

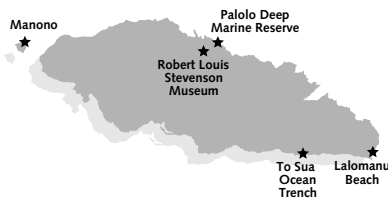
# 'Upolu

Samoa's second-largest and most populated island outdoes itself with tropical grandeur. The main road that winds casually – almost sleepily – around the coast takes you past sublime beaches that are so pristine you feel guilty for putting footprints on them; outcrops of offshore coral that are just pieces of a much larger, more dazzling marine ecosystem; craggy lava cliffs that drop suddenly into a boiling ocean; and verdant plantations and conservation areas that sweep into the island's hilly, rainforested interior. Lined up between the natural spectacles are small villages where a wave and the flash of a smile are as commonplace as sunshine. Even in the crowded confines of the capital, Apia, you'll be warmly besieged by local greetings.

This is not the sort of place where you arrive in the morning, dash around on a manic day tour, and then rush back to the airport to catch a flight to somewhere else. This is a place for cruising around at your leisure. While away the hours bathing in ocean-fed pools or snorkelling amongst living reefs. Spend a day or two (why not a week?) snoozing in *fale* (traditional thatched house), overfeeding yourself on *palusami* (coconut cream wrapped in taro leaves), or unearthing star mounds on smaller islands such as Manono. Completely lose track of time inside beautiful colonial mansions or striding along bushy trails deep within a national park. Whatever you do, make sure you slow yourself down, pack away your watch and submit completely to island time.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Eyeballing technicolour coral and fish in the dreamy depths of **Palolo Deep Marine Reserve** (p64)
- Floundering in the gorgeous waters off pristine **Lalomanu Beach** (p83)
- Letting an ocean current swirl you around the superb **To Sua Ocean Trench** (p81)
- Breathing in the literary history of the charming **Robert Louis Stevenson Museum** (p74)
- Setting off on an early morning circumnavigation of idyllic **Manono** (p84)



■ POPULATION: 110,000

■ AREA: 1115 SQ KM

## LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **Litre of unleaded petrol** ST2.15
- **Litre of bottled water** ST3.50-5
- **Bottle (355ml) of Vailima beer** ST3-4
- **Souvenir T-shirt** ST12
- **Street treat (palusami)** ST1

## HISTORY

Early Polynesians are believed to have established their first village in Samoa on 'Upolu at Mulifanua, probably around 1000 BC. Europeans began fully acquainting themselves with 'Upolu in the early 19th century. Among these visitors were Christian missionaries such as John Williams, who began spreading his holy words in 1830, and Peter Turner, who landed on Manono in 1835. European traders began flooding into 'Upolu after 1850 and for the next 50 years the island became the centre of a territorial dispute between Germany, Britain and the USA, who at one stage all dispatched warships to Apia's harbour – six of these sunk during a massive cyclone in 1889. Germany triumphed but during WWI was relieved of control by New Zealand, which administered Samoa up until the country's independence in 1962.

'Upolu has had a habit of being battered by tropical cyclones in the past two decades, beginning with cyclone Ofa in February 1990 and cyclone Val in December 1991 – the latter caused 13 deaths and economic devastation. The most recent storm to hit the island was Olaf in February 2005, though damage on 'Upolu was much less than at first feared.

## GETTING AROUND

Travelling around 'Upolu by car is easy, but getting around by bus is time-consuming. If travelling on public transport, don't try to visit too many places in a single day. A good rule of thumb is to allow an entire day for each excursion to a point of interest beyond the environs of Apia.

See under Manono (p85) and Apolima (p85) for details of transport to each of those islands.

For info on travelling to Savai'i by plane, see p147. For details of the ferry between 'Upolu and Savai'i, see p148.

## Bus

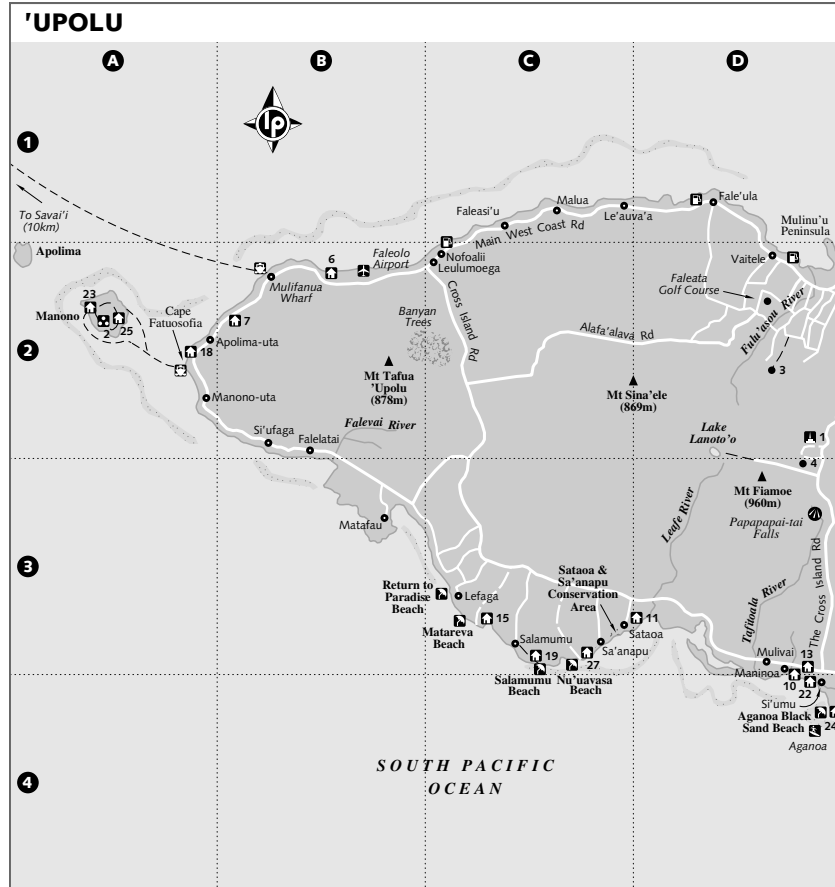
Buses connect Apia with almost every other part of 'Upolu. They leave from Maketi Fou (the main market) and from the bus area behind the Flea Market. Bus terminals are quite a sight in the late afternoon when their perimeters are jammed with Samoans waiting for a ride home. Just because the bus has left the market, however, doesn't mean you're on your way. Buses will travel between the main market areas and around central Apia as many times as the driver deems necessary to fill the bus, or until he realises that it's no longer economically feasible to waste fuel making the circuit. If he decides that he hasn't inspired sufficient interest in the trip, it is cancelled altogether. Keep in mind that buses tend to begin running early but can stop in the early afternoon, according to the whim of the driver. If you'd like to visit a remote spot (say the Aleipata district) and return the same day, you'll need to get an early start.

All buses prominently display the name of their destination in the front window. To stop a bus, wave your hand and arm, palm down, as the bus approaches. To signal that you'd like to get off the bus, either knock on the ceiling or clap loudly. Fares are paid to the driver. A bus schedule that includes fare information is available from the Samoa Tourism Authority (p64).

Any bus with the sign 'Pasi o le Va'a' or 'Faleolo' in the window will be passing Faleolo Airport and going on to Mulifanua Wharf. If it also says 'Manono-uta' or 'Falelatai', it will be continuing to the Manono ferry dock or to the southwestern end of the island.

In order to reach the Aleipata district at the eastern end of the island, catch the Lalomanu bus, which takes Richardson Rd. If you're heading east along the north coast, take the Falefa, Fagalao or Lotofaga bus. For any point along the main Cross Island Rd, take either the Si'umu or Salani bus. To get to Togitogiga and O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park, you'll need to take the Falealili or Salani bus.

Sample fares from Apia include to Robert Louis Stevenson Museum (ST1.20), Falefa (ST2), Faleolo Airport (ST2), Mulifanua Wharf (ST2), Virgin Cove (ST2.30) and Lalomanu (ST4).



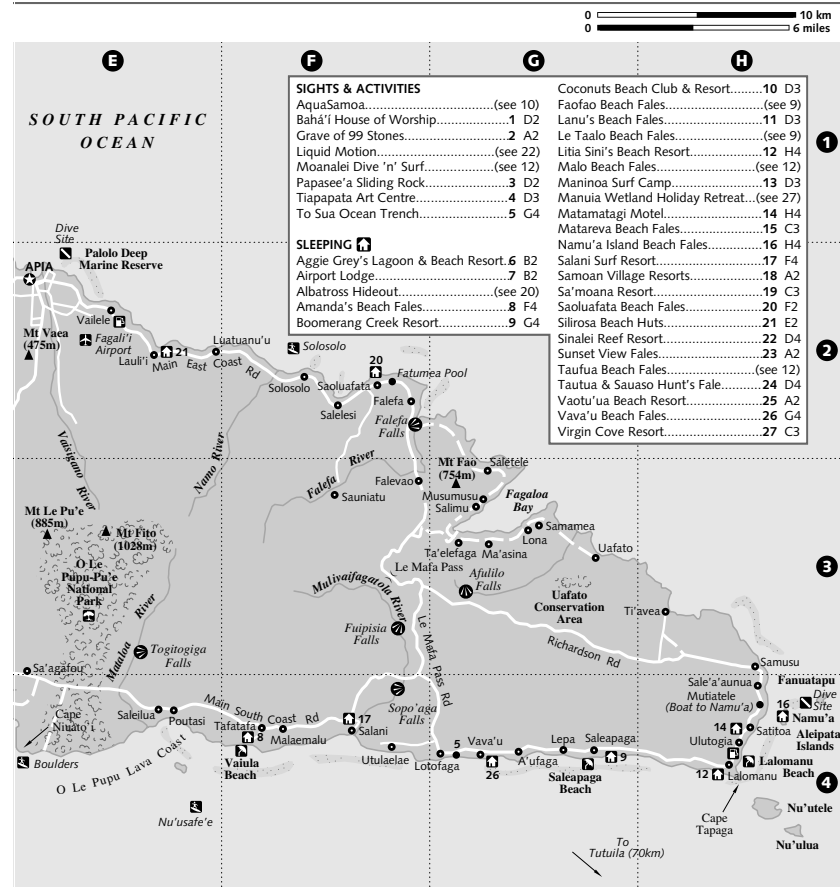
### Car

The sealed Main Coast Rd follows the coast all the way around the island of 'Upolu. Three good cross-island roads pass over the east-west central ridge and divide the island roughly into quarters. The central one begins in Apia at Falealili St before becoming The Cross Island Rd further south. There's another Cross Island Rd to the west and the steeper, picturesque Le Mafa Pass Rd in the east. The general quality of these and other roads outside Apia has improved a lot in recent years, but they're still generally narrow with crumbling verges, and lined with dogs, pigs and pedestrians. Some of the side roads to beaches are rough and can get boggy after heavy rain, but in dry weather they can

almost all be negotiated in a high-clearance 2WD. If unsure, check with locals regarding road conditions before setting out.

Petrol availability is limited on 'Upolu. We only found one petrol station away from the north coast – it's just north of Lalomanu. For information on getting a temporary driving licence, see p149.

There are numerous car-hire agencies in Apia, so ring around to find the best deal. Prices start at around ST120 per day, with discounts offered for longer-term rentals. Hiring a car in Samoa means being subject to a ST2500 insurance excess (nonreducible) in the event of any accident that's your fault. Most outfits allow you to put their vehicles on the ferry to Savai'i; but



double-check this if you plan to head over there.

Some recommended car-hire companies are as follows:

**Blue Pacific Car Hire** (☎ 22668; bluepacific@lesamoa.net) It doesn't have a depot as such, but offers free delivery to all Apia hotels and the airport.

**Budget Car Rental** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20561, 22191; www.budget.com; ground fl, NPF Bldg, Beach Rd)

**Funway Rent-A-Car** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22045; www.funwayrentals.ws; Beach Rd)

**Juliana's Car Rentals** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 23009; Mata'utu St)

### Taxi

Taxis can be convenient for day-tripping around 'Upolu; you'll pay around ST30 an

hour or ST150 for a full day of sightseeing. Some drivers still submit to a temptation to overcharge, so it pays to know the correct fare. Always agree on a price with the driver before climbing in.

At the time of writing, some sample fares to popular destinations were as follows. From Apia, a taxi to the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum costs ST6, while to the Bahá'i House of Worship costs ST14, to the Manono-uta wharf costs ST42, to Mulifanua Wharf costs ST45 and to Lalomanu costs ST65.

The following taxi companies in Apia are recommended.

**City Central Taxis** (☎ 23600)

**Radio Taxi** (☎ 24432)

### HOW A LAZY LAD PUT 'UPOLU ON THE MAP

There are a number of ancient stories about the origin of the name 'Upolu. The most interesting one tells of the marriage of an earthly chief called Beginning to Timuateatea, a daughter of the god Tagaloa.

The couple had a son called Polu, who grew bored and lazy during his teenage years. Beginning thought his son ought to get a job and, looking over towards nearby Savai'i, he realised that it might be a good idea to send Polu over there to see if the island had any inhabitants. So he instructed Polu to pay a visit to his heavenly grandfather, who would provide carpenters to build a canoe for the journey. Polu initially refused but Beginning insisted and the boy finally agreed to do the job.

Up in heaven, the god Tagaloa looked down and noted that the initially reticent Polu had found the carpenters uninterested and lazy, but he had nevertheless managed to urge them to build his canoe. Thus, Tagaloa decided to honour his grandson and name his island 'Upolu (The Urging of Polu).

In distant New Zealand, the Maori remember an island in their people's ancient past named Kuporu. Drop the 'k' and roll the 'r' into an 'l'...

## APIA

pop 40,000

Samoa's capital is a small-town sprawl of low, modern buildings interspersed with dilapidated colonial architecture, old churches and smaller dilapidated structures that have long defied the imperatives of renovation. The brickwork is occasionally leavened by big old *pulu* (banyan) trees, and this is all wrapped around a charming little harbour that glows serenely at dusk.

Travellers rarely respond enthusiastically to Apia. The narrow streets can be choked with fume-belching cars and litter, the mixture of the traditional and the new doesn't sit easily side by side – such as when a jet ski buzzes noisily around a traditional canoe – and it's simply not the beachfront paradise that most people have come to see. But it's still worth spending a few days here, particularly for the Samoan streetlife. Plunge into the markets, elbow your way into a crowded bar and practice hopping on and off the manic local buses. Then dive into Palolo Deep and remember that Polynesia proper is only a slow ride away.

### ORIENTATION

Apia is less a city and more an agglomeration of urbanised villages. From the centre, Apia's villages spread west along the coastal area and climb up into nearby valleys. The main drag is Beach Rd, which follows the

curve of the harbour. At the eastern end of Beach Rd is the ferry wharf and Palolo Deep, while the western end becomes the peninsular Mulinu'u Rd. Most of Apia's activity is centred along Beach Rd between Aggie Grey's Hotel and the Flea Market, with the business district spreading south from the clock tower. The Maketi Fou and bus station are a few blocks south of the clock tower.

### Maps

Hema publishes the detailed *Samoa* map (ST10) including a plan of Apia, but it hasn't been updated since 1999. Jasons offers a basic fold-out *Samoa Visitor Map* (free), with Apia's street grid, which is widely distributed in local hotels. Both maps are available from the Samoa Tourism Authority.

### INFORMATION

#### Bookshops

**CCK Store** (Map pp62-3; Convent St) There are several shelves of used paperbacks upstairs.

**la Malamalama** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 24424; Beach Rd) Primarily stocks religious reading matter, but is also one of the few places that sells a Samoan dictionary – the 4th edition of Pratts, published in 1911 no less.

**Le Tusi Faitau** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 31626; Level 2, Wesley Arcade, Methodist Church Bldg, Beach Rd) Has a great supply of second-hand pulp fiction to see you through endless days lazing on the beach. Best range in town.

### Emergency

**Ambulance** (☎ 996)

**Fire** (☎ 994)

**Police** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 995, 22222; Ififi St)

### Internet Access

Apia's Internet cafés charge between ST2.50 and ST4 per 15 minutes.

**iPasifika** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 29919; www.ipasifika.net; Beach Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat)

**LeSamoa.net** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 21016; lesa@lesamoanet.net; Lotemau Centre, cnr Convent & Mt Vaea Sts; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 7.30am-8.30pm Thu, 7.30am-1pm Sat)

**Travellers' Lounge** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22144; Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Sat, 7am-8pm Sun) A café here serves meals and ice cream.

**www.samoa.ws** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 24159; www.samoa.ws; cnr Convent & Mt Vaea Sts; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat)

### Laundry

Most laundries charge ST4/5 to wash/dry one load. A scoop of washing powder will cost ST2.

**Cleanmaid Laundromat** (Map pp62-3; Mata'utu St; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat)

**Three Corners Laundromat** (Map pp62-3; Mt Vaea St; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Sat) Charges slightly more per load than Cleanmaid.

### Libraries

**Nelson Memorial Public Library** (Map pp62-3; Beach Rd; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-4pm Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) Has a good collection of Pacific titles. Visitors need to present a photo ID to peruse these books. Borrowing books requires temporary membership (ST20, of which ST5 is refunded when you leave Apia).

### APIA IN...

#### One Day

Take an early-morning stroll around the harbourfront and treat yourself to breakfast on the balcony at **Sails** (p71). If it's high tide, head straight out to **Palolo Deep Marine Reserve** (p64). If it's not, lose yourself amidst the good-natured commercial mayhem of **Maketi Fou** (p64), then take a long walk past Mulinu'u Peninsula's tumble-down **monuments** (p66). Travel up The Cross Island Rd to the captivating **Robert Louis Stevenson Museum** (p74), perhaps stopping off en route at the **Curry House** (p70) for some takeaway, then double back to Beach Rd for a late-afternoon Vaillima at **Paddles** (p71) or the **RSA Club** (also known as the Rosa; p73) before tackling a late dinner.

#### Two Days

Expand the one-day itinerary by allowing more time at Villa Vaillima to wander the surrounding **Mount Vaea Scenic Reserve** (p74), followed by a quick peek at the nearby **Bahá'i House of Worship** (p77). Eat cheap seafood at **Gourmet Seafood** (p70), see a **fiafia** (celebration; p73) if at all possible, browse the **Museum of Samoa** (p65) and have a Bloody Mary at **Aggie Grey's** (p69) in honour of the hotel's namesake. Any extra time between these activities should be spent furthering your explorations of **Palolo Deep Marine Reserve** (p64).

### Medical Services

**MedCen Hospital** (Map p75; ☎ 26519, 26323; medcen@ipasifika.net; The Cross Island Road; ☎ 24hr) The best option for medical assistance is this private hospital, based at Vaillima. A doctor is on site from 9am to 10pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to noon Saturday and Sunday; outside these times doctors are on call. A consultation costs ST55.

**Samoa Pharmacy** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20355; Mulinu'u Rd; ☎ 8am-noon, 1.30-4.30pm & 6-10pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon & 6-10pm Sat, 10am-noon & 6-10pm Sun) A little way out of town but well stocked.

### Money

**ANZ Bank** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 69999; Beach Rd; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Wed, 9am-4pm Thu & Fri) The Beach Rd branch has a pair of ATMs. There's also an ANZ ATM at Faleolo Airport.

**National Bank of Samoa** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 23076; Beach Rd; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) Also has a branch at the Maketi Fou which is open on Saturday from 8.30am to 12.30pm.

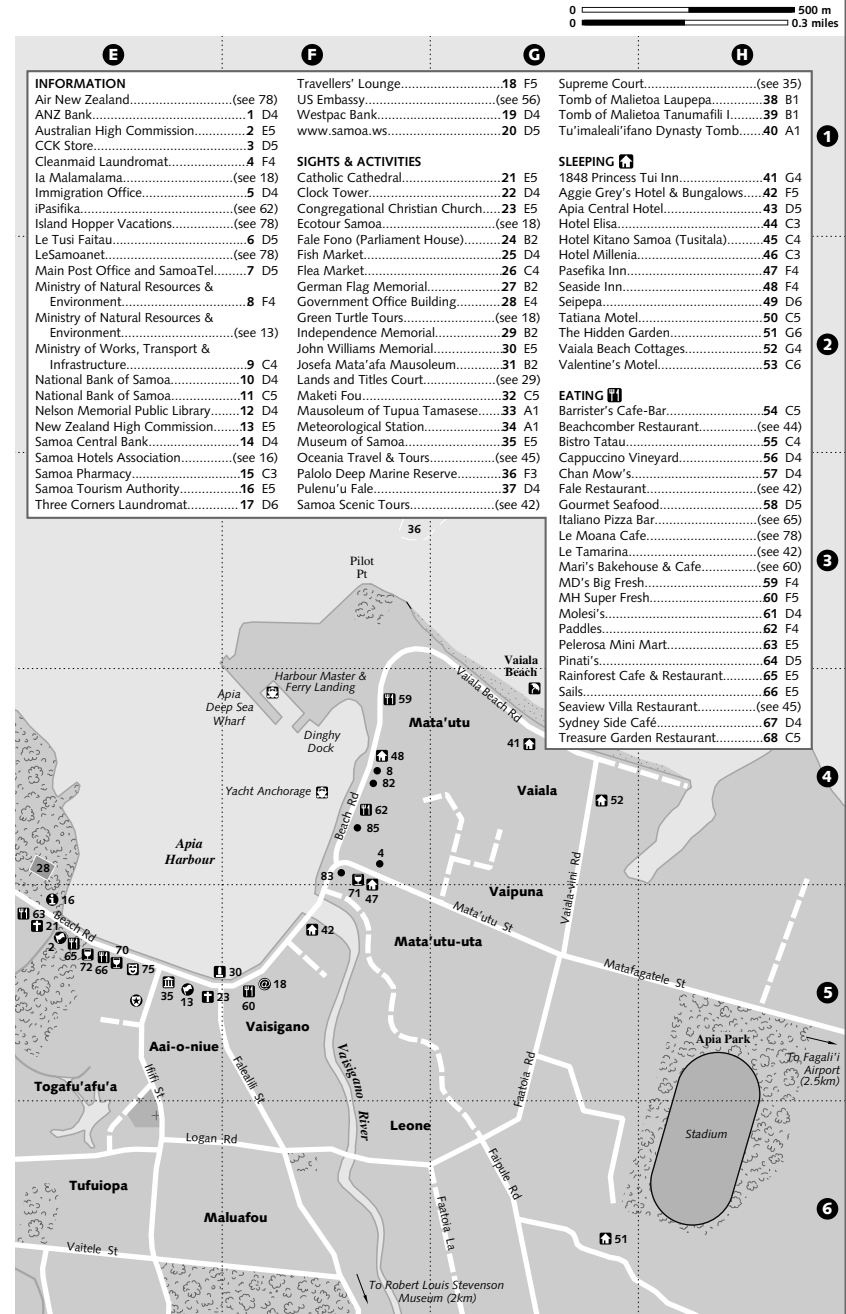
**Westpac Bank** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20000; Beach Rd; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Mon-Wed, 8.30am-4pm Thu & Fri) Has an ATM out front.

### Post

**Main post office** (Map pp62-3; Post Office St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) Apia's main post office has been incorporated into the head office of the country's telecommunications provider, SamoaTel. The counter at the far right sells postcards, phonecards and souvenir envelopes.

UPOLO

APIA



UPOLO

**Poste restante office** (Map pp62-3; Post Office St; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-4.30pm Mon-Fri) For poste restante, go to the separate office, two doors from the main lobby. To receive mail in Apia, have it addressed to you, care of: Poste Restante, Chief Post Office, SamoaTel, Apia, Samoa.

### Telephone

**SamoaTel** (Map pp62-3; www.samoatel.ws; Beach Rd; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) International calls can be made in the call centre located within the SamoaTel office.

**Travellers' Lounge** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22144; Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Sat, 7am-8pm Sun) Make international calls here using phonecards.

### Toilets

There are a few public toilet blocks around Apia, not all in the best shape but OK if you're desperate. Most are concentrated at the western end of town: near the Flea Market bus station, next to the Pulenu'u Fale, and at the southern side of the Maketi Fou.

### Tourist Information

**Samoa Hotels Association** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 30160; Beach Rd; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) This extremely helpful organisation can make accommodation bookings around 'Upolu and Savai'i. Its office is located within the Samoa Tourism Authority *fale*.

**Samoa Tourism Authority** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 63500; www.visitsamoa.ws; Beach Rd; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) The large *fale* housing the Samoa Tourism Authority was built on reclaimed land atop the remains of the German warship *Adler*, destroyed in the 1889 cyclone. Over repeated visits we unfortunately found Tourism Authority staff disinterested and unhelpful. Hopefully their service has improved by the time you read this. Pick up the *Samoa Visitor Guide* and fold-out *Samoa Visitor Map*, both free and published by Jasons, and the free self-tour brochure *Discover Samoa*. The Tourism Authority also keeps a small office at Faleolo Airport, but it only seems to open for incoming international flights.

### Travel Agencies

**Island Hopper Vacations** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 23388; www.islandhoppervacations.com; Lotemau Centre, cnr Convent & Mt Vaea Sts) Also has a desk at Faleolo Airport (☎ 42938), though its opening hours are haphazard.

**Oceania Travel & Tours** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 24443; www.oceania-travel.ws; Hotel Kitano Samoa, Mulinu'u Rd)

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Apia's attractions are mainly strung out along its waterfront. The main exceptions are Maketi Fou, which is a few blocks south of Beach Rd, the memorials lining the road

leading to the tip of Mulinu'u Peninsula, and Madd Gallery, at the southern end of Ifiifi St. For information on the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum and other attractions south of town, see The Cross Island Road section (p74).

### Palolo Deep Marine Reserve

Past the wharf, near the *palagi* (white people) enclaves of Mata'utu and Vaiala, is the sublime **Palolo Deep Marine Reserve** (Map pp62-3; Vaiala Beach Rd; adult/child ST2/1; ☎ 8am-6pm). After lazing or picnicking along the beach, strap on your snorkelling gear (two-hour rentals of snorkels/flippers/masks cost ST2/4/4) and head out to where the shallow reef suddenly drops away into a deep blue hole flanked by walls of coral and densely populated by colourful species of fish.

Palolo Deep is best visited at high tide, otherwise you'll find yourself belly dancing with coral on your way out to the drop-off. To reach the drop-off, swim out from the beach to the dark patch of water to the left of the marker stick. On the way check out the underwater cages filled with giant clams which lie just offshore, to the immediate right of the beach.

### Swimming

Other possibilities for watery entertainment in Apia besides a trip to Palolo Deep are **Vaiala Beach** (Map pp62-3; Vaiala Beach Rd), which, we were told, is accessible on Sunday, and the fine swimming pool at **Hotel Kitano Samoa** (Tusitala; see p69), which can be enjoyed by nonguests for a day fee of ST20.

### Maketi Fou

Apia's centre of commerce is its main market, **Maketi Fou** (Map pp62-3; Fugalei St), which has a huge selection of fresh produce. It hums 24 hours a day and to have a stall there is so prestigious that family members take turns staying the night in order not to lose their privileged spots. Its bustling atmosphere is enlivening at just about any time.

Every kind of meat and produce available in Samoa is sold in this vibrant and colourful place. Here, *matai* (chiefs) gather to chat and drink 'ava (also known as *kava*) and the general public comes to socialise. You'll find drinking coconuts for sale, kiosks selling ready-made *palusami*, *fa'ausi* pudding (taro in coconut cream), cakes and *koko*

*Samoa* (locally grown cocoa served hot and black with lots of sugar).

Also on sale here are craft goods such as *siapo* (bark cloth), wood carvings and an amazing variety of coconut-shell jewellery, items woven from coconut fronds, *kirikiti* (cricket) bats and balls, *lava-lava* (sarongs) and printed T-shirts.

At the back of the main market are shops selling tinned foods, bread and other dry goods. Right next to the market is the **central bus terminal** (Map pp62-3; near Fugalei St), serving the entire island of 'Upolu, where colourfully painted wooden buses blast Samoan pop music and compete for passengers on their seemingly endless cycles around the market square. This is also a popular hangout for local pool sharks, who congregate at the pool halls alongside the terminal.

### Flea Market

Apia's **flea market** (Map pp62-3; off Beach Rd; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) is housed in the old central market building. Here you'll find stalls selling everything from cheap clothing (the range here is bigger than at Maketi Fou), tubs of styling gel and wooden writing tablets to coconut-shell jewellery, *siapo* and 'ava bowls. Most stalls sell exactly the same things, so it's puzzling how they all make enough money to survive. Tucked away beyond the craft stalls, on the northern side of the market, is a row of cheap food stalls selling greasy fried fare.

### Fish Market

Sunday morning is the busiest time at the **fish market** (Map pp62-3; off Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-2pm), with everyone rushing in to buy seafood for the end-of-week *umu* (stone oven) before hurrying off to attend church services. Regardless what day you visit, get there early before the best of the catches is snapped up. Look out for Coca-Cola bottles full of sea-slug innards (a Samoan delicacy) and the bright-green seaweed that looks like bunches of tiny grapes. Battered fishing boats bob away behind the market building.

### Churches & Religious Services

On Sunday, masses of Apians dress in sparkling white to attend morning church services. Most churches have several services on this day, usually lasting an hour and some conducted in English. Visitors are welcome

to attend, but make sure you dress modestly and in light colours.

A landmark of the city's waterfront is the impressive **Catholic Cathedral** (Map pp62-3; Beach Rd), which sports a quartet of recessed statues on its façade and a statue of Madonna and child up top between two small turrets. The cathedral, completed in 1905 and coloured a blazing white, could be seen from up to 20km out to sea before the government building and the Samoa Central Bank were constructed in front of it.

The **Anglican Church** (Map p75; Ifiifi St) is a lovely, unassuming building, the only such church in Samoa. Although not an old building, it has some beautiful stained-glasswork in the windows. The cornerstone inscription states that it was laid on '3 December 1944, the 50th anniversary of the falling asleep of Tusitala', referring to the anniversary of Robert Louis Stevenson's death.

When the Reverend John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS) was killed on 20 November 1839, on Erromanga in Vanuatu, he was subjected to the cannibalistic traditions of the Melanesians of the day. His bones were recovered, however, and buried on the site where the simple wood and stone architecture of the disused **Congregational Christian Church** (Map pp62-3; cnr Beach Rd & Falealii St) now stands. Across the street is a **monument to Williams** (Map pp62-3; Beach Rd) and his 'martyrdom', a surprisingly underwhelming structure considering the reverend's influence. It was erected in 1930, commemorating 'the first hundred years of Christianity in Samoa'.

### Museum of Samoa

The **Museum of Samoa** (Map pp62-3; Beach Rd; admission free; ☎ noon-3.30pm Mon-Fri) has a small but interesting display on Samoan history and culture. The collection includes examples of *siapo* and *lalaga* (weaving), a parliamentary meeting table that involved some impressive carpentry, a rather cumbersome traditional costume prepared for Miss Samoa 1998, enlightening old photographs and some great traditional carvings, some in the form of model outrigger canoes. Unfortunately, the potted history of the islands only goes as far as the year 2000. The museum is upstairs in the same building as the Justice Department and the Supreme Court (p66).

## Madd Gallery

One of Samoa's best-known contemporary painters, Momoe von Reiche, set up the **Madd Gallery** (Map p75; ☎ 28533; Ififi St; admission free; 🕒 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) in 1984 to encourage local interest in the arts. Madd (which stands for Motivational Art, Dance and Drama) displays paintings and *siapo*, and hosts occasional poetry readings, dance performances and visiting exhibitions. The onsite shop sells a small array of craftwork.

## Clock Tower

Located in the town centre, the **dock tower** (Map pp62-3; Beach Rd) was constructed in memory of those who fought and were killed in WWI, and sits on the site of an old bandstand where sailors from incoming warships were serenaded by their compatriots. Its clock and chimes were a gift to the city from one of Samoa's most successful early businesspeople, Mr Olaf Frederick Nelson. It was donated in memory of Olaf's only son, Ta'isi, who died in the influenza epidemic brought to the islands by the New Zealand ship *SS Talune* in 1918.

## Government Buildings & Monuments

The seven-storey **government office building** (Map pp62-3; off Beach Rd), a product of Chinese benevolence, sits astride an area reclaimed from the sea. Built in 1993, its universally unpopular design was only slightly improved by the addition of a *fale* – a last-minute concession to *fa'a Samoa* (Samoan customs and traditions) – which forms its top floor. Sharing this reclaimed area is the **Pulenu'u Fale** (Map pp62-3; off Beach Rd) where *pulenu'u* (village mayors) meet.

A two-storey knocked-about colonial building is home to the **Supreme Court** (Map pp62-3; Beach Rd). It was on the street here that the bloody clash between the formerly peaceful Mau Movement ('Samoa for Samoans') and the New Zealand police brought about the deaths of 11 Samoans, including the Mau leader, Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, on 28 December 1929.

At 7.45am every weekday, the Police Band of Samoa marches from the **police station** (Map pp62-3; Ififi St) to the government building. Vehicle and pedestrian traffic is stopped and the national anthem is played while the flag is raised. It's a great way to start the day, especially in 'winter', when the sun is low

and casts a serene morning glow over the harbour.

Near the gleaming new **Mormon temple** (Map p75; Vaitele St) is the **German bandstand** (Map p75; Vaitele St) that was used as the headquarters of the Mau Movement. Near to the bandstand is the **tomb of Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III** (Map p75; Vaitele St).

## WALKING TOUR

This walking tour takes you up and around the Mulinu'u Peninsula, which stretches out into the South Pacific Ocean to the northwest of central Apia. The peninsula seems to serve as a repository for political monuments and memorials, though most of these are now rather derelict.

Start from outside Apia's lively **Flea Market** (1; p65). The first monument you encounter while ambling along the sea wall that buttresses the peninsula's eastern shore is the **German Flag Memorial** (2), which was erected in 1913 to commemorate the raising of the German flag over the islands on 1 March 1900. Nowadays, it registers as little more than a small pile of stones surrounded by a rusty fence.

On the lawn in front of the *Fale Fono* is the **Josefa Mata'afa Mausoleum** (3). Josefa Mata'afa was the puppet paramount chief supported by the Germans after they annexed Western Samoa in 1899. The grave is not of Samoan design and it seems that the Germans constructed it hoping to undermine the pride the locals had in their leaders by altering their age-old burial customs.

The **Fale Fono** (4) itself, Samoa's parliament house, resembles a large beehive and was opened on 31 May 1972. Nearby is the **Lands and Titles Court** (5), the entity that settles land-rights cases. In case you had any doubts about Samoa's Christian leanings, have a look at the **Independence Memorial** (6) in front of the court building. It was built to mark the independence of Western Samoa, granted on 1 January 1962, and bears the inscription 'Samoa was founded on God'.

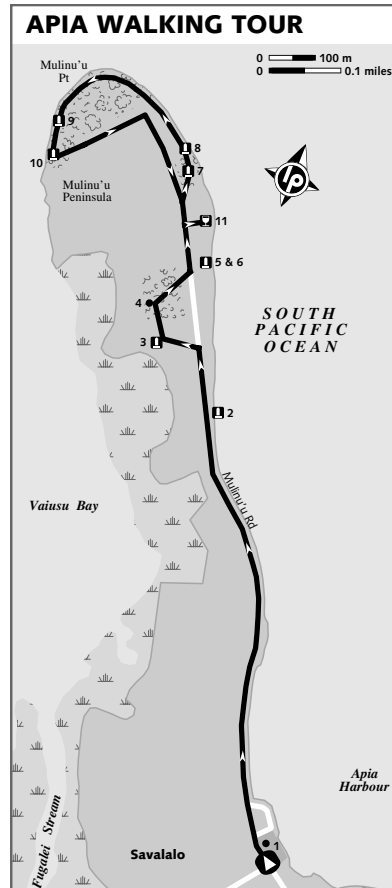
Further up the peninsula are the **tombs of Malietoa Laupepa** (7) and **Malietoa Tanumafili I** (8), the grandfather and father, respectively, of the present ceremonial head of state. Small tended gardens surround the tombs but the tombs themselves look forlorn. To see something a bit cheerier, continue to the **meteorological station** on the tip of the peninsula and

skirt it via the shoreline embankment, which offers a nice vista of Vaisua Bay.

Coming around the northwestern edge of the peninsula, you'll find two more tombs: the seven-tiered **tomb of the Tu'imaleali'ifano dynasty** (9) and the **mausoleum of Tupua Tamasese** (10). Having had enough of old monuments by now, and probably getting a bit thirsty too, you should head back to Mulinu'u Rd

### WALK FACTS

**Start** Flea Market  
**Finish** Apia Yacht Club  
**Distance** 2km  
**Duration** 1 hour



and down to the **Apia Yacht Club** (11; p72) for a well-earned drink – if the timing of your walk doesn't coincide with the club's opening hours, just stroll into a bar in one of the peninsula's well-appointed hotels.

## APIA FOR CHILDREN

There are lots of distractions for children in Apia, which is fitting for a country that lavishes so much attention upon its own young. Kids will be fascinated by offerings in the **Maketi Fou** (p64) and the **Flea Market** (p65). They'll also love snorkelling at **Palolo Deep** (p64) – even if your child isn't a confident swimmer, you can still lead them only a short distance offshore to where the giant clams lie. The traditional Samoan **fiafia** (p73) is a memorable experience for families, as is a ride in one of the colourful local **buses**. Only a short distance from Apia is the **Robert Louis Stevenson Museum** (p74) and its beautiful grounds (perfect for a picnic), the **Tiapapata Art Centre** (p77) with its great art workshops for children, and the challenging **Papase'e Sliding Rock** (p78).

## TOURS

The following Apia-based companies conduct assorted tours of 'Upolu and Savai'i; for more info on Savai'i tours, see p90. Tours are usually not staged on Sunday.

**Ecotour Samoa** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22144; www.ecotoursamoa.com) Offers all-inclusive ecotours encompassing culture, nature, adventure and education around the various Samoan islands. Tours include 4WD trips in air-conditioned comfort; seven-day bird-watching, sea-kayaking or 'safari' trips; or, for the hard core, the three- to 30-day 'Samoan Survival', where guests learn to survive on uninhabited Nu'utele island, off 'Upolu's southeast coast. The majority of tours cost US\$190 per person per day.

**Green Turtle Tours** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22144, 29229; www.greenturtle.com) Travellers have mixed opinions about this tour outfit. True, the guide-accompanied hop-on, hop-off bus services conveniently circle 'Upolu and Savai'i daily. But the company's attempts to get you to prebook with its favoured accommodation doesn't work in favour of travellers seeking true flexibility, and budget travellers can easily find better deals than its ST90-per-night accommodation vouchers. A one-month pass costs ST170 per island, not including accommodation and many of the daily activities. Green Turtle also offers day tours of 'Upolu and Savai'i (each ST90).

**Oceania Travel & Tours** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 24443; http://www.oceania-travel.ws; Hotel Kitano Samoa, Mulinu'u Rd) Among the day tours offered by Oceania is

one taking in eastern 'Upolu (US\$40), including Lalomanu and Piula Cave, and one of Manono (US\$40).

**Samoa Scenic Tours** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 26981, 22880; [www.samoascenic.com](http://www.samoascenic.com)) Runs half- and full-day scenic, cultural and ecotours around Apia, 'Upolu and Savai'i from ST60 (half-day) or ST120 (full day) per person. Tailor-made itineraries are also offered. Has a desk at Aggie Grey's Hotel.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The city's most prominent celebration is the Teuila Festival, a week of festivities which has become Samoa's key cultural event. See p141 for details.

## SLEEPING

Some of Apia's accommodation is arranged along the harbour, including the peaceful foreshore of the Mulinu'u Peninsula. But most hotels, motels, modern homestays and budget *fale* are scattered throughout the villages to the south of the centre – several of these lie 1km from the harbour along the route to The Cross Island Rd.

## Budget

**Hidden Garden** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 25416, 31252; [garden@lesamoa.net](mailto:garden@lesamoa.net); Vini Rd; fale per person ST35-45) *Fale* set on stilts and small shacks, all scattered throughout a naturally overgrown garden, are the hallmarks of this excellent, restful place. Guests share toilets, a kitchen and the environmental knowledge of the owner, Eti, who conducts foot-powered explorations of the island in the guise of SamoaOnFoot (see p136). Ask about kayaking trips around nearby Taumeasina.

**Seipepa** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 25447; [seipepa@samoa-experience.com](http://seipepa@samoa-experience.com); off Vaitete St; dm/s/d ST45/75/90; 📺) Lovely, intimate place tucked away among village houses. Accommodation is available either in *fale*, which are squeezed together and don't offer much privacy, or in four comfortable, nicely decorated rooms in the main house (only one has a double bed). Bathrooms are shared and there's a communal kitchen (prices include breakfast).

**Valentine's Motel** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22158; [valentine@samoa.ws](mailto:valentine@samoa.ws); Fugalei St; s/d from ST40/60; 📺 📺 📺) This friendly place feels more like a big family home than a motel, with a neat lawn out back, a breezy downstairs lounge and a minimum of fuss from the lovely owner. Budget rooms have shared bathrooms and are nothing flash, but are well-priced. Air-

conditioned rooms with en suites are available for ST100. Breakfast is included in the room price.

**Seaside Inn** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22578; [seasideinn@ipasifika.net](mailto:seasideinn@ipasifika.net); Beach Rd; dm ST30, s ST65-70, d ST75-85) The rooms at this appealingly low-key place are a little scuffed and dreary but are otherwise in reasonable condition. Breakfast is included in the price and there's a kitchen and a laundry service. Commanding the patio out front is a small café-bar where travellers swap apocryphal stories over beer and burgers.

**Tatiana Motel** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 26829; [www.tatiana-motel.com](http://www.tatiana-motel.com); Fugalei St; dm ST30, r ST50-120; 📺 📺 📺) Tatiana offers mostly no-frills rooms on a barren roadside plot. But it is a friendly place and backpackers will appreciate the 'dorm' price (one bed in a twin room).

## Midrange

**Pasefika Motel** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20971; [www.pasefikainn.ws](http://www.pasefikainn.ws); Mata'utu St; r from ST90; 📺 📺) The fan-cooled rooms at the Pasefika, just off Beach Rd, each have an en suite, fridge and telephone, and comprise one of Apia's best midrange deals. There's also a communal kitchen, a laundry service and a large veranda to exploit, and a tropical breakfast is included in the price.

**Samoa Outrigger Hotel** (Map p75; ☎ 20042; [outrigger@samoa.ws](mailto:outrigger@samoa.ws); Falealili St; fale per person ST45, s ST100-140, d ST110-160; 📺 📺 📺) This lovely old timber hotel, shaded a soothing blue, is nestled behind a high hedge. It's a low-key, restful place that provides a communal kitchen and distractions in the form of a billiard table and an above-ground pool.

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Aniva's Place** (Map p75; ☎ 23431, 20501; [anivas@lesamoa.net](mailto:anivas@lesamoa.net); off Falealili St, Moto'otua; s ST95-115, d ST115-135; 📺 📺 📺) This two-storey 'suburban' dwelling offers all the creature comforts of someone else's home and is an excellent place to repose in-between making excursions into Apia and 'Upolu's hinterland. Flake out in the upstairs lounge, make full use of the guest bar, and refresh yourself in a pool swaddled in a broad deck. The nine rooms here are homely and the price includes breakfast; dinners can also be arranged. This place doubtless garners much return custom.

## THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT BLOODY MARY

Agnes Genevieve Swann was the daughter of William Swann, a Lincolnshire chemist who had migrated to Samoa in 1889, and Pele, a Samoan girl from Toamua village. In 1917 she married Gordon Hay-Mackenzie, the recently arrived manager of the Union Steamship Company. They had four children before Gordon died eight years later. Soon afterwards, Aggie married Charlie Grey, who was, unfortunately, a compulsive gambler. Charlie lost everything they had and Aggie had to look for some means of supporting the family.

In 1942 American soldiers arrived in Apia carrying 'unimaginable wealth', and Aggie saw an opportunity to earn a little money. She borrowed US\$180, bought the site of a former hotel and began selling hamburgers and coffee to US servicemen. Response to her business was overwhelming and, although supplies were difficult to come by during WWII, Aggie built up an institution that became famous Pacific-wide as a social gathering place for war-weary soldiers. She even succeeded in getting through the New Zealand-imposed prohibition of alcoholic beverages.

When James Michener published his enormously successful *Tales of the South Pacific*, Aggie Grey was so well known throughout that realm that it was widely assumed she was the prototype for the character of Michener's Tonkinese madam, Bloody Mary. Michener has said that he did visit Aggie's place whenever he could, to get away from 'unutterably dull and militarily stuffy' Pago Pago, where he was frequently stationed. However, he denies that anything but the good bits of Bloody Mary were inspired by Aggie Grey.

Over the next few decades, the snack bar expanded into a hotel where numerous celebrities stayed while filming or travelling in the area. (Many of the *fale* rooms are named after these famous people.) If you'd like to read more about Aggie Grey, who died in June 1988 at the age of 91, pick up a copy of her biography, *Aggie Grey of Samoa*, by Nelson Eustis.

Besides the restful rooms, you can also hire one of the four *fale* out back.

**Vaiala Beach Cottages** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22202; [www.samoana.org/vaiala](http://www.samoana.org/vaiala); Vaiala-vini Rd; s/d/tr US\$45/70/80; 📺) The attractive fan-cooled timber cottages here have plenty of furniture and facilities squeezed into them, including a stove and fridge, bathroom, one double bed and two single beds. They're set in a nice garden and are ideal for families, with discounts offered for longer stays. Walk a little further down the street to see an unusual turreted church.

**Hotel Millenia** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 28284; [www.hotelmilleniasamoa.com](http://www.hotelmilleniasamoa.com); Mulinu'u Rd; r from ST180; 📺 📺) This three-storey hotel is perched halfway up Mulinu'u Peninsula, where it's regularly swept by ocean breezes. It's worth paying about ST30 more for an upper-level room as some of the lower-floor rooms are disquietingly close to the adjacent nightclub. Rates should include breakfast, which (along with afternoon cocktails) should ideally be taken out on the upper deck.

Other possibilities:  
**Samoa Holiday Hotel** (Map p75; ☎ 28016, 28017; [samoaholiday@lesamoa.net](mailto:samoaholiday@lesamoa.net); Moamoa Rd; s/d ST160/175; 📺 📺) Plain white-brick block offering good self-contained accommodation, but it's away from the centre.

**Apia Central Hotel** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20782; <http://www.samoahotels.com/apiacentral.htm>; Savalalo Rd; s/d ST140/170; 📺) Overpriced considering its lack of character but centrally located and worth considering if other places are full.

**1848 Princess Tut Inn** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 23342; [www.princessstui.ws](http://www.princessstui.ws); Vaiala Beach Rd; dm/s/d from ST40/90/110; 📺 📺 📺) Not all facilities are up to scratch in this attractive old house, but you can't argue with the superb location opposite Vaiala Beach.

## Top End

**Hotel Kitano Samoa** (Tusitala; Map pp62-3; ☎ 211 22; [www.kitano.ws](http://www.kitano.ws); Mulinu'u Rd; s US\$95-175, d US\$105-180, tr US\$125-195; 📺 📺 📺) This luxury hotel on Mulinu'u Peninsula looks squat and motel-like from the outside, but rooms are spacious and very well-equipped. The tiered pool area is marvellous, while the 5.5 hectares of landscaping eschews the overgrown style of other hotels for an open feel. In true Samoan style, the reception area is not garnished by a fountain but by a dugout canoe. There's also a children's playground and the excellent Seaview Villa Restaurant (p71).

**Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22880; [www.aggiegreys.com](http://www.aggiegreys.com); Beach Rd; s US\$120-170, d & tw US\$125-175, ste US\$280-340; 📺 📺 📺)

Aggie Grey's was founded as a club in 1942 by a woman who became a Pacific celebrity (for more on Aggie Grey, see box, p69) and is now an iconic four-star hotel. It's set in appealing tropical gardens and has some excellent facilities. There's 24-hour room service, a playground and good eateries, including the cavernous Fale Restaurant (opposite). The bungalows and poolside rooms, however, lack Pacific flavour, so get a harbour-facing room. Several rooms have disabled access. Try to catch the Wednesday night *fiafia* (p73). In 2005 Aggie Grey's opened a resort near the airport (p79).

**Hotel Insel Fehmarn** (Map p75; ☎ 23301; www.inselfehmarnsamoa.com; Falealili St; s/d from ST220/250; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) This modern three-storey block has airy and well-equipped (though somewhat bland) rooms, and good facilities, including a pool, tennis courts and a shuttle service into town. It's frequently booked out by conferences and other events. It's named after an island in the Baltic Sea; see their brochure for the full story.

**Hotel Elisa** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 21116; www.hotel elisa.ws; Mulinu'u Rd; r ST290-320, ste ST750; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) Hotel Elisa is peacefully sited on Mulinu'u Peninsula. It has an austerity in its modern décor that gives it a lack of overall character, but you'll forget about this when standing on your private balcony and gazing out at the sea or the silhouette of 'Upolu's mountainous interior. On the ground floor is the formal Beachcomber Restaurant (p72).

## EATING

Apia's extensive eating scene has a bit of everything, from fried food emporiums and international cuisines like Chinese and Indian, to top-notch restaurants and an embryonic café culture. There's plenty of good food and value for money on offer all around town.

### Cafés & Quick Eats

**Sydney Side Café** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 779 0495; Gold Star Bldg, Convent St; meals ST10-22; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) Imported direct from Sydney (or at least its coffee and its prices are) is this accomplished modern café, which is very popular with *palagi* who are yearning for a authentic cuppa – everything from a flat white to an *affogato* (short black poured over ice cream) – and perhaps the illusion of being back home. It makes excellent gourmet sandwiches and salads.

**Gourmet Seafood** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 24625; Toga-fu'afu'a Rd; meals ST5-8; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Very popular with both locals and *palagi*, this eatery has a pleasant *fale*-style dining area draped with fishing nets. Lots of seafood, burgers, steaks and toasted sandwiches are served up here. The fish and chips are reliably tasty.

**Cappuccino Vineyard** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22049; ACB Bldg; meals ST7-16; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) breakfast, lunch & dinner) There's not much to look at inside this busy café except for people crowded on stools around the bar, but the umbrella-shaded tables lining the mall outside make for a nice retreat. Situated on a pedestrian mall off Convent St, it does a range of good breakfasts, burgers and salads (try the swordfish version), plus decent coffee and smoothies. At night it turns into a popular wine bar (p73).

**Curry House** (Map p75; ☎ 26815; The Cross Island Rd; meals ST4-20; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This popular Indian café serves its butter chicken and lamb korma curries, plus smaller dishes like dhal and *baigan* (spiced eggplant), on a small deck that has views down to the sea. It also does a roaring trade in takeaway. Makes a nice change from steak or eggs.

**Le Moana Cafe** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 24828; Lotemua Centre, cnr Convent & Mt Vaea Sts; meals ST7-18; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) Simple, well-patronised café with a small fan-cooled courtyard and a menu of sizeable egg and pancake breakfasts, burgers, toasted sandwiches, salads, steaks and other filling fare. Every Wednesday night it dusts off a Weber and cooks up an all-you-can-eat barbecue (ST37) which is accompanied by live music. Some international wines are also available here.

**Pinati's** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 24248; Convent St; mains ST2-5; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri) Pinati's is one of the few remaining places in town selling cheap nosh with a Samoan influence. It's a cavernous, unsigned eatery that's always full of Samoan workers and serves up huge meals, including chow mein, chop suey and curry.

**Mari's Bakehouse & Cafe** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 30658; Beach Rd; meals ST12-19; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) This humble café, adjacent to MH Super Fresh supermarket, dutifully services local office workers and quickly fills at lunchtime. It's not the cheapest café around but you won't go hungry here. There's the usual array of high-calorie breakfasts and fried lunches, plus tasty burritos, enchila-

das, soups and pastries (think blueberry turnover).

**Barrister's Cafe-Bar** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 29136; Ministry of Communications & Information Technology Bldg, Fugalei St; meals ST9-15; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) No-frills place tucked away at the end of an arcade. Its steak sandwiches and big breakfasts will get the cholesterol oozing through your veins, or you can choose a cheap seafood platter. The plastic seats are doubled up to support those large Samoan bodies.

One of the best places for a cheap meal, particularly for breakfast, is the **Maketi Fou** (p64), or try the food stalls behind the **Flea Market** (p65).

## Restaurants

**Sails** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20628; Beach Rd; breakfast & lunch ST15-25, dinner ST30-45; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) Sails is housed upstairs in a cosy 140-year-old colonial building that was Robert Louis Stevenson's first Samoan home. Its balcony overlooks the harbour and is a superb place to dine. The service here is assured and the good-quality food includes big breakfasts and plenty of seafood – try the megaplatter that costs ST80 for two people. Disappointingly, vegetarian meals aren't standard menu inclusions and usually have to be requested.

**Seaview Villa Restaurant** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 21122; Hotel Kitano Samoa, Mulinu'u Rd; mains ST30-45; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) dinner Mon-Sat; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) This accomplished restaurant dishes up fine Japanese cuisine and seafood in the building to the immediate right as you turn in to Hotel Kitano Samoa (Tusitala). Nibble lobster thermidor, sushi and donburi-style meals (served on rice in bowls) and sip international wines in the restaurant's intimate interior or on the ocean-facing balcony.

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Bistro Tatau** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22727; Beach Rd; mains ST25-50; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) Eggs Benedict, laksa and calamari salad round out the lunch menu at this suave fine-dining establishment, while double-baked soufflés, huge steaks and vegetable crêpes headline the dinners. The rich mains are complemented by ultrarich desserts. Come here for a special occasion, even if you have to make one up.

**Italiano Pizza Bar** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 24330; Beach Rd; small/medium/large pizzas from ST15/25/27; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) A sociable pizza joint handily located in the heart of town. Doesn't have much character inside but there's almost always a small crowd eating and drinking (usually smoking too) on the front deck, and the pizzas are very tasty. They do free deliveries to hotels in central Apia.

**Paddles** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20194; Beach Rd; mains ST16-38; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) The balcony of this fine restaurant-bar is one of the best places in town to have a meal or late-afternoon drink accompanied by a harbour view, but bring your sunglasses. The varied (mostly meaty) menu includes seared tuna steak, seafood crêpes, creamy pastas and several salad variations. Later in the evening it becomes Spy Nightclub (p73).

**Giordano's Pizzeria** (Map p75; ☎ 25985; Falealili St; small/large pizzas from ST15/20, pasta ST18; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Sun) Serves some of Apia's tastiest pizzas, which can be taken away or eaten in the inviting candle-lit courtyard. Also serves good salads and pasta. It's a bit of a hike from downtown but worth the trip.

**Treasure Garden Restaurant** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22586; Fugalei St; mains ST13-30; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) This cavernous restaurant takes up the entire ground floor of the Treasure Garden Hotel and offers arguably the best Chinese food in town. Steel pillars, plastic plants and a sea of red table cloths all battle for your attention, but it's the extensive menu (takeaway available) centred on chicken, pork, beef and seafood, plus a handful of vegetarian and tofu meals, that will inevitably occupy you.

**Fale Restaurant** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22880; Aggie Grey's Hotel, Beach Rd; breakfast & lunch from ST15, dinner from ST19; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) This informal restaurant sits within an enormous *fale* beside Aggie Grey's pool and serves up lots of Western-style meals at the tables scattered between the enormous carved pillars. A *fiafia* (ST55/15 with/without buffet) is staged each Wednesday night.

**Le Tamarina** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22880; Aggie Grey's Hotel, Beach Rd; lunch/dinner from ST35/50; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Mon; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) Fortunately for this upmarket eatery, its encircling windows ameliorate what would otherwise have been a stiffly formal ambience. Don't turn up here in shorts though; formal attire



is requested. The restaurant serves highly rated meat meals like beef Wellington and rack of lamb, but no vegetarian pleasures appear on the menu.

**Rainforest Cafe & Restaurant** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 25736; Beach Rd; lunch ST8-16, dinner ST14-26; ☎ 9am-3pm & 6pm-late Mon-Fri; ☒) If the Swiss Family Robinson built a restaurant, it would look like this: broad shavings on the floor, pandanus-woven walls screened by lots of greenery, and *siapo* hangings. Despite the overdone tropical theme, this BYO restaurant has a laidback feel and serves curries and other hearty meals, including several vegetarian options. Book ahead for a table on the small front porch.

**Beachcomber Restaurant** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 21116; Hotel Elisa, Mulinu'u Rd; mains ST20-55; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☒) The windows that ring this one-room restaurant open up to admit the sea breeze, or you can sample the salt air while clutching an aperitif on the front veranda. The wine list has some good international choices and the menu, though not adventurous, should satisfy. For some pointless reason, men are required to wear a collar.

### Self-Catering

The best places for fresh produce are **Maketi Fou** (see p64) and the **Fish Market** (p65). Central supermarkets with reasonable selections include **Chan Mow's** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22616; Beach Rd; ☎ 8am-5pm), **Molesi's** (Map pp62-3; Beach Rd; ☎ 6am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) and **MH Super Fresh** (Map pp62-3; Beach Rd; ☎ 6am-7pm). The ramshackle **Pelerosa Mini Mart** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 26042; Beach Rd; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) has a bakery selling bread, muffins, pies and donuts.

Imported food is sold at **Lynn's Supermarket** (Map p75; ☎ 20275; Salenesa Rd; ☎ 5.30am-10pm). Another good option is **MD's Big Fresh** (Map pp62-3; Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-7pm); head to the fruit and vegetables section to find a rack of Australian and New Zealand wines.

### DRINKING

For a smallish place, Apia has a rather large number of bars. The waterfront is where the vast majority of the drinking action is, and most large hotels have an area reserved for barflies. Most places open in the early afternoon and close at the stroke of midnight. The Apia Yacht Club is one of the few places serving alcohol on a Sunday.

**Hennie's Sports Bar** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22221; Fugalei St) Hennie's is an appealingly boisterous place hung with fairy lights and filled with the strains of Polynesian dance music. An older crowd of locals and expats gather in this convivial rumpus room of a bar to play darts and pool, or just to cheer on those who are. Several small-screen televisions show a variety of sports, but the commentary is lost in the drinkers' chatter.

**Cocktails on the Rocks** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20736; Beach Rd) This teensy but busy bar concocts a dozen standard cocktails (ST8/20 per glass/jug), including a potent Bloody Mary. There's almost always a row of *palagi* seated out front, staring across the road at nothing in particular.

**RSA Club** (Returned Services Association; Map pp62-3; ☎ 20171; Beach Rd) Don't be fooled by the billboard advertising Wondersoft toilet paper at the entrance. Nicknamed 'The Rosa', this place is anything but soft: the standard drink is a 750ml Vaillima, the floor has possibly the oldest, most scarred linoleum on the planet, and you don't want to be here when a fight breaks out (usually around the pool tables at closing time). That said, you see all types in here and the atmosphere is always lively, especially when bands play (opposite).

**Apia Yacht Club** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 21313; Mulinu'u Rd; ☎ 4pm-midnight Tue-Sat, 2pm-midnight Sun) The local yacht club is a welcoming place up near the tip of Mulinu'u Peninsula, where it enjoys ocean views and is untroubled by the traffic noise of the town centre. Sip a drink or devour a cheap meal while allowing your hair (assuming you have any) to be ruffled by a sea breeze.

**Bad Billy's** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 30298; Beach Rd) This rousing saloon-style bar has a cracked concrete floor, an unusually tall timber-plank bar and surfboards stuck on the wall for decoration. It's usually bereft of foreigners but loquacious locals make up for the shortfall in noise. The pool tables shut down at 10pm so everyone can concentrate on drinking.

**Bounty Bar** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 28506; Mata'utu St) Bounty is a one-room bar filled with what appears to be garden furniture and cheerfully devoted to playing rousing feel-good ballads as loudly as possible. While you're enjoying the cold, cheap beer, spare a thought for those attempting to sleep in the upstairs motel.

## ENTERTAINMENT

The possibilities for entertaining yourself in the evening in Apia include a handful of nightclubs, the DJs and bands that play at some of the local bars and cafés, and the high-spirited *fiafia* staged at some hotels. Like bars, nightclubs tend to close at midnight.

### Nightclubs

**Lighthouse Cafe & Bar** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 26669; Beach Rd; admission Wed-Sat night ST5; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat) This high-ceilinged place looks like an enormous open-fronted barn. It functions primarily as an entertaining bar-club, with lounges and chairs to sprawl in, Vaillima in hand, as you listen to the click of pool balls colliding and to live and recorded Polynesian rap and dance music. It also moonlights as a reasonable **café** (meals ST7-19; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) serving kebabs, pastas and grilled meats.

**Spy Nightclub** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20194; Beach Rd; admission Thu & Fri ST5, Sat ST6, dinner guests free; ☎ 9pm-midnight Thu-Sat) The upstairs space of Paddles restaurant (p71) is taken over by a DJ for a few hours on most nights after the kitchen starts winding down. It's usually low-key and friendly, and in-between songs you can chill to the harbour view from the balcony.

### Live Music

**Cappuccino Vineyard** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22049; ACB Bldg; meals ST7-16) By day Cappuccino Vineyard is a mild-mannered café but at night it transforms itself into an exuberant wine bar, where the drinkers crowded around the tables outside the front door are serenaded for free several nights a week by local musicians. It's a relaxing venue where striking up a conversation is as easy as lifting a glass.

**RSA Club** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20171; Beach Rd) Samoan bands regularly brave the Rosa's intimidating reputation. Gigs are often free but occasionally there's a cover charge (around ST4 to ST5), particularly if two bands are playing on the same night.

### Fiafia

Spectacular Samoan dance performances called *fiafia* are staged regularly at various hotels. You'll need to book ahead to get decent seats. A buffet dinner usually ac-

companies the performance, though you can choose to see the show only. There's a *fiafia* at **Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22880; Beach Rd; show ST15, dinner & show ST55) every Wednesday evening, while an equally lavish production is staged just out of town at **Aggie Grey's Lagoon & Beach Resort** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 22880; Main West Coast Rd; show ST15, dinner & show ST55) every Thursday. **Hotel Kitano Samoa** (Tusitala Map pp62-3; ☎ 21122; Mulinu'u Rd; show ST15, dinner & show ST50) has its *fiafia* on Friday night. Children are often charged half-price for these shows.

### Cinemas

**Magik Cinemas** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 28126; Convent St; adult/child ST5/3.50) The pair of theatres here is devoted to mainstream movie releases and gets insanely busy on the weekend of a first release.

### Sport

**Apia Park** (☎ 21400; off Faatoia Rd) The big national and international rugby tournaments are held here. It's also where the athletics events and opening and closing ceremonies of the 2007 South Pacific Games will be staged.

### SHOPPING

Lots of businesses have moved out of Apia's centre in recent years due to large increases in rent, but you'll still find plenty of shops crowded together in the streets running off Beach Rd.

**Elaine MAR Enterprises** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 25891; Saleufi St) This shop is just one of many places around Apia where you can buy *lava-lava* machine-printed with traditional designs for ST9 or have one made up for you – the hand-printed material costs around ST10 per yard. It's worth visiting just to be mesmerised by the array of colourful fabric.

**Aggie Grey's Gift Shop** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22880; Beach Rd) This retail offshoot of the luxury hotel has a good selection of locally produced crafts and artwork, especially reasonably priced *'ava* bowls and wooden models of traditional outrigger canoes, as well as roll upon roll of printed fabric.

**Treasure Box** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 20470; Convent St) It has lots of upmarket Samoan jewellery but this shop specialises in black pearls that are imported and then matched with locally designed settings. Pop inside just to see the dark lustre of the pearls.

**Plantation House** (Map p75; ☎ 22839; Lotopa Rd) Beautiful, high-quality, Samoan-made *lava-lava*, prints, tailored shirts, jewellery, lacquer-ware and other crafts line the walls of this fine boutique, situated at the front of the owner's house.

Caffeine fans might want to hunt down some yummy *koko Samoa* and Samoan coffee in the larger supermarkets; for details of these, see p72. If you're on a health kick, you might be interested in purchasing some *nonu* juice, Samoa's popular cure-all (see Nonu the Wonder Fruit; p46). You can buy a litre bottle of this bitter stuff for ST20 at the **Natural Health Centre** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 21317; Beach Rd).

A treasure trove of crafts is yours for the browsing in the **Maketi Fou** (p64) and the **Flea Market** (p65).

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

For information about transport between Apia and other parts of 'Upolu, see Getting Around (p57) at the start of this chapter. For information on the cargo ship route between Apia and Tokelau, see p294. For details of ferry services between Apia and Pago Pago (American Samoa), see p294. Information on international flights to Apia can be found on p290.

## GETTING AROUND

All major international flights (including those servicing American Samoa) use Faleolo Airport, 35km west of Apia. Fagali'i Airport, a few kilometres east of Apia, is used mainly for flights to Savai'i, but nearly all travellers head across on the ferry. To get to Faleolo from Apia, take any bus marked 'Pasi o le Va'a' or 'Faleolo' (ST2); note that the last bus leaves Apia at 2.30pm. Alternatively, a seat on the airport shuttle that primarily services guests of Aggie Grey's Hotel can be organised through **Samoa Scenic Tours** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22880; Aggie Grey's Hotel, Beach Rd), which has a desk down the stairs from the hotel's reception. Tickets (ST15) must be prebooked and the shuttle picks up from any central Apia hotel. This shuttle does not meet incoming flights and won't service flights departing for American Samoa unless there are at least three passengers. Taxis between Apia and Faleolo Airport cost ST40 each way.

Taxis in Apia are cheap and plentiful. Most trips around downtown cost between ST2 and ST3.

# THE CROSS ISLAND ROAD

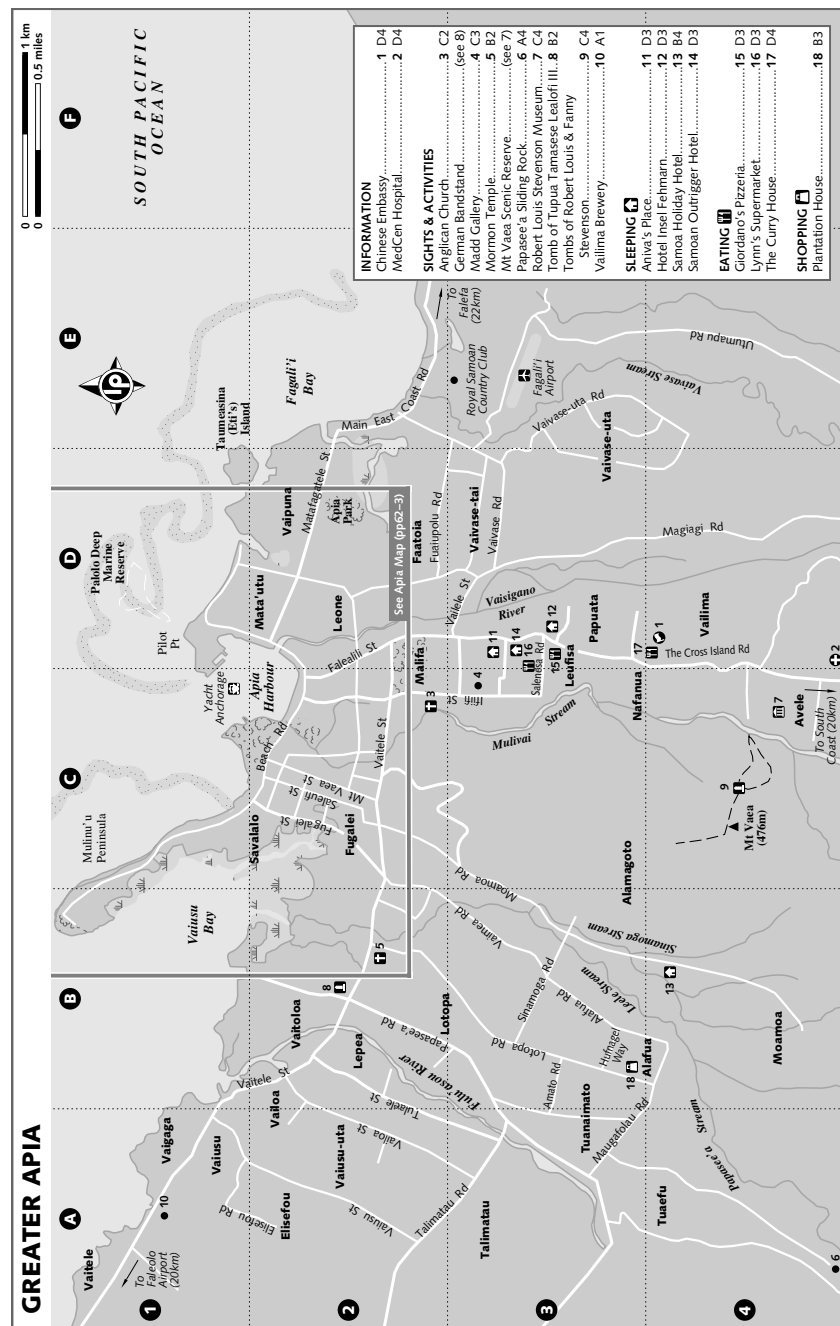
The main road that leads from Apia in the north to Si'uimu in the south is one of 'Upolu's three cross-island roads. It links the Samoan capital with several key attractions, including the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum and mysterious Lake Lanoto'o.

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON MUSEUM & MOUNT VAEA SCENIC RESERVE

Only a short drive inland from Apia is the **Robert Louis Stevenson Museum** (Map p75; ☎ 20798; adult/child ST15/5; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat), set in the famous Scottish author's beautifully restored former residence, Villa Vailima. Stevenson spent the last four years of his life here and after he died, Vailima was occupied in turn by a wealthy German philanthropist, a Kiwi official during the New Zealand administration and then, after Samoan independence, by the country's head of state. This fine mansion, which now sports a creamy paint job but was originally painted peacock blue, opened as a museum in 1994 on the centenary of Stevenson's death. From the benches on the front porch you look across a vast expanse of lawn to a low horizon of manicured plants, below which is the ocean. It's a fascinating, wonderfully restful place.

Guided tours last 30 to 45 minutes and begin when enough people arrive. While strolling around on polished wooden floors you'll see a collection of early musical instruments, including a Gem roller organ that still works; the Smoking Room, papered in a beautiful copy of the original *siapo* wallpaper and complete with a rather redundant fireplace Stevenson installed to remind him of home; the author's library and bedroom, where some of his favourite books and his own original editions are displayed; and his wife Fanny's bedroom, lined with polished Californian redwood.

Stevenson and Fanny are buried in the adjacent **Mount Vaea Scenic Reserve** (Map p75; admission free), the central feature of which overlooks Apia and the surrounding mountains. To get to the tombs, which are on a plateau just below the summit, take the path on the western side of the house (the guide



### HERE HE LIES WHERE HE LONGED TO BE

In December 1889 the already famous Scottish author and poet Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson and his wife Fanny Osborne arrived in Apia aboard the schooner *Equator*. Stevenson had left Europe in search of relief from worsening tuberculosis and the general sickness that had plagued him all his life. He was enchanted by Samoa and in 1890 he paid £200 for 126 hectares of land in the hills above Apia.

Stevenson's health improved and, with his family, he set sail for Australia. However, he became ill again in Sydney and it was decided that the climate of Samoa would be much better for him. The Stevenson family returned to Apia in September 1890 and constructed Vailima, the grandest home ever seen on the island. They imported furniture from Stevenson's native Scotland and dressed their Samoan employees in *lava-lava* patterned with the Stuart tartan.

In the 1890s, during the period of strife in Samoa between Britain, the USA and Germany, Stevenson became an activist for Samoan rights, maintaining that the people should be left to determine their own destiny in accordance with their customs. Most Europeans there would have liked to see him deported at the time, but this would have been very unpopular indeed; Stevenson came to be loved by the Samoans for his friendliness towards them and his ability to entertain with stories. They respectfully and affectionately referred to him as *Tusitala* (Teller of Tales).

On 3 December 1894 Stevenson died of a stroke at Vailima. When the Samoan chief Tu'imalaali'ifano spoke of Stevenson's death, he echoed the sentiments of many Samoans: '*Talofa e i lo matou Tusitala. Ua tagi le fatu ma le 'ele'ele*,' he said. ('Our beloved *Tusitala*. The stones and the earth weep.') Just two months before his death, in gratitude for his kindness to them, a delegation of Samoan chiefs had arranged for a hand-dug road to be made between Apia and Vailima, which they called O Le Ala O Le Alofa, the Road of the Loving Heart.

Stevenson had stipulated that he wished to be buried at the top of Mt Vaea, part of the Vailima estate. And so, after a Christian burial service, the coffin was laid on a base of coral and volcanic pebbles and the grave lined with black stones, a practice normally reserved for Samoan royalty. His epitaph reads:

Under the wide and starry sky,  
Dig the grave and let me lie,  
Glad did I live and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:  
Here he lies where he longed to be;  
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.

Fanny, who was known as *Aolele* (Floating Cloud) by the Samoans, stayed on for a while in Samoa but died in California in 1914. In her will she requested that her ashes be taken to Mt Vaea and buried beside her husband's. Her epitaph, also composed by Stevenson, reads:

Teacher, tender comrade, wife,  
A fellow farer, true through life,  
Heart whole and soul free,  
The august father gave to me.

will point it out) and turn left at the first intersection of trails. After a short, steep climb this path forks into two new paths: the righthand trail is the shortest route to the mountain top (30 minutes), entailing an extremely steep and slippery climb, while

the lefthand trail is slightly longer (45 minutes) and less taxing. Even if you don't visit the tombs, take some time to wander the reserve where you'll hear only the sounds of insects, birds and the odd Apia church bell.

A taxi from Apia to Vailima should cost ST6. To go by bus (ST1.20), take the Vaoala or Siumu bus.

### BAHÁ'Í HOUSE OF WORSHIP

Near the highest point of The Cross Island Rd is the elegant 19m-high tiled dome of the **Bahá'í House of Worship** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 24192; 📍 information centre 6am-6pm). Designed by Iranian Husain Amanat and dedicated in 1984, this beautiful structure is one of only eight Bahá'í houses of worship in the world. All these buildings are architecturally different except for the fact that all are domed and have nine sides and entrances, which reflects the faith's central tenet of a basic unity of religions and peoples under one 'Creator'.

The Bahá'í faith, which has no professional clergy or priesthood, originated in Persia in 1844. Services are held on Sunday at 10am and consist of prayers, meditations and readings from the scriptures of the faith, as well as from other religions.

Visitors are welcome and attendants in the adjoining information centre will happily answer any questions. Nature lovers will appreciate the beautifully manicured gardens, criss-crossed by paths lined with pink tea plants.

A taxi from Apia will cost around ST14.

### TIAPAPATA ART CENTRE

Signposted off the main road just south of the Bahá'í House of Worship is located the lovely **Tiapapata Art Centre** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 23524, 29272; perival@lesamoa.net; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri). The accomplished artists responsible for the two small rooms of purchasable ceramics, paintings and prints live right next door and will pop out to greet visitors. Excellent art workshops for children are usually held two afternoons a week; call ahead for exact times. The two-hour lessons costs ST15 which includes all materials, but there's an extra charge (rarely more than ST10) for using the oven due to the high cost of electricity. Adults get their two-hours lessons (ST20) in things such as pottery and *siapo* making two mornings a week.

The road in is very bumpy but you can exit along a smoother road running alongside the Bahá'í House of Worship. A taxi from Apia will cost around ST15.

### LAKE LANOTO'O

Lake Lanoto'o is an eerie, pea-green crater lake in the central highlands and makes for an adventurous excursion. It's full of wild goldfish which locals used to collect as pets until the government banned it, and so is also known as Goldfish Lake. During the German occupation a basic resort was established here and in 1919 local traders suggested that a road be built to the lake to allow easy access for holiday-makers, but proponents of 'controlled tourism' prevented such development. The Samoan government has proposed creating a national park around the lake, but this is yet to be formalised.

The lake is an excellent place for a swim but also a little spooky because of alternating warm and cold currents. The trail leading in to the lake from the car park – located 3km along a very rough road branching off The Cross Island Rd – is steep, overgrown and slippery, and forks and multiplies the further in you get. We heard of more than a few hikers getting lost trying to find the lake. For these reasons, walkers are strongly advised to hire a guide. A dependable and knowledgeable outfit is **SamoanOnFoot** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 21529, 25416; samoanfoot@hotmail.com), which organises half-day trips to the lake (ST55, including gumbboot hire).

### PAPAPAPAI-TAI FALLS

About 3.5km south of the Bahá'í House of Worship is the parking area for **Papapapai-tai Falls** (Map pp58-9; 🕒 9.30am-4pm Tue-Sat). It's only a few steps to the lookout for this spectacular 100m waterfall that plunges into a dramatic, forested gorge.

## NORTHEASTERN 'UPOLU

The northeastern corner of 'Upolu contains one of the island's wildest, least-visited areas: the Uafato Conservation Area. On the way there, stop off to refresh yourself at Fatumea Pool or to overnight in some splendidly isolated *fale*.

### UAFATO CONSERVATION AREA

The Uafato region is blessed with some magnificent scenery. A rough track follows the rugged coastline as far as the picturesque village of **Uafato**, where 14 sq km of the

surrounding rainforest and coastal waters have been declared a conservation area. This is one of the few remaining areas in Samoa where an intact band of rainforest stretches from the sea to the interior uplands. The area also contains a rare stand of *ifilele* (the tree used for carving 'ava bowls), as well as many bat and bird species, including the rare *manumea* (tooth-billed pigeon). **Traditional carvers** live in Uafato and are usually willing to demonstrate their art to visitors.

You can take a 15km guided walk (ST90) around Fagaloa Bay with **SamoaOnFoot** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 21529, 25416; samoaonfoot@hotmail.com). Pay a bit more to include a wood-carving and 'ava session in Uafato in this tour (ST120).

Although there's no formal accommodation at Uafato, it may be possible to stay here overnight. Ask to speak to the *pulenu'u* (mayor) when you arrive, or contact Samoa-OnFoot about the possibility of tying in an overnight stay with one of their tours.

You can reach Uafato via the rough track that winds all the way around Fagaloa Bay – the turn-off is at the powerful Falefa Falls. This track offers beautiful views through the rainforest down to the sea, but we wouldn't advise going past Saletele without a high-clearance vehicle. Another option is the road (4WD only, about 10km) signposted off Le Mafa Pass Rd to the village of Ta'elefaga.

## FATUEA POOL

Also known as Piula Cave Pool, **Fatuea Pool** (Main East Coast Rd; admission ST2; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat) lies beneath Piula Methodist Theological College. It's a wonderful spot to spend a few hours picnicking, swimming in the clear springs and exploring the water-filled caves.

This freshwater pool is separated from salt water by black lava rock. At the rear of the first cave you'll be able to see light through the wall under the water. A 3m swim through the opening will take you to the second cave pool. If you don't fancy a James Bond-type swim, the opening to the second cave is about 20m northeast of the first cave. Beware when you climb down into the second cave: there's a moss-covered concrete platform that gets very slippery.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Albatross Hideout** (☎ 40375; Saoluafata; fale per person ST30, r ST70) This excellent accommodation in Saoluafata is easy to miss – look for the

sign reading 'Dal Mart' on its top half. It has five modern *fale* equipped with lighting and decks that jut out over a lovely shallow bay, or you can stay in a pleasant room in the main house. Tiny Albatross Island is only a short wade away. The onsite restaurant (breakfast ST10, lunch & dinner ST18-45; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) does yummy soups and Thai-style curries, served direct to your *fale*.

**Silirosa Beach Huts** (☎ 40656; Lauli'i; r per person ST30) Set up by a former minister for the sheer love of it, this is an overgrown little beachfront sanctuary that will suit self-sufficient travellers. It has a couple of cheerfully ramshackle huts that have been cobbled together from driftwood and other odds and ends but will keep you snug and dry. You can cook your own food on a wood stove, surf some convenient offshore breaks and learn traditional weaving.

**Saoluafata Beach Fales** (☎ 778 0769; Saoluafata; fale & r per person from ST50) The *fale* here are a little the worse for wear but are slowly being revamped, and you can also hire a room in the family house. Prices include breakfast and dinner. Guests access the beach for free but day trippers pay ST2.

## NORTHWESTERN 'UPOLU

There are a couple of worthwhile attractions between Apia and Faleolo Airport, namely some very slippery rocks and a site that's regarded as a national monument by thirsty Samoans.

## PAPASEE'A SLIDING ROCK

A trip to the **Papasee'a Sliding Rock** (Map p75; off Maugafolau Rd; adult/child ST2/1; ☎ 6am-6pm), accessed via 200-odd steep and slippery stone steps, is obligatory for every visitor to Apia. The ritual involves a 5m slide down a waterfall into a jungle pool. If the big slide puts you off, there are three smaller ones to choose from. The best time to visit is between December and June; at other times the water levels may be low and the slide not as fun (or safe).

To get to the rock, take the Se'ese'e bus (ST1.30) from the Maketi Fou and ask to be dropped off at the turnoff for Papasee'a.

## VAILIMA BREWERY

Several million litres of the national beer, Vailima, are brewed by **Samoa Breweries** (Map p75; ☎ 20200, 20201; www.vailima.ws; Main West Coast Rd) annually. The brewery opened in 1978 and is now owned by Carlton & United Breweries. Free one- to two-hour tours of the brewing operation are run at 9.30am Tuesday and Thursday. Just turn up at reception, which is in the low white building to the right of the entry gate. Wear enclosed shoes.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Aggie Grey's Lagoon & Beach Resort** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 22880; www.aggiegreys.com; Main West Coast Rd; s/d/ste US\$180/190/400; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This new addition to the Aggie Grey empire occupies a 90-hectare plot of land. At the time of research it had over 140 rooms, with more still to be added. Practice your swing on an 18-hole golf course, play tennis, go snorkelling and watch planes swoop overhead on their way to the nearby airport. It's already a favourite of package tours and lavish weddings.

**Airport Lodge** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 45584; www.samoaho.tels.ws/airportlodge.htm; Main West Coast Rd; s ST110-140, d ST125-170; ☎) The plane-shaped sign in mid-take off out front is a dead giveaway for Airport Lodge, which occupies a pleasant site opposite the ocean. Its bungalows have plain décor but admit plenty of sunlight, and each comes with an en suite and small outdoor deck. You can order breakfast (ST18) and a set-menu communal dinner (ST35).

**Samoan Village Resorts** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 46028; www.samoanvillageresorts.com; Main West Coast Rd; fale d from US\$125; ☎) This was being upgraded at the time of research, with new *fale* being built, the bar area being revamped and a Chinese restaurant being established, all of which should be ready by the time you read this. Its location on Cape Fatuosofia provides good ocean views, but the swimming and snorkelling here isn't great.

## SOUTH COAST & SURROUNDS

Along with the Aleipata Islands district and Manono, the south coast of 'Upolu offers plenty of beautiful palm-fringed beaches where it wouldn't be difficult to pass a week or two in sandy bliss. The region's

hinterland has some stunning waterfalls and waterholes to visit, as well as the rugged environs of Samoa's sole national park.

## SOUTH COAST BEACHES & REEFS

At Lefaga village is the idyllic **Return to Paradise Beach** (day access per person/bicycle/car ST2/3/10; ☎ Mon-Sat), made famous in the 1951 Gary Cooper film based on the James Michener novel, *Return to Paradise*. While the setting lives up to its name, the beach isn't ideal for swimming due to shallow reefs, volcanic boulders and heavy surf. It's a popular spot for Saturday barbecues and has toilets and showers.

Follow the narrow, winding and quite beautiful road west from Return to Paradise Beach to the sizeable settlement of **Falelatai**. At times you'll be hemmed in by village life, while the final descent into Falelatai yields superb views of the reefs and waters off 'Upolu's western nub.

Down a 3km access road east of Return to Paradise Beach is **Matareva** (day access person/bicycle/car ST2/3/10), a series of delightful coves with safe, shallow snorkelling areas and lots of rock pools to explore. A few kilometres east of Matareva is beautiful **Salamumu Beach** (day access bicycle/car ST3/6; ☎ Mon-Sat), reached via a potholed 5.5km track.

About 15km further east is **Aganoa Black Sand Beach** (day access car ST5). Unlike most 'Upolu beaches, the water here is deep enough for swimming. There is also a popular surf break called **Boulders**, just off Cape Niuafo'i. The very rough 3km track to Aganoa isn't signposted off the main road. The turn-off (opposite a blue house) is 150m east of the one-lane stone bridge in Sa'agafou. Sand Beach is a 10-minute walk east of where this track terminates; locals told us to just ignore the 'Private Property' sign.

Accessed from the village of Tafatafa to the east of O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park is **Vaiula Beach**, which has a good surf break and a castaway feel. Experienced board riders can go day surfing at **Salani Surf Resort** (p81); the ST150 fee covers guided surfing and a buffet lunch.

**Liquid Motion** (☎ 64381; www.liquidmotion.ws), based at Sinalei Reef Resort (p82), does various south-coast dives (ST150 for one dive, ST120 for each of one to five dives) and offers four- to five-day PADI courses (ST1200). Another recommended diving outfit is **AquaSamoa** (☎ 23805; www.aqua

samoa.com), based at Coconuts Beach Club & Resort (p82).

## SATAOA & SA'ANAPU CONSERVATION AREA

In an effort to preserve one of 'Upolu's most important coastal wetland areas, the mangrove forests around the villages of Sataoa and Sa'anapu were declared a conservation area. Mangroves provide a vital habitat for the breeding of fish and crabs, they help to keep erosion in check and the leaves and bark are used in traditional medicine.

At **Sataoa** there's a **nature trail** (per person ST5) but it's just a rough car track that skirts the mangroves before terminating at some wind-blown *fale*. A better option is to stop at Lanu's Beach Fales (see p83) and ask about organising a 90-minute **outrigger canoe trip** (per person ST20) through the mangroves.

Off the potholed road to **Sa'anapu** is a better **nature trail** (per car/motorcycle ST5/2), consisting of a boardwalk that winds through the mangroves for several kilometres. It begins at the sign detailing the car and motorcycle toll.

## O LE PUPU-PU'E NATIONAL PARK

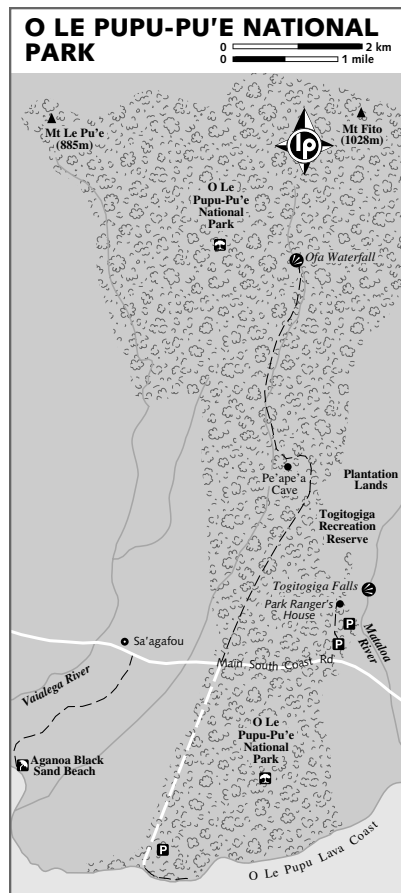
The name of Samoa's only national park, the 29-sq-km **O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park** (☎ 6am-6pm), means 'From the Coast to the Mountain Top'. Created in 1978, the park's northern boundary is formed by a ridge between the volcanic 885m Mt Le Pu'e and 1028m Mt Fito, which is the island's highest peak. In the south is the rugged O Le Pupu Lava Coast. The park entrance is near the Togitogiga Recreation Reserve (opposite), which lies just outside the park to the east. The information building at the entrance has been closed for some time. A ranger lives onsite and usually appears when visitors arrive.

A hiking trail begins opposite the side road to O Le Pupu Lava Coast and heads through thick rainforest to **Pe'ape'a Cave** (six hours return). This large, pit-like cave (actually a lava tube) is full of circling *pe'ape'a* (swiftlets). You can explore the cave with a torch, but be careful climbing into the pit over mossy, slippery rocks. This walk is only recommended for people with hiking experience.

It's possible to continue beyond the cave to **Ofa Waterfall** (three days return). This track is infrequently tackled by government

scientists and is usually heavily overgrown, so a guide is advisable. If you're interested in doing this trek, visit the resource centre at the **Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 23800; Beach Rd) office beside the New Zealand High Commission in Apia.

At the park's western boundary, a rough 3.5km **track** (☎ 6am-6pm) leads south from the main road to the magnificently rugged **O Le Pupu Lava Coast**. From the car park, a rock-strewn path heads east through coastal rainforest and along the coast. Go at least as far as the first lookout to see the sheer cliffs with their melted patterns of ancient lava flows, and the enormous waves that thump against them.



**SamoaOnFoot** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 21529, 25416; samoaonfoot@hotmail.com) conducts a day tour of O Le Pupu-Pu'e (ST80) that includes a two-hour walk to Pe'ape'a Cave and a swim at Togitogiga Falls.

## TOGITOGIGA FALLS & RECREATION RESERVE

The tongue-twisting **Togitogiga Recreation Reserve** (☎ 6am-6pm), with its gentle waterfalls, lies just east of O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park. The reserve entrance is the same as for the national park; just drive on to the second parking area. Several levels of falls are separated by pools, all great for a cool swim, and the surrounding grounds make a gorgeous place for a picnic. The facilities here have deteriorated due to a lack of funding, however, and even the toilet block was boarded up when we visited.

## SOPO'AGA FALLS

Just south of the turn-off to the Main South Coast Rd are the lovely, 54m-high **Sopo'aga Falls** (Le Mafa Pass Rd; adult/child ST3/free). The lookout to the waterfall and its immense gorge is accessed through a garden replete with tropical plants such as Indian mulberry, pineapple and *'ava*, all accompanied by signs detailing their Samoan, English and scientific names. Some traditional artefacts are also on display, including drums and an *umukuka* (cooking house). There's an honesty box for when the attendant's house is unattended.

## FUIPIISIA FALLS

A few kilometres north of Sopo'aga Falls is the 350m trail to **Fupisia Falls** (Le Mafa Pass Rd; admission ST10; ☎ 8am-dusk), a 55m plunge off the Mulivaifagatola River. Standing on top of the falls is a heady, worthwhile experience. But the standard fee levied by the property owner to 'guide' you the short distance to the falls is way too high and we suggest you discourage such overcharging by negotiating a fairer price (around ST4).

## TO SUA OCEAN TRENCH

The short, bumpy track to the fabulous **To Sua Ocean Trench** (South Coast Rd; adult/child ST4/2; ☎ 8am-5pm) is marked by a faded sign that's easy to miss if you're travelling westwards, due to the way it's angled. The trench consists of a pair of huge sunken waterholes

connected by a short rocky tunnel, all of it swept by an ocean current that enters through an underwater passageway. A 15m rope ladder allows you to descend into the southernmost waterhole, where you can gaze up at the sky far above the hole's rocky lip while letting the tenacious ocean current swirl you around – it's a magical experience.

Be warned, however, that most of the rope ladder swings freely because it's unattached to the rock face and so can be very difficult to ascend. We heard of several travellers who got stuck and needed help to climb back up. So don't enter the waterhole (certainly not without help at hand) unless you're absolutely sure you can climb out. Some travellers have also been encouraged by locals to swim out to the ocean through the underwater passage, but this is an extremely dangerous proposition and you'd be well advised not to try it.

Beyond the waterholes is a short track leading to views of the area's superb coastal cliffs, including an energetic blowhole.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Virgin Cove Resort** (☎ 777 5000; http://www.virgin-cove.ws/; Sa'anapu; *fale* per person ST70-90) If you turn right once you reach the beach at Sa'anapu, you'll soon find this superb resort. It has purpose-built *fale* strung out along a beautiful, gentle beach, disturbed only by fluttering herons, and uses ecologically friendly composting toilets and solar power. Prices include breakfast and dinner on the balcony of the main house, the latter accompanied by traditional Samoan music. Vegetarians can request nonmeat meals. Guided walks (ST10) are conducted from here along Sa'anapu's mangrove boardwalk.

**Salani Surf Resort** (☎ 41069; www.surfsamoa.com; Salani; surf package ST350, nonsurfer package ST275, B&B d ST150; ☎) This excellent resort's enclosed *fale*, each fan-cooled and with a private deck and two single beds (bathrooms are shared), is located at the mouth of the Fuipeia River. *Fale* numbers 4 and 5 look out beyond the river mouth to where a pair of reef breaks entertain surfing guests. Only very experienced surfers can book in (stitches and broken boards are regular occurrences here) and numbers are limited to 12 guests. Surf packages include transfers, accommodation, meals, tours and guided

surfing. Nonsurfers can also sample the friendly, laidback atmosphere here, though their package only includes accommodation and meals. Samoan culture is emphasised at the resort, hence no surfing on Sunday.

**Sinalei Reef Resort** (☎ 25191; www.sinalei.com; off South Coast Rd; r US\$190-600; 🏠 📺 📶 🚰) This elegant adult retreat (children under 12 are not admitted) is spread out over 13 landscaped hectares. The refreshing swimming pool is complemented by tennis courts, a golf course, a Wednesday-night *fiafia* (ST65 for dinner and show) and a Saturday *umu* feast (ST40). Accommodation is in modern, porch-fronted units. The 'Garden View' unit is a comfy affair with an open-air bathroom; try for one opposite the pool. The most expensive units have superb sea views. Sinalei's **restaurant** (lunch ST18-30, dinner ST25-50; 🍷 lunch & dinner; 🚫), also open to nonguests, has an eclectic menu of seafood paella, Thai curries, pizzas and large burgers.

**Vava'u Beach Fales** (☎ 41306; Vava'u; fale ST180, extra adult/child ST20/10; 🚫) These upmarket enclosed *fale* are on an idyllic plot of land off serene Vava'u Beach. Each *fale* sleeps up to five people and has its own en suite, porch and views to the beach on one side and to a well-tended garden on the other. Ask for a *fale* at the property's western end, where the beach is shielded by a nearby islet. The varied menu of the onsite **restaurant** (mains ST14-28; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) includes chicken stir-fry and Polynesian *oka* (marinated raw fish).

**Maninoa Surf Camp** (☎ 31200; off South Coast Rd; fale per person ST70) Squeezed in between Sinalei Reef Resort and Coconuts is this modest surfie's haunt, a good option for a cheap sleep. Accommodation is in simple enclosed *fale* and prices include breakfast and dinner. There's a solitary pool table in a small shed, but thirsts can only be quenched at one of the neighbouring resort bars. Guided surfing trips (ST20 to ST40) can be arranged by telephoning ☎ 31175.

**Tautua & Sauaso Hunt's Fale** (☎ 778 3186, 779 6056; Aganoa Black Sand Beach; fale per person ST60) Travellers seeking isolation or surfers treating themselves to some waves at Boulders can consider sleeping at Aganoa Black Sand Beach. The sole *fale* here contains a couple of beds and a mattress and is run by a friendly family. The price includes all meals. For directions on how to get here, see p79.

**Matareva Beach Fales** (☎ 35139; Matareva Beach; fale per person ST40, with all meals ST70) The water off Matareva Beach is a beautiful turquoise colour and numerous rock pools line a serene swimming area, so it's a great spot to overnight. These attributes also make the beach very popular with locals. The accommodation prices we were quoted seem unusually high; try to negotiate a more reasonable fee. A shop here sells basic meals.

**Sa'moana Resort** (☎ 777 1460; www.samoanareort.com; Salamumu Beach; 7-day all-inclusive package per person per night from US\$115; 🏠 📺 📶 🚰) This splendid resort is on lovely Salamumu Beach. When you're not resting inside one of the A-frame bungalows, you can stroll into the large lounge to play pool, watch DVDs or fix yourself a drink. There's also a superb beachside saltwater pool and guided surfing trips can be organised. Children are well catered for. All the food is deliciously fresh, some of it imported from New Zealand. There are no walk-in bookings; book package in advance through their website.

**Coconuts Beach Club & Resort** (☎ 24849; www.coconutsbeachclub.com; Maninoa; r US\$200-300; 🏠 📺 📶 🚰) Cool your heels at this relaxed resort. Those feeling active should head for the pool-side *fale* to hire kayaks (guests/nonguests ST10/15) and surfboards (ST15/25) but, surprisingly, not snorkels. Inactive types should jump in the pool and point themselves towards the swim-up bar. There's a free Saturday night *fiafia*; book in advance. Accommodation includes beachside bungalows, over-the-water *fale* and balcony-equipped tree house rooms. Large *'matai'* *fale* were being built to accommodate families when we visited. Sieni's 3-Stool Bar & Restaurant (breakfast ST15-25, lunch ST22-30, dinner ST35-45; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) serves up good food like curried or flambéed *ula* (lobster).

**Amanda's Beach Fales** (☎ 41428; Tafatafa; fale per person ST30, with breakfast & dinner ST40) Amanda's place is on pretty, Vaiula Beach, which the proprietor refers to proprietorially as Amanda's Beach. There are four basic *fale* here, planted among coconut palms that lean out over the sea. The turn-off to the beach is beside the Mormon church in Tafatafa.

**Manuia Wetland Holiday Retreat** (☎ 28934, 779 8606; Sa'anapu; fale per person ST30, with all meals ST70, r ST100) This grouping of no-frills *fale* and self-

contained bungalows is on a sandy, tree-shaded plot east of Sa'anapu, on the way to Virgin Cove. The old-fashioned, fan-cooled bungalows have a couch, electric stove and bathroom, and sleep up to six people (each extra person after the initial two people pays ST50). There are barbecue areas.

**Lanu's Beach Fales** (☎ 24300; Sataoa; fale per person ST70) You'll find a pair of wind-blown but cosy *fale* at the back of the shop in Sataoa with the Coca-Cola sign out front (on the left as you near the beach). One *fale* has a single bed and the other a double mattress, and the price includes all meals.

## ALEIPATA DISTRICT

The reefs in the Aleipata district at the easternmost end of the island are 50m or so offshore, and the water is a remarkable turquoise blue, making for the loveliest beaches and the best swimming on 'Upolu. The centrepiece beach is Lalomanu, where several accommodation options shoulder each other on the crisp sand.

### ALEIPATA BEACHES & REEFS

The snorkelling at Aleipata is excellent due to a remarkably well preserved reef system, but beware the numerous cone shells found here. Some are mildly poisonous, but the most beautiful ones can be deadly. Also beware the strong currents that prevail at high tide. Beautiful **Lalomanu** is where most travellers flop onto the sand. Other beaches in the district such as **Saleapaga** aren't quite as inviting as Lalomanu but are still very attractive. This area is overflowing with beach *fale*, particularly around Lalomanu and further west at Saleapaga.

The offshore islands **Nu'utele** and **Nu'ulua** also offer good snorkelling. Part of the **Aleipata Islands Conservation Area**, the islands are important sea-bird nesting grounds. Nu'utele served as a leper colony from 1916 to 1918, when the residents were relocated to Fiji.

**Moanalei Dive 'n' Surf** (☎ 777 7216), based at Taufua Beach Fales (right), conducts guided surfing (from ST50) and diving (from ST195) trips along 'Upolu's southeastern coast. Dive sites include Namu'a Island and 'Turtle Minefield', so named because of the high numbers of sea turtles consistently seen there.

The bus ride from Apia to either Lalomanu (ST4) or A'ufaga (ST4) can take up to 90 minutes.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Litia Sini's Beach Resort** (☎ 41050, 41388; www.litia.sinibeach.ws; South Coast Rd, Lalomanu; fale per person ST70; 📺) This superb place on pristine Lalomanu Beach has 17 enclosed *fale*, each with their own small deck and plenty of privacy. The beachside bar has an outside deck that's perfect for an evening guzzle, and you can hire snorkel gear (ST15, ST50 deposit) to investigate the offshore coral. Rates include breakfast and dinner, and the onsite **restaurant** (meals ST12-20) cooks up basic lunches.

**Namu'a Island Beach Fales** (☎ 20566; namuaisland@hotmail.com; Namu'a; fale per person ST70) If you think 'Upolu's coastline is soporific, just wait until you sit on the beach of this tiny, inactive island. The seven beachfront *fale* are rudimentary but sturdy, and prices include all meals. Ask for one facing west, as those facing north bear the brunt of incoming wind. A steep, slippery track scales Namu'a's small peak (25 minutes), at the top of which a side trail (to the left) yields a spectacular vista of another offshore island and adjoining reef, and you can circumnavigate the island at low tide. You are run across by boat from Mutiatele, where you can have your car minded (ST10).

**Taufua Beach Fales** (☎ 41051; South Coast Rd, Lalomanu; fale per person ST55-60) This place offers good-standard accommodation beside Litia Sini's Beach Resort on wonderful Lalomanu Beach. Choose between a knot of enclosed *fale* and slightly cheaper open *fale* that sit closer to the water. The deck of the main building is a sociable gathering place at meal-times. Prices include breakfast and dinner.

**Faofao Beach Fales** (☎ 41067; South Coast Rd, Lepa; fale per person ST20) Faofao is a truly hospitable, family-run place 1km west of Boomerang Creek Resort. It has a large clutch of basic *fale* on the beach, plus a hall across the road where Vailima and meals are served (breakfast ST10, lunch and dinner ST15) and a *fiafia* is held on Saturday night (guests/nonguests free/ST30).

**Boomerang Creek Resort** (☎ 40358; www.boomerangcreek.ws; South Coast Rd, Saleapaga; fale s ST25-50, d ST40-75) This inviting resort offers a choice between appealingly private hillside *fale*, set

up on landscaped terraces with a backdrop of spectacular verdant cliffs, or more expensive beachside *fale*. All *fale* are fan-cooled and prices include breakfast. The resort's **Kangarama Restaurant** (meals ST10-40; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner), which is occasionally swamped by tour groups, favours fried food like burgers but also dishes up seafood and vegetarian meals. You can also hire snorkels (ST5), get a Samoan massage (ST20), organise a day-long fishing trip (from ST600) and attend the Saturday-night *fiafia* (ST10/30 without/with food).

Other options:

**Matamatagi Motel** (☎ 47155, 47098; South Coast Rd, Satitua; r ST80-100) Located opposite a safe swimming beach, this new motel wasn't yet open when we visited but will suit those wanting to swap windswept *fale* for a spacious room in an old family home.

**Malo Beach Fales** (☎ 47059; South Coast Rd, Lalomanu; fale per person ST25, with breakfast & dinner ST45) These basic but well-maintained *fale* are at the western end of the crowded Lalomanu strip. The beach is a bit rocky here but it's only a short walk east to smoother sands.

**Le Taalo Beach Fales** (☎ 41231; South Coast Rd, Saleapaga; fale per person ST30, with all meals ST60) This simple, reclusive grouping of *fale* is located on a fairly rough beach about 500m west of Boomerang Creek Resort.

## APOLIMA STRAIT ISLANDS

The tiny islands of Manono and Apolima lie in the strait between 'Upolu and Savai'i. Though both islands have embraced modern conveniences, in many ways they are still well-preserved microcosms of traditional Samoan life and offer a different experience to the main islands.

### MANONO

area 3 sq km / pop 1400

The small island of Manono offers a wonderful respite from some of Samoa's noisier modern-day features, its 3-sq-km mass undisturbed by any cars or dogs. It's not always the peaceful haven it used to be: round-the-clock electricity was delivered here by submarine cable from 'Upolu several years ago and now music blares more frequently from out of local domiciles. But the pace is even slower than that of the main islands (which you wouldn't think was humanly

possible) and it's impossible not to relax while drifting above well-preserved coral in the tranquil surrounding waters.

The people living on Samoa's third-largest island are scattered across four villages and have a semisubsistence lifestyle.

### Sights & Activities

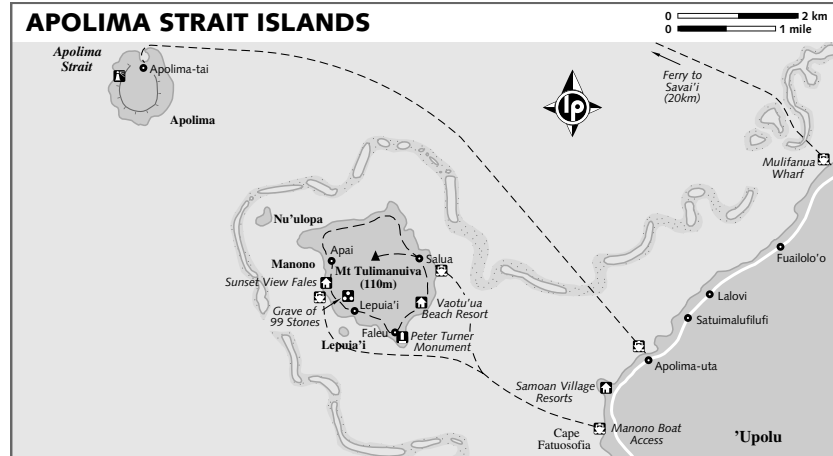
The highlight of a visit to Manono is an early-morning walk around the island, which takes two to 2½ hours. The track circumnavigating the island often resembles a garden path. Sometimes only as wide as a footprint and edged with distinctive yellow *lautalotalo* (crinum lily), banana palms and hibiscus, it winds its way between the sea and the bottom of people's gardens. As you stroll around you'll see kids playing *lafo*, a game in which they compete to be the first to flick a coin into a hole in the dirt, and you may be approached by women selling traditional handicrafts such as *lava-lava* and woven baskets. Unfortunately, you'll also see a fair amount of rubbish lying around, a problem that's widespread in Samoa.

At Lepuia'i is the late-19th-century **Grave of 99 Stones**, a two-tiered edifice of black rocks. The story goes that high chief Vaovasa, who had 99 wives, was killed as he tried to escape from 'Upolu with his 100th wife. A grave was to be built on Manono with 100 stones, but remains unfinished. The large gap in the wall facing the beach was where the final stone was to be placed. Further east at Faleu is the **Peter Turner monument**, a

#### BEHAVING YOURSELF

Manono is a relatively traditional island, though the days when everyone lived in thatched *fale* are long gone and modernity is a growing presence. Nonetheless, visitors are requested to be particularly mindful of accepted village behaviour. Outside the two places to stay, which apply their own 'dress codes', women and men should wear either a *lava-lava* or knee-length shorts, including while swimming.

If you are walking through a village when the bell sounds for *sa* (evening prayer), stop and wait until another bell signals the end of the ritual (about 15 minutes later). Visitors are also requested not to give money or sweets to children.



simple white structure commemorating the 1835 landing of the Methodist missionary on Manono. Also look out for the large **grave** with a muzzled cannon protruding from it, just south of Vaotu'ua Beach Resort.

On top of Mt Tulimanuiva (110m) is a large, 12-pointed **star mound** (see Star Mounds, p116). Nearby is the **grave of Afutiti**, who was buried standing up, to keep watch over the island. The best way up the mountain is via the path (90 minutes to two hours return) behind the women's committee building in Salua.

Guided tours of Manono (ST20) and various other activities, from canoe trips to instruction in traditional weaving and cooking, are offered by both of the island's places to stay. A seven-day sea-kayaking tour that takes in Manono is available with **EcoTour Samoa** (Map pp62-3; ☎ 22144; www.ecotoursamoa.com). It costs US\$190 per day per person.

The surrounding **coral reefs** offer excellent snorkelling opportunities. Bring your own snorkelling gear.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Sunset View Fales** (☎ 45640; Lepuia'i; fale per person ST90) Loquacious Leota runs this cosy accommodation where you stay in cute and colourful waterfront shacks; the two either side of the communal area have the least privacy. Leota will take you out in his boat to snorkel the reef, show you how to make *palusami* in an *umu*, and talk about all aspects of Samoan culture. The price includes all meals.

**Vaotu'ua Beach Resort** (☎ 46077; Faleu; fale per person ST45, with all meals ST90) Comprises a half-dozen open-sided *fale* in a shaded beachside grove fenced in by foliage. Another two *fale* are reserved for the excellent communal meals and a pool table, respectively. The tiled sinks outside the shared showers are a nice touch. Meals can be purchased separately for ST15 each.

All accommodation prices include boat transfers from 'Upolu. There are a few kiosk-type shops in Faleu, including a well-stocked one opposite Vaotu'ua Beach Resort.

### Getting There & Away

To visit Manono, head for the jetty at Cape Fatusofia, just south of Samoan Village Resorts. To charter a boat for a return day trip should cost ST40 for the entire boat. Make sure to confirm which village you'll be picked up from.

Buses marked 'Manono-uta' or 'Falelatai' (ST2) will take you to the jetty from Apia. A taxi will cost ST42.

### APOLIMA

area 1 sq km / pop 100

The minuscule island of Apolima looks impressive from a distance, but just wait until you see this lush gem close up. Apolima is the remnant of a volcanic crater and lies outside the reef encircling 'Upolu and Manono, which means sometimes braving sizeable swells to get there. It meets the sea in high, steep cliffs that are unbroken

**HOSPITALITY, SAMOAN STYLE** *Paul Smitz*

My trip out to tiny Apolima was a memorable lesson in how Samoa's big-hearted hospitality is entwined with uniquely local conceptions of time and comfort.

To begin with, it was agreed that my boat ride from Apolima-uta would depart around 10am. I dutifully turned up at 9.50am, and then sat on the back porch of the house attached to the village store for the next six hours until someone finally appeared to usher me down to the dock. This was not considered unusual – departure times in Samoa rely more on circumstance than on a clock.

While sitting in the small boat as it motored across a becalmed Apolima Strait, the boatman asked me how I was going to get back to 'Upolu the next day (a Sunday). I replied that I'd been told this would be no problem. He laughed – an infectious ho-ho-hoing that quickly spread among the other passengers – and told me that no boats sailed on Sunday, and that I probably wouldn't be able to get a ride until late on Monday afternoon, if not Tuesday.

Samoans 1, painstakingly planned itinerary 0. Ho ho indeed.

After hearing the mellifluous church choir practice that night, I was keen to get up early the following morning to have the full Sunday church experience. I'd neglected to bring suitable clothes for the occasion (a dirt-streaked t-shirt and battered shorts fell far short of the minimum requirement), but a donor was soon located. I strode into church awash in a Samoan-size collared shirt and equally enormous *lava-lava* and settled happily on a pew to listen to beautiful harmonies and the preachings of a Barry White-sized pastor.

Church services were followed by the *to'ona'i*, the traditional Sunday lunch. As I'd found out the previous night, the Samoan mealtime means being buried alive in an avalanche of baked bananas and taro, *palusami*, stews, baked fish, coconut juice and pretty much every other edible substance within reach. It's customary for a guest to be served first and for the family to have the 'leftovers', and so I sat at a large table on my own, trying to make a respectable dent in the food around me. As I lay gurgling on the floor of a *fale* a short while later, my stomach the size of a tethered airship, one of my hosts walked up and announced that a boat had been organised to take me back across the Strait that day. She cheerfully added that it would leave in 10 minutes.

Feeling queasy with anticipation, I hefted my stomach down to the beach and climbed on a rocking boat, absolutely convinced that the motion of the vessel would have me redistributing my lunch within seconds of setting off. Surprisingly, I made it back to 'Upolu without losing my lunch or my pride, though with a much better understanding of the idiosyncrasies of Samoan generosity.

except for a single gap in the north. Sailing through the narrow heads and into the crater, right up to Apolima's only beach, makes a dramatic introduction to the island.

The name of the island is said to be derived from Apo i le Lima, meaning 'Poised in the Hand', in reference to the spear used by a prince to kill his brother. The wound the spear caused is the aforementioned crater entrance, which shelters the village and its harbour.

Someone will offer to guide you through overgrown backyards to the old, steep steps leading up to a small **lighthouse**. The view from here is simply spectacular. In the afternoon you might also take part in a game of volleyball. (Sporty types take note: these guys are good.)

If you're there on a Saturday, ask to go along to **choir practice** that night to hear wonderful voices echoing in harmony around a timber-roofed church. Another highlight is attending Sunday-morning **church services**, when parishioners are ablaze in white. You'll need to dress up for the occasion.

To visit Apolima, it's best to receive an invitation from a resident of the island. Drop into the shop in Apolima-uta with the Western Union sign out front, beside the primary school, and ask to speak to Sofia. There are no guarantees, but she may contact an islander on your behalf to arrange a visit – we stayed with Fipi and Puluseu, who provided great hospitality. Boats to the island depart from the wharf behind this shop. Accommodation providers on nearby

Manono (see p85) may also be able to arrange a visit.

To stay and be fed on Apolima should cost around ST50 per person per night. It is also much appreciated if you bring some food as a gift for the host family; about ST20 worth of chicken is a reliable

choice. You should confirm that the cost of the return boat trip is included in the agreed price. If a boat has to be organised expressly for you (such as on Sunday, when Apolima's boats are normally high and dry on the beach) it will cost ST150 for a one-way trip.

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