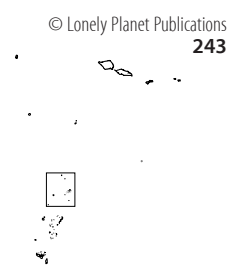


# Vava'u Group



To really experience Vava'u, you have to get out on the water. Picturesque at every turn, stunning, uncrowded stretches of white sand appear like the swathe of an artist's brush skimming through an aquamarine palette before plunging into an inky blue abyss.

Regarded as one of the world's great sailing locations, this tranquil island group is fringed with vibrant coral reefs, offering myriad channels, deep waterways and secluded anchorages, along with one of the South Pacific's most protected harbours, the Port of Refuge. On other islands, sheer basalt cliffs drop 30m into the water, some pock-marked by caves accessible only via boat, or in the case of concealed Mariner's Cave, by diving beneath the water's surface.

The many protected coves and caverns provide exquisite diving sites, and there are plenty of vibrant heads of coral immersed in a tropical fish soup to explore. Sea-kayaking, mountain biking, bushwalking, impressive game-fishing, surfing and even abseiling into caves are possible here. Uniqueness joins beauty in the humpback breeding season, when dedicated whale-watching outfits organise swims with these awe-inspiring giants.

Neiafu is home to a third of Vava'u's people – along with restaurants, bars and a Friday yacht race – and is the only place with any bustle. On Sundays the town is empty and quiet, aside from the uplifting singing emanating from churches. Outside Neiafu, the rest of the population live among emerald hills in villages scattered across 50-odd thickly wooded islands.

Of course, if all the available activities sound a bit too energetic, there are always the beaches at various eclectic island resorts, perfect for lazing in the sun, dabbling in a bit of snorkelling and soaking up the sublime views.

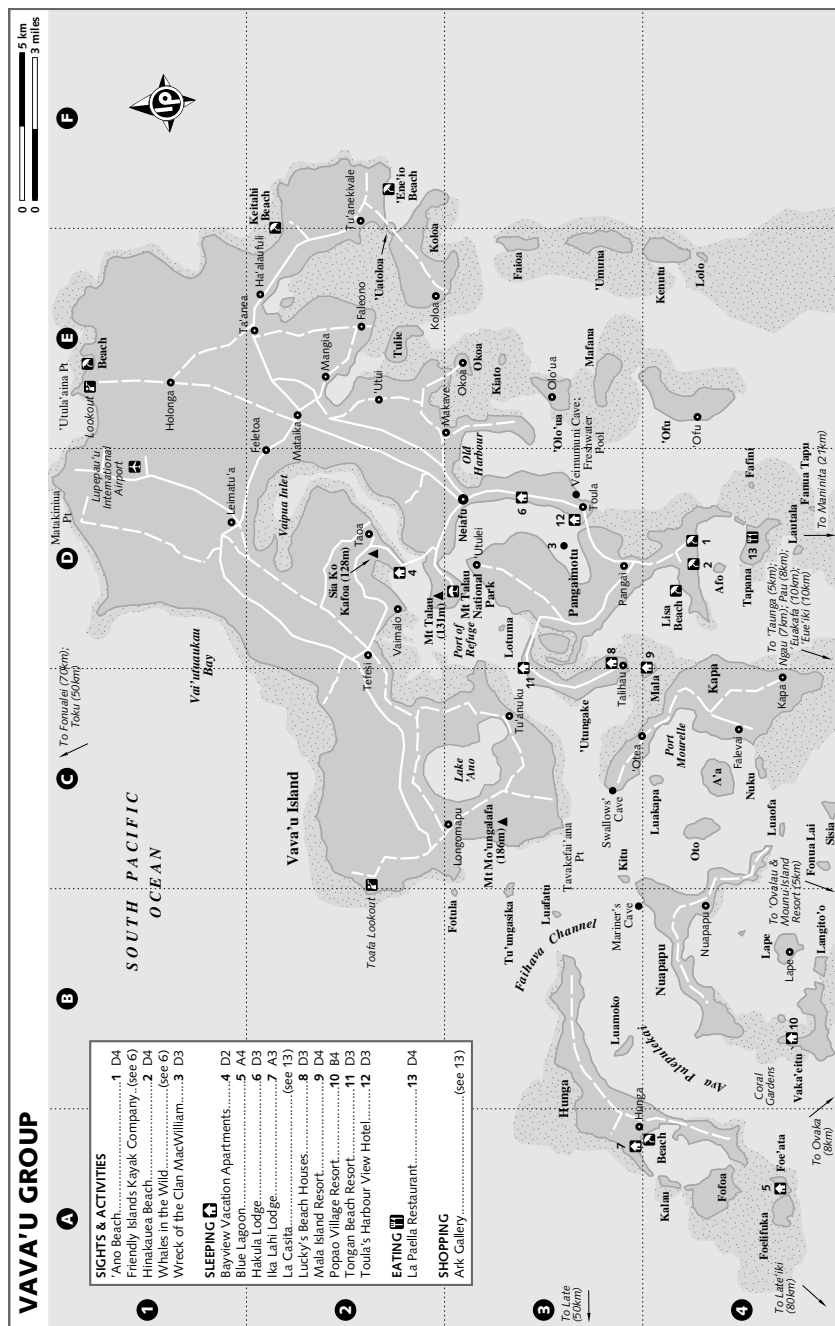
## HIGHLIGHTS

- Snorkelling and kayaking with **humpback whales** (p248), and scanning the horizon for breaches over breakfast at island resorts
- Getting the **wind in your sails** (p246) between beautiful islands, beaches and coves
- **Diving and snorkelling** (p246) in a clear fish soup above stunning coral gardens and geological marvels
- Delving underwater into wondrous **Mariner's Cave** (p262)
- Feasting on paella and revelling at rustic **La Paella** (p260) on Tapana



■ POPULATION: 15,715

■ AREA: 119 SQ KM



## HISTORY

Vava'u is believed to have been settled for around 2000 years. Its first European visitor was Don Francisco Antonio Mourelle of Spain. His ship, the *Princesa*, ran short of supplies while sailing from the Philippines to Spanish America, and after a fruitless visit to the volcanic island Fonualei (which they named Amargura, meaning 'bitterness'), they sighted Vava'u Island on 4 March 1781. Mourelle named Neiafu's harbour Puerto de Refugio or 'Port of Refuge', though Tongans knew it as Lolo 'a Halaevalu, or 'Oil of the Princess Halaevalu', because of the smooth, natural sheen that appears on the water's surface on calm days. Mourelle claimed the new-found paradise for Spain and named it *Islas de Don Martin de Mayorga* after the viceroy of Mexico. The islanders welcomed the Spaniards and stocked their ship before they departed.

In 1793, Spain sent Captain Alessandro Malaspina to Vava'u to survey the new territory and inform the inhabitants of the Spanish claim – allegedly somewhere in Vava'u a decree of Spanish sovereignty is buried – but the captain didn't stay on Vava'u for long. Other than dominating diners with paella on Tapana Island, the Spanish have not pursued their claim.

William Mariner also spent a great deal of time here (see the boxed text, p236), during which he was involved in Finau 'Ulukalala I's conquest of Vava'u. When the English brig *Favourite* landed on Vava'u Island in November 1810, the then king of Vava'u and son of 'Ulukalala I, Finau 'Ulukalala II, permitted Mariner to return home with it.

But when he saw the marvels on board the ship, the Tongan king begged to be permitted to accompany Mariner. He said he was willing to forsake his princely life in the islands for even a lowly station in England. He wanted to learn to read, write and operate mechanical wonders.

Captain Fisk of the *Favourite* refused young Finau's entreaties, whereupon the Tongan made Mariner swear that he would some day return and carry the king back to England. Unfortunately, Mariner never returned to Tonga.

'Ulukalala II's tomb (p258) can be seen in the village of Feletoa on Vava'u Island. His son was converted to Christianity by King George Tupou I of Ha'apai. When

'Ulukalala III died, George was entrusted to look after the throne of Vava'u for the boy king 'Ulukalala IV. But George seized the opportunity to add the group to his own realm and in 1845 he formed a united Tonga.

## CLIMATE

Vava'u has Tonga's wettest climate, with most rain falling in occasional tropical storms between late November and April, which is also the cyclone season. March is the wettest month, but gentle warm rains and occasional downpours occur at any time of year. Vava'u is generally warmer than Tongatapu, and although it can be particularly hot and sticky during the cyclone season, this can be a great time to visit, with fine days if you can stand the humidity. See p285 for information on air travel during the cyclone season.

The prevailing easterly and southeasterly trade winds blow at an average of 15 knots. Between November and April, both northerly and northwesterly winds can occur, usually accompanied by more unsettled seas which can impact on activities, such as sailing, diving and fishing on the western side of the group.

See p277 for more information.

## ACTIVITIES

Vava'u is the kingdom's adventure playground, geared towards activity-based tourism, with plenty of locations (and smooth,

### WRECK OF THE CLAN MACWILLIAM

The wreck of the copra steamer *Clan MacWilliam* lies in 37m of water in the southern arm of the Port of Refuge. Built in 1918, this 127m, 6000-tonne Clan Shipping Line freighter steamed into Neiafu Harbour in December 1927 with a smouldering fire in the No 3 copra hold. The forward holds collapsed, cracking open the steamer's plates. One story has it that the captain and first engineer refused to abandon ship and went down with it; another relates that the captain locked the first engineer into the engine room to prevent him from abandoning the effort to save the ship!

The wreck is now teeming with marine life, and is a popular dive site.

clued-in operations) to dive, snorkel, sail, whale-watch, surf, fish, kayak, mountain bike and hike. See p273 for further details. Many businesses and activity operators still communicate over VHF radio and most will be happy to assist you in making contact.

### Diving & Snorkelling

Vava'u's impressive dive sites range from hard and soft coral gardens and encrusted wrecks (see the boxed text, p245) to vast sea caves and other geological marvels. Contact Vava'u's two dive operators for full details on dive sites.

**Dolphin Pacific Diving** (☎ /fax 70292; VHF Channel 71; www.dolphinpacificdiving.com; PO Box 131, Neiafu) is a friendly operation based alongside Pua-taukanave Hotel on the waterfront. It offers two-/three-tank boat dives (T\$140/200), snorkelling trips (T\$60) and runs PADI/IDEA Open Water (T\$550/500), advanced (T\$500/450), rescue diver (T\$550) and Dive-master (T\$1050) courses. The 'dive and whale-watch combination' is great value at just T\$180, including two-tank dives. Sunset cruises (T\$40) and sole boat charters (T\$800) are also options. Air refills cost T\$9 and snorkelling gear is available for hire.

**Beluga Diving** (☎ /fax 70327; VHF Channel 16; www.belugadivingvavau.com; PO Box 70, Neiafu), along the waterfront at Fangafoa Marina in Neiafu, offers one-/two-tank dives (at two different sites) from US\$35/65, and PADI courses from Open Water (US\$230) to Divemaster (US\$750). Full gear is included in course rates and is available for hire, but remember to check it all over before heading out on a boat. You can hire a mask, snorkel and fins here for US\$12 or take a guided boat-based snorkelling trip for US\$25 (including gear, minimum four snorkellers).

Most boat tours and some of the whale-watching trips include a little snorkelling, such as into Mariner's and Swallows' Caves or over coral gardens. Diving, fishing and whale-watching operators will run snorkelling trips along with their regular excursions for around T\$80. Joining a diving trip as a snorkeller is usually no problem, though some sites lie at reasonably deep depths, over 5m.

For a good snorkelling day trip, head out to Mala Island Resort (p260) for lunch and snorkel from its beach to the beautiful Japanese Gardens nearby.

### Fishing

Regarded as one of the best game-fishing destinations in the Pacific, Vava'u is a prime site for catching marlin and has a few resorts catering primarily for anglers. Almost all fishing is concentrated in the area west of Vava'u where the ocean is over 1000m deep. See p275 for general fishing information.

The Ikapuna Store (see p256) in Neiafu is stocked with lures and other fishing commodities, and sometimes has fishing gear available to hire.

Low-season (January to April) price reductions may be possible and most fishing charters listed here can be contacted on VHF Channel 71.

**Dora Malia** (☎ 70698; ikapuna@kalianet.tg; Ikapuna Store, PO Box 106, Neiafu) Fully equipped game boat with light and heavy trolling gear. Charters are T\$600/800 per day for two/four anglers.

**Hakula Sport Fishing Charters** (☎ 70872, 71381; www.fishtonga.com; PO Box 23, Neiafu) Fully equipped game-fishing boat (A\$900, maximum six anglers). Trips to the exciting fishing grounds around Tofua and Koa in the Ha'apai Group are a possibility.

**Ika Lahi Lodge** (☎ /fax 70611; www.tongafishing.com; PO Box 24, Neiafu) Based on the island of Hunga, operates charters on fully rigged game boats with Shimano tackle (NZ\$800/1400 per half/full day, maximum four anglers).

**Mounu Island Resort** (☎ 70747; VHF Channel 77; www.mounuisland.com) Can arrange game-fishing charters (maximum four anglers).

**Target One** (☎ /fax 70647; www.visitvavau.com/target1; Private Bag 3, Neiafu) Game fishing on a fully equipped fast boat for US\$500/600/700 for two/three/four anglers.

### Sailing & Boating

This is the perfect way to experience Vava'u – cruising the islands and stopping to snorkel and wander beaches at will.

**Moorings** (☎ 70016; fax 70428; VHF Channel 72; www.tongasailing.com; PO Box 119, Neiafu) charters out catamarans and monohulls ranging from 12m to 15m, sleeping up to 10 passengers. Prices vary according to the season, but range from NZ\$480 to NZ\$1450 for bare-boat charters during high season. Additional costs for a skipper/cook/guide are NZ\$170/140/140 per day plus food. Check its website for details and book direct.

**Melinda Sea Adventures** (☎ 70975, 70861; VHF Channel 16; www.sailtonga.com) operates the traditionally rigged gaff ketch, *Melinda*, a beautiful sight under sail in Vava'u. You can do as

much (or as little) sailing as you want on the fully crewed charters on this 13m, smooth-sailing craft which sleeps two to four guests. Minimum three-day charters cost US\$175 per person per day. Day trips (whole-boat charter US\$350) and whale-watching are also available. Contact the operators for further details and off-season rates.

**SY Impetuous** (www.sailingtonga.com) is a fully crewed 51ft Beneteau available for day sails around Vava'u (up to 10 people) and flexible longer charters. You can choose how hands-on you want to be. If you want to feel the wind in the sails, join the yacht in Vava'u and sail to Ha'apai or Nuku'alofa (or vice versa), or alight in Fiji or Samoa. Fully catered charters cost US\$190 per day per person for a maximum of six people in three double cabins. There's a dive compressor on board.

**Sailing Safaris** (☎ 70650; VHF Channel 68; sailing safaris@kalianetvav.tg; PO Box 46, Neiafu) hires out a 26ft yacht (bare-boat/skippered from US\$150/250 per day) and also runs five-day live-aboard sailing courses for US\$1500 (up to two people). Skippered speedboats are available for US\$300 per day.

Sailing dinghies can be hired from **Aquarium Adventures** (☎ 70493; aquariumadventures@yahoo.com) for T\$25/125 per hour/day.

A number of the Neiafu fishing, diving, whale-watching and sailing operators run day boat excursions that typically include Swallows' and Mariner's Caves, picnicking on an uninhabited island and snorkelling at an offshore reef, but they'll also cater to individual whims. The presence of humpback whales (July to November) is a special bonus. Check at the Tonga Visitors Bureau (TVB) for seasonal operators.

**Soki's Island Tours** (contact the TVB) runs boat tours (T\$50, minimum three people) guided by a born-and-bred local, Soki, that are tailored to your interests, such as snorkelling over coral reefs and into Swallows' Cave, and fishing trips.

**Hakula Lodge** (☎ 70872, 71381; www.fishtonga.com) boat tours (T\$65, lunch T\$15) depart Neiafu at 10am for snorkelling, exploration of Nuku Island, Swallows' and Mariner's Caves and the Japanese Gardens, lunch at Mala Island and return at 4pm.

**Coconet Café** (☎ 71311), on the waterfront nearby the market, hires out small power boats for T\$70/80 per half/full day, plus petrol.

### MAPS

A condensed version of the sea chart covering Vava'u (and showing all decent anchorages) is available from the Moorings (opposite). The Moorings charter yachts have their own sea charts, though you can pick up a laminated colour version in their office. Alternatively, pick one up before you arrive in Vava'u (see p280). Yachties should be aware that these charts are not accurate enough for GPS navigation.

### Sea-Kayaking

Island resorts and beachside accommodations invariably all have a kayak or two for guests to paddle to caves, nearby islands and good snorkelling spots. Between July and November paddling alongside humpback whales is possible.

Beluga Diving (opposite) rents single/double sea kayaks with dry bags for US\$20/30 per day, and Adventure Backpackers (p253) hires out kayaks (nonocean-going) with jackets for T\$30 per day.

**Friendly Islands Kayak Company** (☎ /fax 70173; VHF Channel 71; www.fikco.com; Private Bag 10, Neiafu; ☒ Jun-Dec) has been revealing some of Tonga's magic to kayaking adventurers on their camping and paddling expeditions around Vava'u (and Ha'apai) since 1991. This environmentally conscious company provides truly unique experiences (and supplies excellent equipment) on five-/nine-/eleven-day packages (with four/six/eight days of guided kayaking) for US\$900/1790/2130. No experience is required, but all trips require a minimum of four people (and a maximum of 10). Tents, camping mats and snorkelling equipment are provided for a fee. Routes are strongly influenced by weather and tide patterns. Other multiadventure tours include whale-watching, diving, sailing and mountain-biking as well as kayaking.

### Surfing

Vava'u's surf breaks around the three- to five-foot range, and you'll need a boat to access it. Booties are almost as imperative as a surfboard and though the water's warm, pack a wetsuit to counter the chill factor.

**Vava'u Surf & Adventure Tours** (☎ 71283, 12515; http://groups.msn.com/cafetropicnavavautonga; Private Bag 34, Neiafu) has received glowing reports from surf travellers for its well-organised yet laid-back guided boat trips (half-/full-day

per person T\$75/105) that drop surfers on tried and tested uncrowded reef breaks depending on daily conditions. Nonsurfing partners are well looked after (dropped off at snorkelling spots and on uninhabited islands for explorations), extra sights such as Mariner's Cave and Swallows' Cave can be included, and surf/accommodation packages can be arranged.

### Whale-Watching

If you're staying on an island resort or sailing through Vava'u's waters between July and November, you only need to patiently keep an eye seaward to whale-watch. Vava'u has fast become the world's top whale-watching destination.

**Whales Alive** (www.whalesalive.org.au) is a non-government organisation devoted to the protection of whales. Concern for their welfare (particularly in relation to swimming 'with' them) has seen industry standards implemented to limit the negative impact and possible stress to breeding whales.

Operators (p246) fit whale-watching between dives and run specific whale-watching trips. Sometimes videographers accompany whale-watching charters and sell DVDs spliced with footage from your whale encounter. At the time of writing, uniform rates for the following companies (generally with a minimum of four people) were T\$150.

**Melinda Sea Adventures** (☎ 70975, 70861; VHF Channel 16; www.sailtonga.com) Sailing, snorkelling and whale-watching are often combined in day trips (including lunch; minimum two people) on *Melinda*.

**Sailing Safaris** (☎ /fax 70650; VHF Channel 68; www.sailingsafaris.com; PO Box 153, Neiafu) Full-day whale-watching trips on hydrophone-equipped *Whale Song*. Snorkel gear and refreshments available (lunch T\$15).

**Whale Discoveries** (☎ /fax 70173; VHF Channel 71; www.whalediscoveries.com; Private Bag 10, Neiafu) Informative, ecologically sensitive whale-watching trips (US\$82 including lunch and drinks) aboard a 14-passenger rigid inflatable with sun canopy and toilet. Snorkelling gear provided. Note: no swimming with whales.

**Whale Watch Vava'u** (☎ 70747; VHF Channel 77; www.mounuistland.com) A long-time operator with a purpose-built vessel for small-group trips and an enviable reputation and uncanny knack for finding whales. Lunch can be arranged.

**Whales in the Wild** (☎ 71381, 70872; VHF Channel 71; www.whales-in-the-wild.com) A friendly operation with a shaded boat for up to 12 passengers. Free hotel pick-up and special family rates available. Swimmers/non-swimmers T\$150/120.

**WhaleSwim Adventures** (☎ 71266; www.whaleswim.com) Multiday swim with the whales expeditions and organised holidays.

### Other Activities

Bird-watchers can peruse the local avian scene in Mt Talau National Park (p252) and visit the island breeding site of Maninita (p263).

You can peddle around on your own mountain-bike exploration of the islands connected to Vava'u Island (p257) or take a guided mountain-biking trip. The Friendly Islands Kayak Company (p247) runs half-/full-day mountain-biking trips (T\$30/50), in addition to their action-packed Adventure Week (US\$1570 including food and accommodation) between May and February which includes sea-kayaking, whale-watching, mountain biking and sailing or diving.

Few people rock climb in Vava'u, but the short (around 50m) sea cliffs of Tu'ungasika and Luafatu (among others) look promising. Logistics could be tricky and you would need your own climbing gear. Vava'u Surf & Adventure Tours (p247) compiles adventure tours between July and October, one incorporating walking on Kapa Island, abseiling into a sinkhole and swimming out of Swallows' Cave (T\$130, or T\$150 including a swim into Mariner's Cave). Small-group snorkelling and island-hopping boat trips, including Swallows' Cave and Mariner's Cave (half-/full-day T\$50/80) are also possible.

### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The Vava'u Festival, the biggest festival of the year, takes place during the week leading up to 4 May, the crown prince's birthday. This week-long party includes a variety of events, from processions to weaving, dance and song, sports matches, drinking bashes and feasts. It now incorporates the Vava'u Tuna Fest. Other fishing tournaments are held throughout the year. Fishing tournaments take place in the deep waters of Vava'u (to the west of Hunga etc), but fisher folk congregate around Neiafu for meetings, awards and so on. They often include other meals and events on Mala and other islands, while fishing guests will stay at fishing-focused islands and in Neiafu. Contact Hakula Sport Fishing Charters (p246) for further information.

## VAVA'U ISLAND

area 90 sq km / pop 12,418

The hilly island of Vava'u is the main island in the Vava'u Group, with nearby islands linked to it by causeways. Outside of Neiafu are quiet villages and 'api (plantations).

### NEIAFU

pop 5650

Nestled between several low hills in the Port of Refuge, Neiafu is Tonga's most picturesque harbour town and the Vava'u Group's administrative capital. It's the only town with any sort of bustle, particularly around the market on Saturday, and has a good selection of restaurants and upbeat bars.

### History

Prior to European contact, Neiafu was a sacred burial ground of the indigenous people, and political unrest and tribal skirmishes were forbidden. Every person entering the village was required to wear a *ta'ovala* (pandanus mat tied around the waist and worn on formal occasions) as a symbol of esteem for the chiefs entombed there.

The waterfront area around the Halaevatu Wharf is called Matangimalie (Pleasant Winds). Formerly it was the site of a palace built by Finau 'Ulukalala II. In 1808 Finau built a fortification on slightly higher ground at Pou'ono. The fort was called Vaha'akeli (Between Trenches), a reference to the moats surrounding it.

### Information

Many businesses in Vava'u communicate by VHF radio and a yachties' information net is held on VHF Channel 6 at 8.30am Monday to Saturday.

Film is sold at several shops around Neiafu, though the best retailer is **Pacific Timber & Hardware** (☎ 70500; Fatafehi Rd). It sells slide, black-and-white and colour print film, as well as waterproof disposable cameras.

### BOOKSHOPS

Most places to stay have libraries and/or book exchanges for guests. Tropical Tease (p256) has a selection of titles for exchange. **Friendly Islands Bookshop** (☎ 70505; Fatafehi Rd) Limited stock, but with a few excellent titles on Tonga and some children's books, magazines and film.

### EMERGENCY

**Fire** (☎ 933, 70233; Tu'i Rd)

**Medical emergencies** (☎ 933)

**Police** (☎ 922, 70236; Tu'i Rd) Clerical division (for driving licences) is open from 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday and Tuesday, and 8.30am to 12.30pm Wednesday to Friday.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Aquarium Adventures** (☎ 70493; per hr T\$12) Also burns CDs.

**Café Tropicana** (☎ 71322; Fatafehi Rd; per 15min T\$3) Also burns CDs.

**Coconut Café** (☎ 71311; VHF 16; per 5min T\$1; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Waterfront, below Tongan Bob's. Printing and faxes from T\$1 per page.

**Maamamo'onia Hall** (☎ 70570; Tu'i Rd; per 15/30/60min T\$1.50/3/5; ☎ 8.30am-11pm Mon-Sat) In the high school.

### LAUNDRY

Most places to stay offer laundry service or washing facilities for guests.

**Adventure Backpackers** (☎ /fax 70955; www.visitvavau.com/backpackers; Fatafehi Rd) Per load T\$6.

**Coconut Café** (☎ 71311) Waterfront, below Tongan Bob's. Wash/dry/fold T\$5/5/1.

### LIBRARIES

**Vava'u Library** (Fatafehi Rd; ☎ noon-5pm Tue-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Opposite the post office. Annual membership costs T\$3. Computer usage (no Internet) per hour T\$2.40.

### MEDIA

Vava'u FM1 is found at 89.3FM, and satellite TV can be accessed at some of the available accommodation. The Friendly Island Bookshop has some Tongan newspapers which sometimes have a bit of information in English.

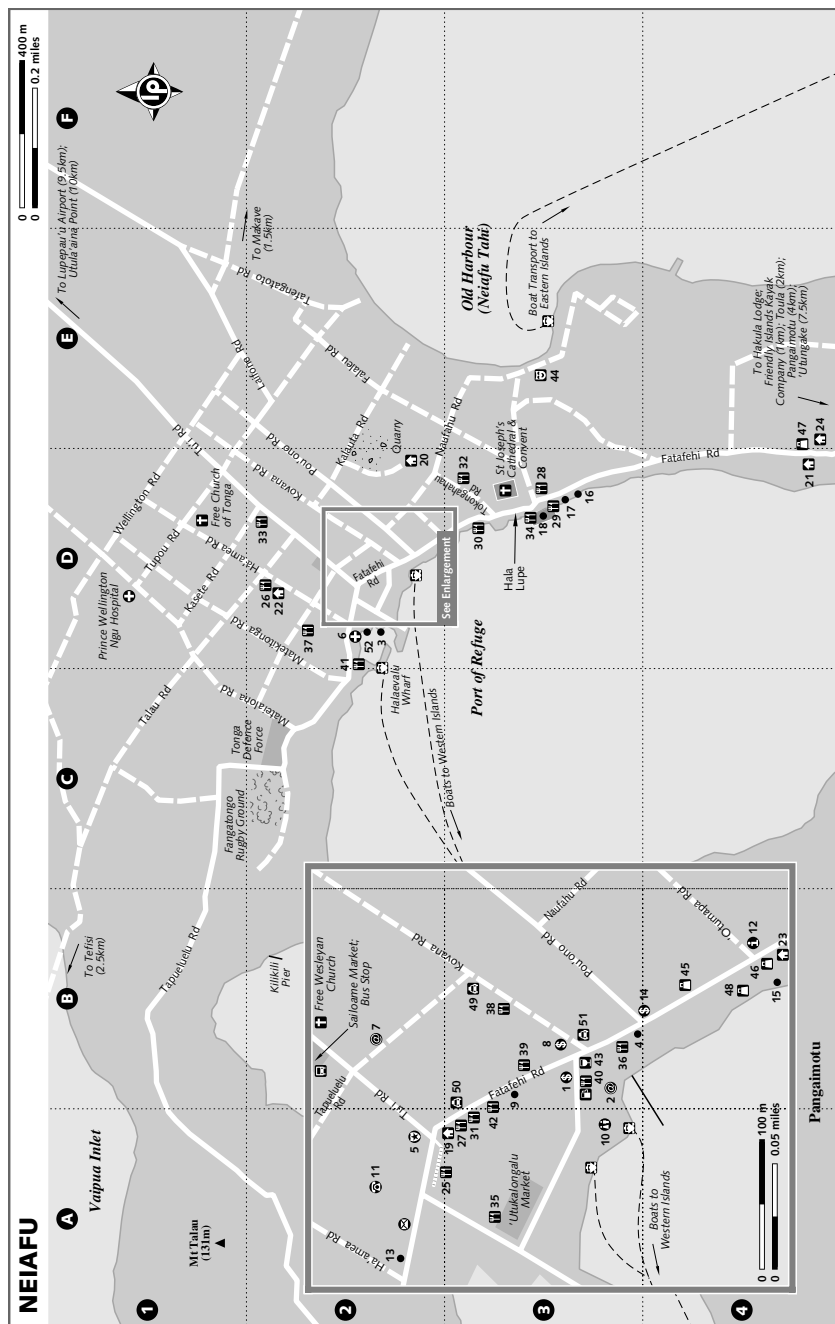
### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Italian Clinic and Pharmacy** (☎ /fax 70607; i\_clinic@kalianetvav.to; Main Wharf; ☎ clinic 8.30am-12.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30-10.30am Sat; pharmacy 8.30am-2.30pm Mon-Sat) Consultations with Dr Alfredo Carafa cost T\$25 to T\$35; dive health certification is T\$25. Stocks antibiotics and can have prescription medicines within 24 hours if not stocked.

**Prince Wellington Ngu Hospital** (☎ 70201, 70204; ☎ 24hr, pharmacy 8.30am-12.30pm, 1.30-4.30pm & 6-11pm Mon-Fri) Outpatient and dental clinics (rudimentary equipment) also available. For emergencies.

### MONEY

**ANZ** (Fatafehi Rd; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Has ATM inside bank. Provides cash advances on Visa, MasterCard and JCB.



<b>INFORMATION</b>		Vava'u Surf & Adventure Tours.....(see 27)	Tangitau & Sons Bakery.....38 B3		
ANZ Bank (ATM).....	1 B3	Coconut Café.....	2 B3	TCF Supermarket.....	39 B3
Customs Department.....	3 D2	Adventure Backpackers.....	19 A3	Tongan Bob's.....	40 B3
Fire Station.....(see 5)		Hill Top Hotel.....	20 D2	Vava'u Fish Market.....	41 D2
Friendly Islands Bookshop.....	4 B3	Paradise International Hotel.....	21 D4	Vava'u Trading Centre Supermarket.....	42 B3
Immigration Office.....	5 A2	Port of Refuge Yacht Club.....(see 34)		<b>DRINKING</b> ☰	
Italian Clinic & Pharmacy.....	6 D2	Port Wine Guest House.....	22 D2	Bounty Bar.....	43 B3
Maamamo'onia Hall.....	7 B2	Puataukanave Motel & Restaurant.....	23 B4	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> ☰	
MBF Bank.....	8 B3	Vava'u Guest House.....	24 E4	Motele Nightclub.....	44 E3
Pacific Timber & Hardware.....	9 B3	<b>EATING</b> ☰		<b>SHOPPING</b> ☰	
Public Toilets.....	10 A3	'Alatini Fisheries.....	25 A3	Fata Fata Mafana.....(see 12)	
Tonga Communications Corporation (TCC).....	11 A2	Lighthouse Café.....	32 D3	Hibiscus Hut.....	45 B4
Tonga Visitors Bureau.....	12 B4	Mangele Bakery.....	33 D2	Leiola Duty Free Shop.....	46 B4
Vava'u Library.....	13 A2	Mermaid Restaurant & Bar.....	34 D3	Look Sharp Shop.....	47 E4
Western Union.....(see 19)		Neiafu Market Kiosks.....	35 A3	Tropical Tease.....	48 B4
Westpac Bank of Tonga.....	14 B4	Neiafu Market Supermarket.....(see 23)		<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>		Compass Rose.....	29 D3	JL Rental Cars.....	49 B3
Aquarium Adventures.....(see 16)		Dancing Rooster.....	30 D3	JV Taxi & Rental Cars.....	50 B3
Beluga Diving.....(see 16)		Ikapauna Store.....	31 A3	Livelia Taxi.....	51 B3
Dolphin Pacific Diving.....	15 B4	Lighthouse Café.....	32 D3	Peau Vava'u.....(see 46)	
Dora Mallia.....(see 31)		Mangele Bakery.....	33 D2	Polynesian Airlines.....(see 23)	
Fangafoa Marina.....	16 D3	Mermaid Restaurant & Bar.....	34 D3	Sailing Safaris Marine Centre.....(see 18)	
IFAW Marine Awareness Centre.....(see 18)		Neiafu Market Kiosks.....	35 A3	Shipping Corporation of Polynesia.....	52 D2
Moorings.....	17 D3	Neiafu Market Supermarket.....(see 23)		'Uata (Walter Line) Shipping.....(see 52)	
Sailing Safaris.....	18 D3	Royal Beer Shop.....	36 B3		
		Siaosi Fainga'a Bakery (George's Bakery).....	37 D2		

**MBF** (Fatafehi Rd; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-11.30am Sat)  
**Western Union** (☎ 70888; Fatafehi Rd; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat)  
**Westpac Bank of Tonga** (☎ 70168; Fatafehi Rd; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-11.30am Sat) Has an ATM, provides cash advances on Visa and MasterCard and offers MoneyGram money transfer services.

**POST**  
**Post office** (☎ 70002; Fatafehi Rd; ☎ 8.30am-4pm) North of 'Utukalongalu market. Poste restante mail (c/o General Delivery, Post Office, Neiafu, Vava'u, Tonga).

**TELEPHONE & FAX**  
 Public phones are available outside the TCC office and Adventure Backpackers.  
**Tonga Communications Corporation** (TCC; ☎ 70101; Fatafehi Rd, behind post office; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Fri, 7am-2pm Sat) Offers fax services and sells phonecards and SIM cards.

**TOURIST INFORMATION**  
**Tonga Visitors Bureau** (TVB; ☎ 70115; fax 70666; VHF Channel 16; Fatafehi Rd; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) A well-stocked office with visitor information brochures (including one on Talau National Park) and tourist maps of Neiafu and Vava'u (T\$1). Helpful, well-informed staff happily assist with bookings and accommodation reservations.

**Sights & Activities**  
 Taking in the Port of Refuge view of yachts bobbing on their moorings from a café or bar, with a cool drink in hand, may be the only sight you need to see in Neiafu, but there are a few reasons to take a wander.

Standing high above the Port of Refuge, on Fatafehi Rd, **St Joseph's Cathedral** is the most prominent structure and acts as a beacon for arriving yachties. Attempts to establish a Catholic mission in Vava'u began in 1837, but it wasn't until over a century later that construction of the wonderful cathedral began; it was to take nine years to complete. The white and red façade survived the strong cyclone in 1961 and is a classic example of Catholic colonial architecture. Within the light interior is a considerably Tongan-looking Jesus.

**Hala Lupe** (Way of Doves) is the stretch of road along the waterfront cliff-top between St Joseph's Cathedral and the Moorings office. The road was constructed by female prisoners convicted of adultery by the church. Their mournful singing was likened to the sound of cooing doves.

Below Hala Lupe is the **IFAW Marine Awareness Centre** ([www.ifaw.org](http://www.ifaw.org)), an excellent place to learn more about humpback whales and their conservation. Head down the stairs and follow the pathway towards the Mermaid Restaurant.

**NEIAFU TAHI (OLD HARBOUR)**  
 Neiafu's Old Harbour is much shallower than the Port of Refuge – so shallow that you'll see pigs dining on the mudflats here at low tide. It served as Vava'u's main landing site until the arrival of relatively large European ships, and has its own colourful past. Around 1808, Finau 'Ulukalala II, during the conquest of

Vava'u, bound several resisting chiefs into decomposing canoes and set them adrift on Neiafu Tahi to drown.

**Hala Tafengatoto** (Tafengatoto Road; Road where Blood Flows) meets the Old Harbour, and is part of a network of sunken clay pathways found around the main island of Vava'u. Tradition has it that this sunken trail, the route to the village of Feletoa, ran with the blood of warriors killed during the conquest of Vava'u by Finau 'Ulukalala II.

Near the entrance to Hala Tafengatoto are several **freshwater springs** bubbling into the Neiafu Tahi. The most reliable is **Matalave**, around the harbour to the east. Nearby is the rocky outcrop that is said to have been the primary Vava'u landing site of the *kalia* (double-hulled canoes) used in ancient times.

#### KILIKILI PIER

At the far western end of Neiafu, Kilikili Pier once served as a British coal station. It was so named because the coal loaded there by the foreigners resembled, to the Tongans, the familiar *kilikili* (black volcanic slag pebbles used to decorate grave mounds throughout Tonga).

#### MOUNT TALAU NATIONAL PARK

Mt Talau (131m), the flat-topped mountain dominating the Port of Refuge, is protected in the Mt Talau National Park. The marked trail through the park (45-minute circuit) leads steeply over slippery rocks to the summit, linking four viewpoints from which you can get your bearings while scanning stunning views of Neiafu, the Port of Refuge, the Vaipua causeway and the 128m-high Sia Ko Kafoa across Vaipua Inlet. The truncated mountain off in the distance is 186m-high Mo'ungalafa, rising above the freshwater Lake 'Ano at the west end of Vava'u Island. Mt Talau is a good place for contemplative sundowners, though pack a torch.

To get to the trailhead, head west along Tapueluelu Rd for about 2km from the centre of Neiafu until you reach a small car park.

Walking here you may see the rare *fokai* (banded lizard); *hengehenga* (Tongan whistler), a rare and distinctive bird – males have bright yellow chests; and, at dusk, *peka* (flying fox). Pick up the map and guide to the park from the TVB for details of other flora and

#### MT TALAU LOSES ITS PEAK

A popular Tongan legend explaining how Mt Talau came to lose its peak suggests that a mischievous Samoan *tevolo*, or devil spirit, decided to filch the attractive peak and carry it away to his homeland. There is some disagreement as to what happened next; some maintain that a patriotic Tongan *tevolo* caught the offender and forced him to drop the peak by convincing him of the imminent arrival of daylight, the time for all devils to be back under cover. Another source claims that the mountain simply became too heavy and the thief dropped it. Whatever the case, the mountain top splash-landed in the middle of the Port of Refuge. It is now called Lotuma and is used as the Vava'u naval base of the Tongan Defence Forces.

fauna in the park. The legend of the mountain is revealed in the boxed text, above.

#### YACHT RACES

On a balmy Friday afternoon you can't beat knocking back an Ikale on the bow in a relaxed yacht race around the Port of Refuge. If you want to become 'rail meat' (crew), turn up to the Port of Refuge Yacht Club (at the Mermaid) when the skippers meet around 4pm between May and December. Spectators can watch from the bar at the 5pm race start. The only requirement for membership of the yacht club is arrival in Tonga on a yacht or launch (the 'Olovaha doesn't count!).

#### RUGBY & FOOTBALL

Rugby and football games are held year-round at church school pitches and Fangatongo Rugby Field (on Saturday games are held all day). Ask locals for details.

#### Tours

Tour companies on Vava'u Island come and go, so contact the TVB for further information. Hiring a taxi with or without driver (see p257) is another option. Be aware that after heavy rain some roads become deeply rutted and impassable to anything but 4WD vehicles.

Most organised boat tours include a range of sights throughout Vava'u's islands. See p245 for details.

#### Sleeping

Neiafu has a good range of accommodation, while other options soak up quiet beach- or harbour-side positions around Vava'u Island, its causeway-connected islands and on outer-island resorts. Boat tour operators (see p246) happily collect guests from the jetties and beaches of their accommodation around the Vava'u group of islands.

Bookings are advised between April and December.

#### BUDGET

**Port Wine Guest House** (☎ 70479; portwine@kalianet.to; Ha'amea Rd; s/d T\$15/25) You'll feel like you're staying with your dear Tongan grandmother (who in fact lives next door) in this clean, four-room guesthouse with a breezy lounge and soft couch to sink into (beneath lots of family photos and a cat disguising itself as a mantelpiece ornament). The only downside is that you will have to take a cold shower. Cook your meals in the good kitchen, fill water bottles from the tank and dine on Port Wine's veranda. It's in a quiet spot, just a few minutes' stroll from the centre of town.

**Adventure Backpackers** (☎/fax 70955; www.visitvavau.com/backpackers; Fatafehi Rd; dm T\$24, s/d from T\$48/78, d with bathroom T\$88) This modern hostel in the centre of town makes a handy base to spring into the activities and nightlife of Vava'u. Fan-cooled rooms are bright, clean and secure (if a bit sterile), there is an excellent shared kitchen and communal area, and a terrace to sun yourself on. Hot showers in winter only. Book ahead.

**Vava'u Guest House** (☎ 70300; Fatafehi Rd; r per person T\$15, bungalow s/d with bathroom T\$35/45) At the time of research, this unkempt and shabby option was barely an option; check with the TVB for updates. It's 1.2km south of the town centre, opposite Paradise International Hotel.

#### MIDRANGE

**Hill Top Hotel** (☎/fax 70209; sunset@kalianet.to; Holopeka Hill; garden/harbour-view d with bathroom from T\$75/115) The main balcony of this small hotel takes in 180-degree views over town, the Port of Refuge, the Old Harbour and neighbouring islands, and harbour-view rooms have an outlook almost as sublime. Spacious, tiled rooms are fan-cooled and have good beds (but thin, scratchy sheets). Arm yourself with a torch and antidog mis-

siles for the night-time walk up Holopeka Hill (Place of Gathering Bats).

**Toula's Harbour View Motel** (☎ 70687, fax 70846; marcella@kalianet.to; s/d/tr with bathroom & breakfast T\$75/100/125) The old Marcella Resort is set in tropical gardens south of Neiafu, with a magnificent fan palm and tennis court. Each of the nine detached cabins comes with a veranda and quality linen. Opening off the motel's guest lounge is a bar/restaurant (see p254) with a pleasant view of the Port of Refuge. You can swim off the wharf below the resort, or walk for 15 minutes to a beach (see p259). Taxis from Neiafu cost T\$4.

**Puataukanava Motel** (☎ 74000; fax 70080; puas hotel@kalianetvav.to; Fatafehi Rd; s/d with bathroom & fan T\$85/110, with air-con from T\$100/120; waterfront deluxe/super deluxe d T\$170/205; ☎ ☎) Oddly furnished rooms seem to get more austere with size, but the 'super deluxe' waterfront rooms have kitchens as well as balconies. Negotiate for budget rooms.

#### TOP END

**Hakula Lodge** (☎ 70872; VHF Channel 71; www.fish.tonga.com, s/d/tr with bathroom A\$150/175/210; ☎ ☎) The most attractive and atmospheric of Neiafu's accommodations, Hakula Lodge consists of two units opening onto a full-length veranda overlooking the Port of Refuge, complete with a barbecue and dining table. The spacious, tiled units also have well-equipped kitchens and lounge chairs which can be transformed into extra beds. Guests can head down the tropical garden path to swim off the private jetty, from where the owners' whale-watching and fishing trips depart on MV *Hakula* (see p246). Substantial low-season discounts and high-season 'standby' specials are available. The owners will book and confirm domestic flights to ensure smooth travel. It's 2km south of Neiafu.

**Paradise International Hotel** (☎ 70211; fax 70184; www.tongahost.com; Fatafehi Rd; island-/garden-/harbour-view d with bathroom US\$70/95/115; ☎ ☎) A sprawling place with heavy furniture and 'ma and pa' velour armchairs in tired but clean interiors. A valuable feature is the large, clean pool (T\$5 for nonguests), where you can flake on a sun lounge and sip on a 'Vava'u breeze' (dark rum, pineapple, coconut cream and ice cream), served from the nearby restaurant/bar (open from 6.30am to 10pm; breakfast T\$7 to T\$13, lunch T\$8 to T\$23, dinner T\$30 to T\$45).

## RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

Guesthouses allow guests to use their kitchen facilities, while Hakula Lodge and Puatakanave offer self-contained accommodation. Check the notice boards of Adventure Backpackers and the Mermaid (or contact both places) for details on rental houses – some with stunning water views.

**Bayview Vacation Apartments** (☎ 70724; 1-bedroom apt per week T\$400) Well-furnished apartments are available for weekly or long-term rental and boast elevated views across Vaipau Inlet. Book through Adventure Backpackers.

## Eating

Neiafu has access to the widest variety of fresh produce outside of Nuku'alofa, ultra-fresh local seafood and restaurant cuisine from every continent.

## CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

**Café Tropicana** (☎ 71322; Fatafehi Rd; breakfast T\$4-16, meals T\$11-16; ☎ 6.30am-6pm Mon-Sat; 📺) Pass the cabinet stuffed with pies, cookies and cakes, if you can, and nab a table in the cool interior or slouch into a deckchair on the harbour-view terrace. The tasty, mixed cuisine ranges from sandwiches (around T\$6) and burgers to Thai chicken laksa and a few Tongan dishes, such as *ota ika* (Tongan raw fish salad) and *otai*, a rich, smoothie-like mélange of tropical fruits and coconut cream. Such a shame it's not open for dinner too – you'll just have to wait until breakfast.

**Lighthouse Café** (Tokangahahau Rd; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) Munch on danishes and other pastries in thatched *fale* (thatched house) in the bakery's garden, just off the main street.

**Neiafu Market Kiosks** (Utukalongalu Market; snacks T\$2-5; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-midnight Fri, 7am-noon Sat) You can buy *ota ika* and *sipi* (mutton flap) curry here along with sausages and two-minute noodles. The bright liquid in bags is cordial.

## RESTAURANTS

**Tongan Bob's** (Kovana Rd; mains T\$16-20; ☎ noon-late Mon-Fri) A sand floor to sink your toes into and tasty Mexican staples to sink your teeth into. *Tostadas*, *enchiladas*, *tacos* and *burritos* come packed with fresh pickings and you can stoke the fire with extra hot chilli sauce, or head straight for the cinnamon and sugar-rolled banana *tostada* dessert.

**Ciao Italian Restaurant** (☎ 71030; Fatafehi Rd; pasta & pizza T\$10-18, mains T\$23-30; ☎ lunch & dinner) Near the cathedral, this provincial-style Italian bistro serves authentic Italian cuisine, including pizza. Couple your meal with an Italian wine and finish it off with tiramisu, homemade gelato and espresso coffee.

**Compass Rose** (☎ 71167; VHF Channel 16; Fatafehi Rd; ☎ T\$8-15, mains T\$18-30; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Perched on the edge of Hala Lupe, with elevated views over the Port of Refuge, this small restaurant offers relaxed elegance and good food. Dishes include curries, marinated kebabs, barbecued lamb chops on mash, and lobster tails.

**Dancing Rooster** (☎ 70886; Fatafehi Rd; mains T\$24-42; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Descend the stairs from the main road to this relaxed, tropical garden setting and dine on dishes served with finesse from the Swiss chef. Generously proportioned options include rich local fish soup, blue-cheese ravioli in homemade Provençal sauce and lobster any which way. Service is attentive and meals are accompanied by Australian and Californian wines...or Swiss schnapps.

**Pierre's Table** (☎ 70687; Toula's Harbour View Resort, Toula; 5-course meals T\$27-68; ☎ dinner) Just out of Neiafu, Pierre's offers intimate dining on European-style dishes. Its Quebecois owners speak English and French and provide a relaxed family atmosphere. Five-course meals start with lobster-topped hors d'oeuvres and finish with rich desserts and coffee. Price is determined by your choice of main course: rib eye steak with peppercorn sauce, lobster tail or garlic-butter surf and turf.

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Mermaid Restaurant** (☎ 70730; VHF Channel 16; breakfast & light meals T\$4-16, mains T\$25-36) Yachties tie up tenders to the pontoon while others wind down a pirate-like lair from Hala Lupe to the most popular spot in town. Flags and yacht T-shirts, signed by their crews, hang from the thatch-fringed ceiling and flap in the breeze at Mermaid's, where a relaxed atmosphere and good cheer pervade. The extensive menu (including bulging tortillas, juicy grills and the popular pizzas and seafood dishes) attracts plenty of repeat diners. Saturday's barbecue includes fish and octopus.

**Bounty Bar** (☎ 70576; VHF Channel 16; Fatafehi Rd; snacks & mains T\$6.50-19; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Near Tongan Bob's, this small bar with an open side onto the Port of Refuge also serves meals.

In addition to the options given above, try La Paella (p260) on Tapanu Island and Mala Island Resort (p260), which is a good option on a Sunday. The restaurants of the Puatakanave and Paradise International Hotels serve all meals daily.

## TONGAN FEASTS

Joining in on a Tongan feast is the best way to experience Tongan food (much of which is cooked in an *'umu*, or pit oven), and get a good dose of traditional Tongan music and dance. Most can be booked through the TVB. Take plenty of smaller denomination *pa'anga* with you.

**Hinakaua/Ano Beach** (☎ 71135; VHF Channel 16; feast & transfers T\$30; ☎ 6pm Thu) A fine Tongan feast on Pangaimotu, with dancing by village children, weaving demonstrations and crafts to buy.

**Mala Island Resort** (☎ 71304; ☎ Sat) Dinner and a unique floor show put on by the staff. Also has a popular Sunday barbecue, see p260.

**Tongan Beach Resort** (☎ 70380; ☎ 7pm Wed) Book ahead for the Tongan feast at this resort on 'Utungake.

**Barnade Beach** (☎ Sat) Traditional feast at Port Mourelle on Kapa island, accessed by boat. Contact the TVB.

## SELF-CATERING

The *fale koloa* (corner shop) around Fatafehi and Tu'i Rds stay open until around 11pm Monday to Saturday. **Royal Beer Shop** (Fatafehi Rd; ☎ 8.30am-11pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 8.30am-2am Fri) sells beer, wine, vodka, gin and rum.

The best-stocked supermarket is **Puatakanave Supermarket** (☎ 70644; Fatafehi Rd), affectionately known as 'Pua', which has refrigerated chocolate as well as wine, beer and spirits. **Tonga Cooperative Federation** (TCF; Fatafehi Rd) and **Vava'u Trading Centre** (Fatafehi Rd) supermarkets stock a good range of imported grocery products and staples.

**'Utukalongalu Market** (☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-midnight Fri, 7am-noon Sat), close to Halaevalu Wharf, is the best place to get fruit and vegetables – stacked in pyramids or frond baskets – and eggs.

The freshest fish (around T\$5 to T\$7 per kilogram) can be found at the **Vava'u Fish Market** (Halaevalu Wharf; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon or 1pm Sat) or early in the morn-

ing on the waterfront near 'Utukalongalu Market. For fresh lobster (around T\$18 per kilogram), head to **Ikapuna Store** (p256) or **'Alatini Fisheries** (☎ 70939), behind 'Utukalongalu Market, which also sells ice, imported gourmet goods and deli foods (think soft and hard cheeses, salami, olives, yoghurt and chocolate biscuits – but perhaps not mixed together), wine and beer.

On Sunday afternoon, just follow your nose through town to the bakeries – the places to be. **Tangitau & Sons Bakery** (Kovana Rd) and **Siaosi Faingau's Bakery** (George's Bakery; Tapue-luelu Rd) sell basic bread and rolls, while the latter also has muffins and *keki* (a sort of Tongan donut). The **bakery** (cnr Ha'amea & Talau Rds) produces a continuous stream of excellent scrolls, cinnamon buns, chocolate and fruit muffins, and pull-apart savoury breads good enough for a meal. **Lighthouse Café** (Tokangahahau Rd; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) bakes European-style breads and Danish pastries.

## Drinking & Entertainment

Most night entertainment centres around the waterfront bars. When the town's bars call last drinks, **Motele Nightclub** (Old Harbour; admission T\$3; ☎ Fri & Sat), Neiafu's only nightclub, swells with the young and drunk. It's a bit rough – go in a group for more fun.

The home of the Port of Refuge Yacht Club and the first port of call for many – yachtie or land-lubber – the **Mermaid** (☎ 70730; VHF Channel 16) is always casual but picks up its party cheer in the evening. The food is good and happy hour flows from 4pm to 6pm, while the changing nightly entertainment includes darts competitions, quiz nights and Friday's yacht race (see p252), which is followed by live Tongan music and dancing. Hats off unless you want to shout the bar a drink.

This jovial restaurant bar with a great vibe is as laid back as a Mexican after siesta early in the evening and festive as the night wears on. Nightly happenings at **Tongan Bob's** (Kovana Rd; ☎ noon-late Mon-Fri) include Monday's live Tongan string and ukulele band accompanied by a *kava* ceremony (*kava* T\$1; open to all), T\$1 tacos on Tuesday, and dancing when the tables are slid aside later in the week. Knock back an Ikale or margarita at happy hour (5pm to 7pm).

**Bounty Bar** (☎ 70576; Fatafehi Rd; ☎ Mon-Sat) is a lively, very local place with karaoke on Tuesday night and live music.

The waterside decking at Puataukanave Motel (p253) is a good spot for afternoon drinks.

### KAVA CLUBS

For information about *kava* clubs in Neiafu (men only), ask any local man to steer you in the right direction. Tongan Bob's (p255) has an all-inclusive *kava* session.

### Shopping

'Utukalongalu Market (p255) has many craft stalls to cruise, with some beautiful carvings and jewellery in bone, black coral, shells and wood. Commissions are possible. Good handicrafts can also be found in the shops lining Fatafehi Rd. **Fata Fata Mafana** (☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat), next to the TVB, sells a range of items and many local weavings. In addition to stocking local art and quality crafts you may not find elsewhere, **Hibiscus Hut** (☎ 70381; Fatafehi Rd) sells coconut oils, sarongs, shorts and T-shirts. A small selection of nautical wear is sold at the Moorings office (see p246).

Quality surf-brand T-shirts (T\$45) featuring local artwork in *kupesi* (mulberry bark designs), and Vava'u 'dirt shirts', dyed (or stained) with Vava'u's soil, are printed on-site at **Tropical Tease** (☎ 71271; tropical@kalianet.to; enter off Fatafehi Rd). If you can't find your favourite design in your size and colour, get it printed. Stubby holders and sun visors are stocked here; there's a small book exchange.

Opposite Paradise International Hotel, **Look Sharp Shop** (☎ 70757; Fatafehi Rd) sells quality Tongan printed T-shirts, including its signature *kava*-dyed range.

For fishing supplies head to the **Ikapuna Store** (☎ /fax 70174; VHF Channel 69; Fatafehi Rd). It's one of the best-stocked shops in the Pacific, with a good range of lures, as well as tackle, ropes and basic trawling rods and reels.

You can purchase duty free on the first day of arrival from a foreign port and on the last day before departure to a foreign port. **Leiola Duty Free Shop** (☎ 70748; Fatafehi Rd; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm Mon-Fri) sells alcohol, cigarettes, watches, jewellery and perfume.

There's a Saturday-morning **flea market** at Sailoame Market on Tu'i Rd.

### Getting There & Away

See p290 for details on international transport to and from Vava'u. See p285 for in-

formation on transport between Vava'u and other parts of Tonga.

### AIR

Lupepau'u Airport is on the northern side of Vava'u Island, about a 15-minute drive from Neiafu. **Airlines Tonga Air Fiji** (www.airlines.tonga.com) and **Peau Vava'u** (Neiafu ☎ 71480; Fatafehi Rd; Airport ☎ 71403) fly between Vava'u, Tongatapu and Ha'apai daily except Sunday. The former also services the Niuas from Vava'u twice weekly. See p285 for details.

See p285 for details on weekly flights between Samoa and Vava'u on **Polynesian Airlines** (☎ 70644; in Puataukanave Supermarket; Fatafehi Rd).

### BOAT

Two ferries travel weekly between Tongatapu and Vava'u via Ha'apai. The offices of **'Uata (Walter Line) Shipping** (☎ 70490), for MV *Pulupaki*, and **Shipping Corporation of Polynesia** (☎ 70128), for MV *'Olovaha*, are at Neiafu's main wharf and open the day before the ferry arrives and the day of the ferry. See p286 for ferry schedules and fares and contact the shipping company for MV *'Olovaha*'s scheduled trips to the Niuas from Vava'u.

Arriving by yacht in Vava'u is reasonably straightforward, if a little time-consuming (see p295). For details on customs see p278. Moorings can be hired from Beluga Diving (p246) for US\$9 per night, or the Moorings and Sailing Safaris (p246) for T\$15.

**Sailing Safaris Marine Centre** (☎ 70650; sailing.safaris@kalianetvav.to; VHF Channel 68; PO Box 46, Neiafu), near the Mermaid, looks after yachting needs including various sorts of fuel, engineering services and repairs, water, ice, laundry facilities and yacht slipway for boats up to 30 tonnes. It also offers poste restante.

See p294 for details on opportunities for cargo ship passage to and from Vava'u. If you're looking to crew, check out the notice boards at the Mermaid, the Bounty Bar and Adventure Backpackers.

### Getting Around TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Some accommodations, including island resorts, offer airport transfers. The Paradise International Hotel bus meets all incoming flights and is free for guests, T\$5 for non-guests. Taxis charge T\$12 for the airport to Neiafu trip.

### BICYCLE

Vava'u is hilly, but fairly manageable by bicycle. Adventure Backpackers hires out good bikes (half/full day T\$13/20) and the Friendly Islands Kayak Company runs mountain-bike tours (see p248).

### BOAT

For passenger transport to outer islands in the Vava'u Group, ask around close to 'Utukalongalu Market and at the jetty on the Old Harbour. You'll probably be able to strike a bargain with someone who's going your way. All offshore island resorts will provide boat transport for a fee.

Tide timetables and daily weather reports are posted at the Mermaid and Moorings. For information on hiring boats see (p246).

### BUS

Buses run from Sailoame and 'Utukalongalu Markets to most parts of Vava'u and connected islands, leaving when full. They usually make the run into town in the morning and return in the afternoon, so they're not very convenient for day trips from town.

### CAR

Tongan driving licences are available from the Police Station (p249). For details of what is required to obtain a license, see p288. Taxi drivers will often hire out their vehicles for a negotiable fee of around T\$55 to T\$65 per day (advice from experience: check the brakes!).

**JL Rental Car** (☎ 71128; Kovana Rd) has a few rental cars for T\$65 per day.

### TAXI

You'll find that taxi drivers often declare they have absolutely no change, so be sure to ensure you have enough *pa'anga* in smaller denominations (there's little likelihood the driver will return with your change). Taxis charge anywhere up to T\$3 around Neiafu, T\$10 to 'Ano and Hinakaua Beaches, T\$12 to the airport, T\$12 to Keitahi Beach and 'Utula'aina Point, and T\$14 for a fare to Taliha village.

Taxi companies in Neiafu:

**Issac** (☎ 12261) Minibus.

**JV Taxi & Rental Cars** (☎ 70136, 71136; Fatafehi Rd)

**Liviela** (☎ 70240; Fatafehi Rd)

## AROUND THE ISLAND

Vava'u Island is a different world once you're outside Neiafu. Not that Neiafu is bustling, but the rest of the island is just a tranquil jumble of small villages, plantations and bush, and is full of beautiful and interesting features.

The easiest way to get around is by taxi or guided tour but, with a bit of effort, you could cover good ground by bicycle, public transport or on foot.

You'll need the best part of a day to see either side of the island. The TVB has a map with information on sights of interest but many of the road cairns are now missing.

### Western Vava'u Island

#### SIA KO KAFOA

Vava'u Island is nearly bisected by the **Vaipua Inlet**, which separates the Neiafu area from western Vava'u. The inlet was used by ancient Polynesian canoes en route to the fort complex at the village of Feletoa.

The two sides of the island are connected by a causeway. On the western shore are the twin hills of Lei'ulu and Sia Ko Kafoa. Historically, this area has served as a burial ground, an *'esi* (resting site), a lookout and a fortification.

From Neiafu, follow the road north past the hospital and cross over the causeway spanning Vaipua Inlet. The road turns right as it climbs up to the village of Taoo (meaning 'spear').

**Lei'ulu**, the hill behind Taoo, is used as a burial ground. Walk downhill along the coral road behind Lei'ulu hill; when the road begins to angle right on an uphill slope, about 10 minutes from the village, you'll see the track to Sia Ko Kafoa (128m) turning uphill to the left. On the summit is an *'esi*, a mound used as a rest area by chiefs and nobles and a place where young virgins were presented to amorous chiefs.

The village of Tefisi has impressive views from its prominent, coloured church.

### LAKE 'ANO

This freshwater lake at the extreme western end of the island is an eerie sort of place. It's accessible only by a steep, muddy climb down from Longomapu village. If approaching it via the main road from the north, turn left at the intersection in the village and follow that road for several hundred metres.



Look carefully for a track turning off to the right and leading downhill – access is difficult after heavy rain. You can fish for edible *lapila* (telapia) fish in the lake.

### MOUNT MO'UNGALAPA

With a little effort you can climb Mt Mo'ungalapa (186m), the highest point on Vava'u Island, via a track just south of Longomapu. The spectacular view from the top takes in all of Vava'u and is well worth the effort.

### TOAFA LOOKOUT

On a clear day, the Toafa Lookout cliff, to the northwest of Longomapu, affords an expansive ocean view all the way to the volcanic islands of Late and Fonualei.

## Northern Central Vava'u Island

### FELETOA

The small village of Feletoa (which means 'many brave warriors'), between Neiafu and Holonga, is the site of a fortification constructed in 1808 to resist the conquest of Vava'u by Finau 'Ulu-kalala II. At the time, Feletoa was the centre of government for Vava'u, thanks to easy canoe access up Vaipua Inlet. The fortification is surrounded by trenches, which you may be able to make running perpendicular to the road.

On the south side of the road between Feletoa and the nearby village of Mataika is a **burial site** containing the *langi* (pyramidal stone) tomb of the ubiquitous Finau 'Ulu-

kalala II. Finau died of what appears to have been internal haemorrhaging after an animated wrestling contest in Neiafu – in spite of the sacrifice of a young Neiafuan child in an attempt to appease the greater powers of the day.

### 'UTULA'AINA POINT

'Utula'aina Point provides what is perhaps the most spectacular view on Vava'u Island and should not be missed. A couple of beautiful sandy coves can be reached from here also. To get to the trailhead, you may need to walk north from Holonga village (depending on the state of the track) to get to a track that forms a fork. Head straight ahead from the intersection and continue along the path as it curves to the left and emerges onto a grassy open area after about 15 minutes. Bear right through the bushes, climb the grassy knoll and you'll emerge on 'Utula'aina Point, surrounded by steep cliffs above a turbulent sea. On exceptionally clear days the volcanic outlines of Toku and Fonualei are visible. Look out for whales between July and November.

Fifty metres before arriving back at the trailhead, as the track bends right, a narrow path on the left leads (almost north at first) down to a beautiful secluded beach. It's a steep climb, but you're likely to have the place to yourself (keep an eye on your belongings though). A shallow coral shelf restricts swimming, but snorkelling at high tide is possible.

To get to the second beach, walk east from the trailhead along the 4WD track. Head north straight through the vanilla plantation (as long as you counter no objections) and follow the narrowing path to a copse and earth mound (once possibly a viewing platform for ancient Tongan kings). From the mound a path leads (in about 10 minutes) northeast down through forest and kava plantations to a beach. It's just as beautiful as the one close to the point and just as dramatic, guarded on each side by towering sentinels of rock.

There's no drinking water available on the coast.

## Eastern Vava'u Island

### MAKAVE

One of the most interesting beaches on the island, Makave is easily accessed on foot from Neiafu along the shore from the Old Harbour. Walk past the entrance to Hala Tafengatoto (p252) and follow the shore east towards Makave village, the legendary home of a mysterious, dark, giant people.

An hour from Neiafu, on the beach below Makave village, you'll find an ancient **canoe mooring** beside an obtrusive rock and cave. Further east are the refreshing **freshwater springs** of Matalave.

The name Makave (Take a Stone) refers to the ancient custom of piling a stone on Kilikilitefua Wall upon the birth of a child. To visit this wall, follow the faint track leading back to the road from the end of the beach. Turn south here and continue along the peninsula until you reach a small rise. At this point the remains of the stone wall, now less than 1m high, can be seen stretching nearly 100m across the peninsula. It once reached a height of 1.5m, but bits of it were removed for use in concrete cisterns.

### TOULA & VEIMUMUNI CAVE

The freshwater spring and swimming hole of Veimumuni Cave is carved into the rock east of Toula village, 3km south of Neiafu. From Toula, turn left (east) following the path uphill past a cemetery. As you descend to the beach, you'll see Veimumuni Cave in the bluff.

Several legends tell of a beautiful spirit maiden who appeared on the rock before the cave and teased mortal men with her beauty, tempting every passing soul with

the contents of the mysterious cave. One version has her finally being outwitted by a *tea* (albino) woman, who became the first mortal to taste the water inside the cave before being tickled into submission by a pair of *tevolo* (devil spirits). In reference to this story, the wells around Toula are called *vai 'ene* (tickling water). Another version of the tale has her being tricked into the clutches of an amorous young gardener. Watch the effect as you throw a stone into the water here.

From the cave, walk north along the shore to a series of further caves, once used by Toula villagers to bury enemies from other villages. At low tide there's plenty of marine life in the rock pools.

### ENE'IO & KEITAHU BEACHES

At the easternmost end of the island, near the village of Tu'ane-kivale, are a couple of seldom-visited, rugged beaches, better for strolling or sunbathing than for swimming or snorkelling.

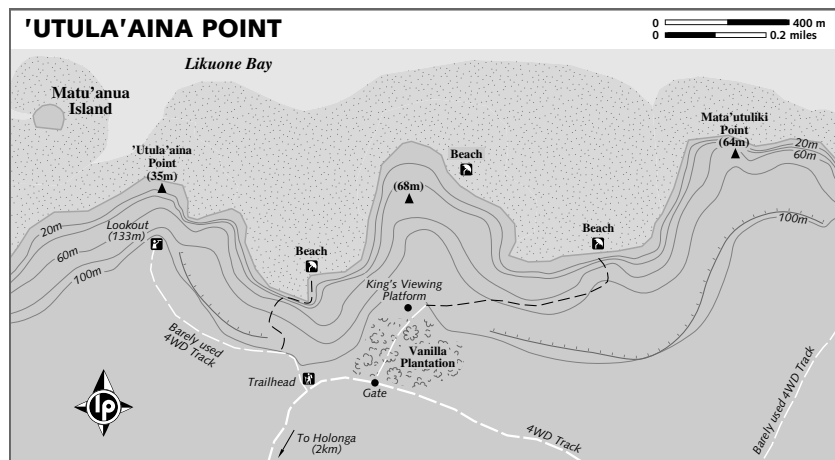
At **Keitahi Beach**, strong snorkellers will find some interesting things to look at in the large tide pools about 100m offshore (be careful as the currents are dangerous at high tide) or you can wander out across the reef with proper footwear at low tide. It's reached via a dirt road to the east between Ha'alaufuli and Tu'ane-kivale.

'Ene'io Beach is signposted from Neiafu and reached via a turnoff from Tu'ane-kivale. With pounding offshore surf and soaring cliffs, it's a secluded and stunning area to explore on foot but not good for swimming.

Further south, across the causeways to 'Uataloa and Koloa Islands, mangroves grow in an eerily still swamp area.

## OTHER VAVA'U GROUP ISLANDS

Pangaimotu and 'Utungake are connected to Vava'u Island by causeways, while other islands are reached by boat. Mala Island Resort and La Paella restaurant on Tapana Island welcome diners. Other island resorts primarily cater for their house guests, but may accept meal bookings made in advance (and may not be too welcoming if you just show up).



**PATRICIA LEDYARD MATHESON**

One of Tonga's most famous *palangi* (foreign) authors, Patricia Ledyard Matheson lived at 'Utulei (Vava'u) for 51 years until her death in October 2000. During that time she wrote three books: *Friendly Isles: A Tale of Tonga*; *'Utulei, My Tongan Home*; and *The Tongan Past*, revolving around her life in Tonga, its people and traditions.

Patricia was born in San Francisco in 1913 and served in the Pacific during WWII, during which she volunteered for front-line duty. Feeling drawn to Tonga, Pat arrived in Vava'u during 1949 to take up a position as principal of Siu'ilikutapu College. She soon married and set up home at the entrance to the Port of Refuge. Known for her hospitality, sharp wit and sharper sense of humour, she established a fine academic library. Pat was still crossing the harbour to Neiafu in a small boat with a dodgy outboard motor weeks before she died. She is buried in the village cemetery on 'Utulei.

**PANGAIMOTU**

area 8.86 sq km / pop 1298

Just across the scenic causeway from Toulavillage is Pangai (Royal Island), so called because it belongs to the royal estate.

'Ano and **Hinakaua Beaches**, near the south end of Pangaimotu, are actually two different parts of the same beautiful beach, with sheltered turquoise water, emerald vegetation, good snorkelling and a safe anchorage. 'Ano Beach Feast (see p255) is held here weekly or you can catch a dinghy across to the island of Tapanavillage for La Paella restaurant (see right).

The village of 'Utulei lies across the Port of Refuge from Neiafu's Kilikili Pier. You can kayak or catch a boat across the harbour from Neiafu, or drive round, park on the hill and walk down to the village. Writer and long-time resident Patricia Ledyard Matheson set her autobiographical accounts of island life here (see the boxed text above).

**Tavalau Beach** is a five-minute scenic walk north from the eastern end of the 'Utungake causeway.

**TAPANAVILLAGE**

Tapanavillage has a few beaches, is a popular island with yachties and has a number of moorings. At the **Ark Gallery** (☎ 12673; VHF

Channel 10; Anchorage 11), located on a house boat, expat Sheri sells her paintings and other artworks inspired by her surroundings and the Tongan way of life.

The island's **La Paella** (☎ 16310; VHF Channel 10; dinner & entertainment T\$50) gets rave reviews for its plentiful paella and lively entertainment. Go there if you can. Land-lubbers can get a boat pick-up from 'Ano Beach; taxis from Neiafu cost T\$10. You can stay in **La Casita** (d T\$100) here.

**'UTUNGAKE**

The long, thin island of 'Utungake is connected by a causeway to Pangaimotu and has a pleasant beach near its southern tip.

Set in immaculate gardens, **Lucky's Beach Houses** (☎ /fax 71075; luckysbeach@yahoo.com; Talihau; tent site for 2 T\$25, fale s/d incl breakfast T\$35/60, beachhouse T\$58/80, extra person T\$25) has a king-sized bed downstairs and a day-bed upstairs, overlooking the water at the tip of 'Utungake. Rustic romantics will love the traditional thatched *fale*, with shuttered windows onto the beach, nets and hurricane-lamp lighting. The tent site includes a tent and has its own sparkling bathroom facilities. Guests can launch a kayak off the beach to explore the islands and paddle over to nearby Mala. It's the only accommodation on an otherwise quiet village. Dinner costs from T\$20.

Primarily aimed at the 'baby-boomer' market on prebooked packages, the three-star **Tongan Beach Resort** (☎ /fax 70380; www.the.tongan.com; VHF Channel 71; high season d & tw with bathroom US\$160, extra bed US\$50; half-/full-board US\$48/60) on Hikutamole Beach, has standard rooms, a lovely sand-floor *fale* bar and a restaurant. Bring reef shoes. Children under 10 stay for free and pay 50% for meals.

**MALA**

Just south of 'Utungake, the small island of Mala has a sandy swimming beach and a welcoming resort. The Japanese Gardens is a beautiful snorkelling spot between Mala and Kapa, though a strong current flows between these two islands and 'Utungake. Beware of a legendary cannibal god who reputedly lives on Mala and is said to capture and devour passing boaters.

**Mala Island Resort** (☎ 71304; VHF Channel 16; mala@kalianet.to; dm T\$50, s/d bungalow with bathroom T\$125/150; meal plan T\$55; ♿) is an upbeat, wel-

coming place where some wild stories get exchanged (you may want to reach for the occasional grain of salt). The *tapa*-lined bungalows have creaky wooden floors, beautiful views and plenty of charm (though remodelling is planned in the near future). There's dinner and dancing on Friday, a Tongan feast on Saturday, and a Sunday barbecue. Plenty of yachties file into the broad restaurant (open to nonguests) and join guests for sundowners (happy hour 4pm to 7pm), often staying on for dinner and extra nights at Anchorage 6. Transfers from the airport and town cost T\$25 per person, or a water taxi can meet you at Talihau Beach. Low-season rates available.

**SOUTHERN VAVA'U GROUP ISLANDS  
Hunga & Fofoa**

At the centre of the westernmost cluster of the Vava'u group of islands is a large, placid lagoon formed by Hunga, Kalau and Fofoa. It looks like a volcanic crater lake with three small openings to the sea and offers superb anchorage – although entering can be tricky – and impressive snorkelling.

Meaning 'big fish, many fish', **Ika Lahi Lodge** (☎ /fax 70611; ikalahi@tongafishing.com; www.tongafishing.com; PO Box 24, Neiafu; tw/tr/q NZ\$295/285/280; meals per day per person US\$60) is just what you want a fishing-focused resort to aspire to. On the Hunga shore of the beautiful

sheltered lagoon, it's handily close to the deep ocean and has four guest units with balconies (fans work when the generator runs from 6.30am to midnight) and plenty of interest for nonfishing partners.

On the cliffs behind the resort is a lookout from where humpback whales can be seen between July and November.

**Foe'ata & Foelifuka**

Immediately south of Hunga, Foe'ata offers glorious white beaches (sometimes diminished by tides) and good snorkelling. At low tide you can walk across the sand bar to Foelifuka, which has an anchorage on its north side.

This ecododge-cum-eccentric dream resort has an idyllic beach position on Foe'ata. Each of the six large *fale* at **Blue Lagoon** (☎ /fax 70247; VHF Channel 16; www.foiata-island.com; standard fale d T\$160, superior fale for up to 4 people T\$280, extra bed T\$40; half/full board T\$90/100) is uniquely constructed in its immediate environment from materials sourced on and around Foe'ata and Foelifuka – one even has an open-air, mosquito-netted bed on the balcony – and include private bathrooms with hot showers. The German chef/owner serves some of Vava'u's best food and may be willing to cater for yachties (tip: organise *before* landing!). Language sometimes verges on the colourful. Transfers cost T\$130.

**MARINER'S MYSTERIOUS CAVE**

Will Mariner was shown this cave hidden below the water's surface by Finau 'Ulukalala II. Puzzled that several chiefs he'd seen dive into the water had failed to return to the surface, he was instructed to follow their example and was guided into the dim cathedral-like cavern. He observed that the cave was about 14m high and 14m wide, with narrow channels branching off all around. As they drank *kava* on a rock platform inside, one of the chiefs related this story:

A tyrannical governor of Vava'u learned of a conspiracy against him and ordered the primary conspirator drowned and all his family killed. The conspirator's beautiful daughter, betrothed to a young chief, was rescued by another chief, who also had amorous intentions. To prevent her imminent demise, he spirited her away into a secret cavern and visited her daily, bringing gifts of food, clothing, coconuts and oils for her skin. His ministrations were so sincere that, eventually, he won her heart as well as her gratitude.

Realising that he couldn't just bring her out of the cavern, he formulated an elaborate plan, which involved a secret voyage to Fiji with some underling chiefs and their wives. When they inquired why he would attempt such a trip without a Tongan wife, he replied that he would probably find one along the way. True to his word, he stopped the canoes before the bare rock above the cave entrance, dived into the water and emerged a few minutes later with the girl, whom his companions surmised to be a goddess until they recognised her striking resemblance to the daughter of the condemned conspirator. They all went off to Fiji, only returning to Vava'u two years later after hearing of the death of the tyrant governor.

## Nuapapu

Nuapapu is best known for the hidden cave at its northern end known as **Mariner's Cave** (see the boxed text, p261) after Will Mariner, who was the first European to see it.

A strange atmospheric phenomenon occurs inside the cave. Pacific swells surging through the entrance compress trapped air and when the sea recedes every few seconds, the moisture condenses into a heavy fog, the result of water vapour cooling as it expands. As soon as another wave enters the opening, the fog instantly vanishes. To enter the cave, snorkelling gear is recommended. You need to be a confident swimmer to try this and don't go in if the swell is strong. Enter the cave when the swell pulls you towards it, exit when the swell pushes you out, and be sure to look up before surfacing. The main entrance is a couple of metres below the surface and the tunnel is about 4m long. Divers can access a second exit at 15m depth.

Between the southern end of Nuapapu and the adjoining island of Vaka'eitu are the Coral Gardens, which offered some of the best snorkelling in Vava'u before sustaining damage from a cyclone.

## Vaka'eitu

The small, hilly island of Vaka'eitu has secluded beaches on each side, a secure overnight anchorage and some of Vava'u's best snorkelling in the nearby coral gardens. Check with the TVB for details about the island's **Popao Village Resort** (☎ 70308; info@popao.org), which has stunning views over the islands from its hilltop position (a bit of a walk up from the beach).

## Kapa

Beautiful **Swallows' Cave** ('Anapekepeka) cuts into a cliff on the west side of the northern end of Kapa Island. Despite its name, it's actually inhabited by hundreds of white-rumped swiftlets (*Collocalia spodiopygia*) that flit about in the dim light and nest in the darkness. In the late afternoon, the slanting sunlight lights up the water.

The water is crystal clear despite the floor of the cave being 18m below the surface and the only access is by boat (unless you want to abseil in, see p248). On entering the cave, you'll see Bell Rock hanging down on your left (along with graffiti dated from 1886 and 1891). When struck with a solid object, it

emits melodic vibrations. Deeper in the cave, you'll see a shaft of light shining through a hole in the ceiling; from there, you can follow a rocky trail into the adjoining dry cave.

Organise to snorkel in the cave on your tour (or you may just get a quick boat view) but be aware of the current that sweeps past the entrance and may cause problems for weak swimmers.

Some excellent snorkelling can be had off **Port Mourelle**, on the protected western bay of Kapa Island, which was the original landing site of the Spaniard Don Francisco Antonio Mourelle, the first European to visit Vava'u. It was here that he took on water from the springs of the swamp near Falevai (House of Water). A track from Port Mourelle leads north and south along the spine of the island. If you would like to camp, ask for permission in the island's villages, Kapa, 'Otea and Falevai. The **Barnacle Beach Feast** (contact the TVB) is held at Port Mourelle.

## Nuku

A magical white sand spit runs off the tiny, uninhabited island of Nuku, into gradients of turquoise and azure water. It's a favoured spot for numerous official functions, celebrations and private parties and locals often paddle over from Kapa to collect a small fee from anyone who stops here. Watch the current at the western tip of the island.

## Taunga, Ngau & Pau

Just south of Kapa, the inviting and sporadically inhabited islands of Ngau and Taunga boast idyllic beaches with fine snorkelling and four good anchorages. At low tide, Ngau and Taunga are connected by a fine sandy beach. Ngau is in turn connected to the uninhabited island of Pau by a slender ribbon of sand that is exposed except at the turn of high tide. There's a superb anchorage in the bight of Ngau on the eastern shore.

## 'Eue'iki

The raised island of 'Eue'iki has easy boat access to the stunning white beach, and a coral garden off the southern shore. You can circumnavigate the island in around 45 minutes at low tide, and explore the caves at the far side of the resort.

The Australian reality-TV series *Treasure Island* was filmed on 'Eue'iki, hence the name of the resort.

**Treasure Island Resort** (☎ 12935; treasure@kalianet.to; 'Eue'iki; d fale with bathroom T\$150; meal package T\$90) Located in a magical setting on the north side of the island, the resort's thatched bar/restaurant perches on a white, coral-free sandy beach which descends to 70m, making it ideal for swimming and simply watching whales pass by (in season). Solid *fale* with water-view balconies are spaced along the beachfront and feature firm beds, private bathrooms (check if hot water is now available), clam-shell soap holders and hibiscus flower adornments. Two family *fale* also have bunk beds. Guests can make use of the kayaks to explore nearby 'Euakafa or possibly fish with the English- and German-speaking owners, but bring your own snorkelling gear. The European cuisine generally features fish (the day's catch) or meat, and may be available to yachties if booked ahead. Return boat transfers cost T\$60.

## 'Euakafa

A sandy beach rings this relatively small, uninhabited island's north side. From its eastern end a trail leads through the forest and mango trees to the summit (100m), containing the overgrown tomb of Talafaiva, a queen of Tonga (see the boxed text, below). On the way up you can peer through the trees to stunning vistas of the islands to the northeast. 'Euakafa is a good spot for swimming and snorkelling – there's a coral garden south of the island.

## Mounu & 'Ovalau

Just southeast of Vaka'eitu are two more of those idyllic sunning, snorkelling, swimming and lazing-on-the-beach islands, Mounu and 'Ovalau. You can walk completely around Mounu in a few minutes and there's good snorkelling.

Vava'u's most elegant accommodation for those wanting privacy and their own space for contemplation, **Mounu Island Resort** (☎ 70747; VHF Channel 77; www.mounuisland.com; d fale with bathroom US\$175, honeymoon fale with bathroom US\$200; meals per day US\$70) consists of a few ecofriendly wooden *fale*, linked by coconut palm-lined sandy paths. Each has its own balcony, and hammocks to moom in are slung between trees nearby. Pass through a humpback whale's jaw bones to the breezy restaurant and well-stocked bar. Island-to-airport transfers cost US\$60 and excellent whale-watching tours are run by the owners. Three nights minimum (unless agreed in advance); children under 12 not accepted.

## Maninita

Located in the remote, extreme south of the Vava'u Group is the tiny wooded island of Maninita. The terraced coral reef on the approach forms lovely tide pools and the island is an important breeding ground for birds. There's an anchorage on the island's western side. Contact Mounu Island Resort (above) to organise bird-watching trips.

### 'THE FO'UI DID IT'

Back in the mists of time, a Tongan chief called Tele'a came to live on 'Euakafa because he considered Vava'u the most beautiful part of the kingdom. He took a lovely girl, Talafaiva, as his third wife and accepted her dowry, which consisted of 100 other attractive girls. The whole family set up house on the plateau of little 'Euakafa.

Outside the royal residence grew a *fo'ui* tree, which Talafaiva wanted chopped down. But Tele'a refused to do so. One day, while Tele'a was out fishing, Lepuha, one of Tonga's irresistible 'handsome men', arrived to 'conquer' the king's bride. By climbing the *fo'ui* tree, he was able to avoid the royal guard and enter the castle in order to seduce the queen. All would have been well had he not tattooed his signature mark on her belly.

When Tele'a saw the mark he was outraged, but all the queen could do was blame the tree that she'd wanted to destroy in the first place. 'The *fo'ui* did it,' she said, and the *fo'ui* has served as a Tongan scapegoat ever since.

Tele'a ordered his wife beaten for her indiscretion, but in doing so his servant inadvertently killed her. The chief built her a tomb on the summit of 'Euakafa, which can still be visited, although a body has never been found. Some claim that it was stolen by Lepuha. The *fo'ui*, by the way, has gone as well.

### VAVA'U'S OUTLYING VOLCANIC ISLANDS

On clear days, the distinctive silhouette of **Late** is visible to the west from the mainland. When King George I realised that some of the outer areas of his kingdom were being ravaged by blackbirders (South American slave traders, see p222), he evacuated Late and resettled its people in Hunga, beside the lagoon.

The heavily forested island is dominated by a 555m-high volcanic crater (dormant since 1854) and remained uninhabited until breeding pairs of the endangered Niufo'ou megapode were installed there in the 1990s in an attempt to protect it from extinction. For further information, see the boxed text, p267.

Between Late and the immense cone of Kao (Ha'apai), far to the south, enigmatic **Late'iki** first broke the surface in 1858, but was gone by 1898. On 12 December 1967, it made a 'pulsing glow on the horizon' during a particularly violent eruption, had reached an altitude of 18m within a week, and subsequently went down again. In May 1979 the island, which locals nicknamed Metis Shoal, began spewing and erupting and the king decided to check it out. On 7 July 1979 the king sailed to the site and looked on as his son planted the Tongan flag on the new land, christening it Late'iki ('Little Late').

On a clear day, **Fonualei** can be seen from Vava'u's northern cliffs, 64km to its northwest. In 1846 the island erupted, covering parts of the main island with volcanic ash. This is the island Mourelle named Amargura (Bitterness) when he discovered it was barren and wouldn't provide him and his crew with much-needed and long-awaited supplies. The ferry passes within a couple of kilometres of its eastern coast en route to the Niuas from Neiafu.

Fonualei's old and worn volcanic neighbour, **Toku**, remains uninhabited since its evacuation during the blackbirding scare of the 1860s. Its inhabitants resettled in 'Utulei village on Pangaimotu. There's a freshwater lake near its summit and it's possible to climb, but difficult as there are no tracks.

### EASTERN VAVA'U GROUP ISLANDS

Transport to the eastern islands is much shorter and easier if you start from Neiafu's Old Harbour rather than the Port of Refuge.

#### 'Ofu

The waters near 'Ofu are the primary habitat of the prized but endangered 'ofu shell – so discourage their collection by resisting the temptation to buy them. The island is friendly and well worth a day's exploration.

#### Kenutu, Lolo & 'Umuna

The small uninhabited island of Kenutu, just east of 'Ofu, has superb beaches, and

coral patches south of the island. The land itself is heavily wooded but there's a well-defined trail across it to steep cliffs on the eastern coast.

The reef between Kenutu and Lolo, immediately south, is very dramatic. On the eastern side the waves crash and boil, while the crystalline waters on the western shore are calm.

'Umuna is another uninhabited island just north of Kenutu. At its centre is a large cave containing a freshwater pool. Both Lolo and 'Umuna are accessible from Kenutu by crossing over the reef on foot at low tide.