

American Samoa

American Samoa is a vastly underrated tropical destination that will delight you with its magnificent mountain ridges, wonderfully peaceful bays, soporific villages, and some of the world's most remote, uncluttered and utterly beautiful reefs and beaches. Once you land on the main island, Tutuila, it takes very little effort to look beyond the imported Americana of its main settlement, Pago Pago, to the shadows cast by the spectacular peaks crowding around the deepwater harbour, the forest-lined roads switchbacking over isolated mountain passes, and palm-shaded beaches that paradoxically empty the mind but fill the imagination. The locals also help you to acclimatise to this relaxing habitat by encouraging you to sing along to their favourite tunes on the crowded island buses, welcoming you repeatedly in the streets, and spinning out traditional stories on long, humid evenings.

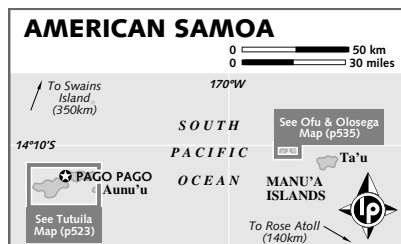
Setting foot on one of the virtually untouched strips of sand in the outlying Manu'a Islands will further seduce your senses. Few experiences compare to the feeling you get when you emerge from the superb, coral-filled waters off Ofu Beach and look up to see nothing but turquoise waters, sea birds crisscrossing the faces of enormous cliffs, and the hulking silhouette of Ta'u way off in the oceanic distance. Hardly anything disturbs the peace and quiet here except for the occasional barking dog and passing pick-up truck – otherwise, there's only the movement of wind and water to ruffle the calm.

Whether you're a hiker keen on checking out some of the highest sea cliffs in the world on Ta'u, a history buff wanting to see your first star mound, or a leisure-seeker with a deep appreciation of beach life, you'll be glad you visited this unsung paradise.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Realise you have the entirety of **Ofu Beach** (p534) to yourself
- Stride along Tutuila's mountainous spine to the top of **Mt Alava** (p525)
- Snorkel and swim off pristine **Alega Beach** (p528)
- Hike across wild **Aunu'u** (p528)
- Fly to remote Ta'u to explore the **National Park of American Samoa** (p535)





CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The best time to visit American Samoa is during the dry season from May to October. A less comfortable time to arrive is during the region's wet season between November and April. That said, most rainfall occurs at night and the main discomfort (excepting the odd cyclone) is caused by higher levels of humidity. The exception is the harbour area of Tutuila, where the famous Rainmaker Mountain ensures that the surrounding area receives over 5000mm of precipitation annually. For more climate information, turn to p827.

If you intend visiting the islands around December–January, remember that this is the peak holiday period for Samoan expats living in the USA, Australia and New Zealand (NZ). Book flights well in advance.

HISTORY

Prehistory

Archaeological finds near the villages of Tula and Aoa at the eastern tip of Tutuila, and at To'aga on Ofu, reveal that the islands have been inhabited for more than 3000 years. In terms of mythology, many Samoans believe

that Manu'a was the first land to emerge at the hands of the god Tagaloa. The Tu'i Manu'a (paramount chief of the islands) was held in high esteem by Samoans, and was likely revered as the sovereign of all Polynesia. Although various conflicts ultimately split the islands, the paramount chief was still a proud and powerful figure at the time of cession to the USA at the beginning of the 20th century.

European Contact

In 1722 Dutchman Jacob Roggeveen sighted the Manu'a Islands, but sailed on without landing. In May 1768 the French explorer Captain Louis-Antoine de Bougainville bartered with the inhabitants of the Manu'a Islands, but merely sighted Tutuila. The first expedition to set foot on Tutuila was headed by Frenchman Jean-François de Galaup, comte de la Pérouse, who landed at Fagasa in 1787. The encounter had a tragic finish, with the French and the Samoans fighting each other at A'asu: 12 sailors and 39 villagers were killed, and A'asu was christened Massacre Bay (see p529).

US Military Rule

A Samoan civil war in the 1870s and 1880s was co-opted by the USA, Britain and Germany into an argument over which foreign power should rule the islands. By the time the tropical dust had settled, control of western Samoa had been granted to Germany and, by 1900, the islands of eastern Samoa had been formally annexed to the USA by a deed of cession signed by all local chiefs. Eastern Samoa became a naval station under the jurisdiction of the US Department of the Navy. In exchange, the USA agreed to protect the traditional rights of indigenous Samoans. The inhabitants acquired the status of US nationals but were denied a vote or representation in Washington.

In 1905 the military commander of Tutuila was given the title of governor and the territory officially became known as American Samoa.

Increasing Democracy

Until the 1960s American Samoa retained its traditional social structure and subsistence economy. But under the orders of President John F Kennedy, American Samoa was swiftly modernised, with European-style

BEST EATING

American Samoa has an obvious fondness for artery-clogging US-style fast food such as burgers and steaks, but fresh seafood and island-grown produce is not hard to track down. The following are Lonely Planet's top four eating experiences in American Samoa:

- Tisa's Barefoot Bar (p532) is a waterfront institution that will put a smile on your face and on your stomach after you chew through one of their fabulous, freshest-of-fresh dinners.
- There's no finer place than the outside deck of the Pago Pago Yacht Club (p532) to munch on cheap, fresh seafood, drink a cold Vailima beer and watch one of Pago Pago's frequent storms blow in from beyond Rainmaker Mountain.
- Take your hearty, home-cooked meal and a refreshment from Va'oto Lodge (p537) across the airstrip and down to the hammock idly rocked by ocean breezes on one of beautiful Ofu's most stunning stretches of beach.
- Enjoy the spectacle of a traditional, high-energy Samoan song-and-dance routine before gorging yourself on a lavish buffet at Sadie's Restaurant (p532).

homes replacing traditional *fale* (houses with thatched roof and open sides), electrification, and the construction of the Rainmaker Hotel, an international airport and tuna canneries.

Between 1967 and 1975 American Samoans voted, in a series of referenda, for direction by appointed governors. A subsequent referendum determined that they were ready for democratically elected leadership and some measure of autonomy. In 1980 American Samoans were allowed, for the first time, to elect a nonvoting delegate to serve in the US House of Representatives.

Recent Decades

In January 1987 the territory was hit by cyclone Tusi, one of the worst storms in recorded history. The Manu'a Islands were particularly hard hit. To compound matters, cyclones Ofa and Val ploughed through the area in early 1990 and late 1991. Then, in late 2005, the eye of the massive tropical

storm Olaf passed right over the islands. For more on tropical cyclones, see p61.

THE CULTURE

More than any other Polynesian people, Samoans have maintained their traditional way of life in their sauna of a climate, and still follow closely the social hierarchies, customs and courtesies established long before the arrival of Europeans.

For a profile of the Samoan psyche and a description of the Samoan lifestyle, see the cultural detail provided in the Samoa chapter (p480).

Population

American Samoa has a population of about 63,500, most of whom live on the main island of Tutuila. The territory has a high population growth rate, but this is offset by emigration to Hawai'i and mainland America. Some 1500 foreigners reside in American Samoa, most of whom are Koreans or Chinese involved in the tuna or garment industries. About one third of this number are *palagi* (Westerners) who hold government jobs, usually in the teaching or health fields.

ARTS

American Samoa shares its artistic traditions with Samoa, from the energetic song-and-dance routines called *fiafia* and the satirisation of their elders by village youth in the skit-based *Faleaitu* (meaning 'House of Spirits'), to the breezy architecture of the *fale*, intricate *pe'a* (male tattoos) and *malu* (female tattoos), and the lovely *siapo* (bark cloth) and *ie toga* (fine mats) used in customary gift exchanges. For more on these, see the Arts section of the Samoa chapter (p482).

LANGUAGE

For an overview of the pronunciation of the Samoan language, and some introductory words and phrases, see the Language section of the Samoa chapter (p483).

ENVIRONMENT Geography

American Samoa has a total land area of 197 sq km. The main island, Tutuila, is 30km long and up to 6km wide. The Manu'a group, 100km east of Tutuila, consists of the islands of Ta'u, Ofu and Olosega, all wildly steep and beautiful examples of volcanic remnants.

AMERICAN SAMOA FACTS

- **Capital city (and island):** Pago Pago (Tutuila)
- **Population:** 63,500
- **Land area:** 197 sq km
- **International telephone code:** 1-684
- **Currency:** US dollar (US\$)
- **Languages:** Samoan, English
- **Greetings:** *Talofa*; *Malo* (informal)
- **Website:** www.amerikasamoa.info

The easternmost part of the territory is tiny Rose Atoll, two minuscule specks of land (plus a surrounding reef) comprising a US national wildlife refuge. The refuge exists primarily to protect the green turtle, as well as the extremely rare hawksbill turtle. Only scientific research expeditions are currently allowed to visit the atoll.

Equally tiny Swains Island is situated 350km north-northwest of Tutuila and consists of a 3.25-sq-km ring of land surrounding a brackish lagoon. Both culturally and geographically it belongs to Tokelau (a NZ territory north of the Samoas), but in 1925 the island's owner, the Jennings family, persuaded the USA to annex Swains Island as part of American Samoa.

Ecology

The wild inhabitants of American Samoa includes two species of flying fox, *pili* (skinks), *mo'o* (geckos), and the harmless *gata* (Pacific boa) snake which is found only on Ta'u. The surrounding waters are home to pilot whales, dolphins and porpoises, while hawksbill turtles occasionally breed on remote beaches. Bird species include the nearly flightless banded rail, the barn owl and the superb *sega* (blue-crowned lory). While walking in rainforests, listen for the haunting calls of the rare multicoloured fruit doves (only 50 survive on Tutuila) and the beautiful green-and-white Pacific pigeons.

Tutuila is characterised by broadleaf evergreen rainforest. Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u host temperate forest vegetation such as tree ferns, grasses, wild coleus and epiphytic plants.

TUTUILA

pop 62,000 / area 132 sq km

Pago Pago's incredible harbour, dominated by breathtaking cliffs and verdant slopes, exemplifies the natural beauty you'll find throughout American Samoa's main island. The serpentine coastline of Tutuila is punctuated by truly lovely coves and bays where you can snorkel, swim and snooze in blissful solitude, while the island's sharp central ridge rises to some impressive peaks. Hike along a summit trail high above Tutuila's centrepiece harbour, trek across the rugged satellite islet of Aunu'u, sink down on the warm sand of an uncluttered beach, or let one of the colourful local buses spirit you with chaotic aplomb from one end of this stunning island to the other.

ORIENTATION

Tutuila's one main road follows the twisty coastline from Fagamalo in the island's northwest to Onenoa in the far northeast, a distance of 50km. Several narrower paved roads connect this road with outlying villages, particularly those along the heavily eroded north coast. Heading southwest from Pago Pago along the coastal road, you soon reach Nu'uuli, a loosely defined commercial area along the main road between Coconut Point and the airport turn-offs. South of Nu'uuli is another commercial area called Tafuna. The island's highest point is Matafao Peak (653m).

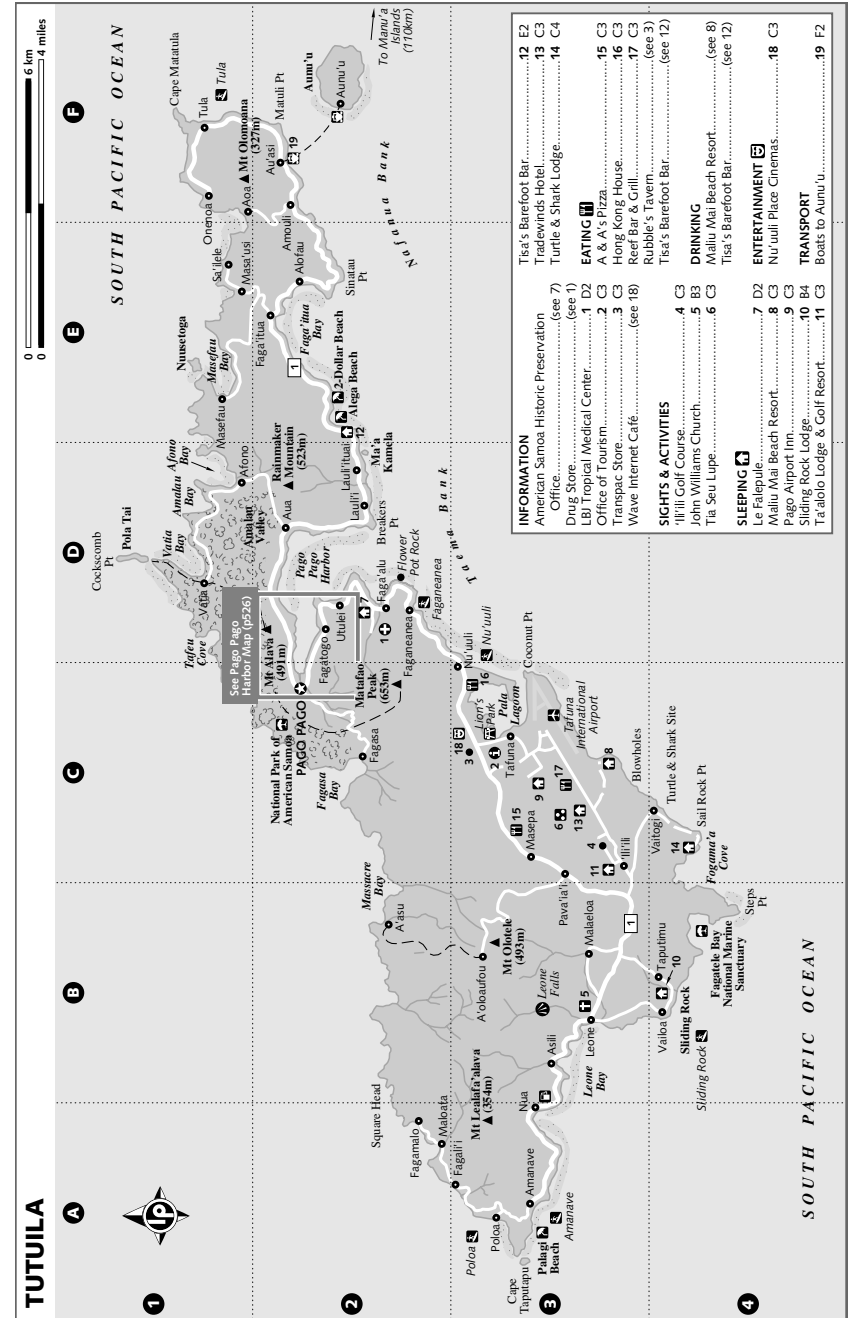
TUTUILA IN...

Two Days

Breakfast early at **DDW** (p532), then hike up **Mt Alava** (p525). Visit the **Jean P Haydon Museum** (p525), enjoy an afternoon of swimming at **Alega Beach** (p528), and stay overnight at **Tisa's Barefoot Bar** (p531). The next day, lose yourself in the wild interior of **Aunu'u** (p528) before heading west to the **Turtle & Shark Site** (p529) and **Cape Taputapu** (p530). Finish the day with dinner at **Evie's Cantina** (p533).

Four Days

It's easy to double your itinerary. Hikers can continue from Mt Alava to beautiful Vatia in the **National Park of American Samoa** (p527), or walk to **Massacre Bay** (p529). Marine enthusiasts should visit **Fagatele Bay** (p529), while budding archaeologists can visit **Tia Seu Lupe** (p528). Whatever happens, have a drink at **Pago Pago Yacht Club** (p533) with its superb sightline to **Rainmaker Mountain** (p527).



Maps

The Office of Tourism distributes a reasonably up-to-date *American Samoa* map (free) with a plan of Pago Pago on one side.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Iupeli Siliva Wesley Bookshop (Map p526; ☎ 633 2201; Pago Pago) Has some Samoa history and culture titles, plus mass-market paperbacks.

Transpac Store (Map p523; ☎ 699 9589; Nu'uuli) Sells a range of Samoa-focused books.

Internet Access

DDW (Don't Drink the Water; Map p526; ☎ 633 5297; Pago Pago)

Feleti Barstow Public Library (Map p526; ☎ 633 5816; Pago Pago) Obtain a temporary library card to access the Internet in the 2nd-floor Computer Lab. Alternatively, pay US\$5 to access the computers for a single day.

Wave Internet Café (Map p523; ☎ 699 7077; Nu'uuli Place Shopping Center, Nu'uuli)

Medical Services

Drug Store (Map p523; ☎ 633 4630; Faga'alu; ☎ 7.45am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) A well-stocked pharmacy.

LBJ Tropical Medical Center (Map p523; ☎ 633 1222-9; Faga'alu; ☎ emergency 24hr) This centre provides basic medical services.

Money

There are no banks or moneychangers at the airport, so bring some US dollars with you.

ANZ Amerika Samoa Bank (Map p526; ☎ 633 1151; Pago Pago) Has an ATM here, at Pago Plaza, and inside the Tradewinds (p532).

Bank of Hawai'i (Map p526; ☎ 633 4226; Centennial Office Bldg, Utulei, Pago Pago) Has an ATM.

Post

Post office (Map p526; Pago Pago) Travellers should have mail addressed to themselves care of General Delivery, Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799.

Tourist Information

American Samoa Historic Preservation Office

(Ashpo; Map p523; ☎ 633 2384; www.ashpo.org; Matafao) Excellent contact for those intrigued by Samoan history. The office is 400m north of the turn-off to the LBJ Tropical Medical Center.

National Park Visitor Information Center (Map p526; ☎ 633 7082; www.nps.gov/npsa/home.htm; Pago Plaza, Pago Pago; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Very helpful place, with info on the National Park of American

Samoa and walking trails. The NPS (National Park Service) runs a homestay programme (www.nps.gov/npsa/home-stay/index.htm) where visitors are put in touch with villagers who offer accommodation. Options have become limited in recent years, but there are still a couple of possibilities around Vatia on Tutuila, and on Ta'u. The cost averages around US\$40 per day, including meals.

Office of Tourism (Map p523; ☎ 699 9411; www.amerikasamoa.info; Tafuna; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) Pick up the excellent *A Walking Tour of Historic Fagatogo*.

TRANSPORT

Getting There & Away

AIR

International flights arrive at Tafuna International Airport, 15km southwest of Pago Pago Harbor. For full details of such flights, see p540.

Inter-Island Airways (in Pago Pago ☎ 699 7100, in Ofu 655 7100, in Ta'u 677 7100; www.interislandair.com) services the 30-minute route between Tutuila and the Manu'a Islands. Flights between Tafuna International Airport on Tutuila and the tiny airstrip on Ofu cost from US\$140 return; ditto flights between Tafuna and the airstrip on Ta'u.

BOAT

The **American Samoa Inter-Island Shipping Company** (☎ 633 4707) operates a boat called the *Manu'a Tele*, which departs Pago Pago for the Manu'a Islands on Wednesday at 10pm; the trip takes eight hours and costs US\$35 one way (plus US\$5 per piece of luggage). Buy tickets from 8am on the day of departure.

The **MV Sili** (☎ 633 5532) departs Pago Pago for the Manu'a group every second Friday at 10pm. One-way tickets cost US\$20, plus US\$1 per piece of luggage, and ticketing/check-in takes place between 8am and 4pm on the day of departure.

Both the *Manu'a Tele* and the *MV Sili* depart from the dock near the Fono in Pago Pago (see Map p526). Ask each company about pick-up times from Ofu and Ta'u.

For details of boat services to Aunu'u, see the section on that island (p528). For info on the boat service between Tutuila and 'Upolu in Samoa, see p540.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Buses between Pago Pago Harbor and Tafuna International Airport are marked

'Tafuna', run frequently during the day, and cost US\$1. If arriving at night you'll need to get a cab into Pago Pago (between US\$12 and US\$15). There's a taxi stand just outside the airport entrance.

BUS

Riding Tutuila's colourful 'aiga (extended family) buses – small pick-up trucks modified for public transport and equipped with ear-busting sound systems – is a highlight of a visit to American Samoa. These buses do unscheduled runs around Pago Pago Harbor and the more remote areas of the island from the main terminal at the market in Fagatogo (see Map p526).

Buses regularly head east to Aua (US\$0.75) and Tula (US\$1.25), and west to Tafuna (US\$1) and Leone (US\$1). Less frequently, buses go to Fagasa (US\$0.75), A'oloa'ofou on the central ridge (US\$1), Amanave (US\$1.25) and Fagamalo in the far northwest (US\$1.50); a trip to the northwest villages often means disembarking at Leone and catching another bus from there. Buses also head over Rainmaker Pass to Vatia (US\$1.50).

CAR

A 2WD is fine for motoring around Tutuila. Car-hire agencies charge between US\$60 and US\$100 per day. For insurance information, see p541.

Some recommended companies:

Avis Car Rental (☎ 699 2746; res@avissamoa.com; Tafuna International Airport)

Kokonut Car Rentals (Map p526; ☎ 633 7855; kokonutrentals@yahoo.com; Pago Pago)

Sadie's Car Rentals (Map p526; ☎ 633 5981; sadies@samoatelco.com; Sadie Thompson Inn, Pago Pago)

TAXI

Taxis are plentiful and convenient in Pago Pago, Nu'uuli and Tafune, but are prohibitively expensive for island touring.

PAGO PAGO

pop 5000

Personality-wise, Pago Pago (*pa-ngo pa-ngo*) is both The Beauty and The Beast. The town's more attractive side is represented by its stunning harbour setting – a deep bowl of seawater overlooked by magnificent mountain ridges and peaks – and an authentically Samoan, laid-back air. Its less

attractive side is represented by some sham-bolic buildings, a steady flow of pick-up trucks, and the inhabitants' rather carefree approach to garbage disposal.

Shadowing the harbour's northern shore is a mountain ridge culminating in 491m **Mt Alava** (Map p526). The NPS maintains a 5.5km **hiking trail** (1½ to two hours) that leads from Fagasa Pass along this ridge top, a walk yielding fantastic views of remote Tutuila bays, the island's encircling reef and the deep blue of the South Pacific. On Mt Alava, a metal stairway leads up to a TV transmission tower and the rusted remains of a cable-car terminal; a cable car once ran 1.8km across the harbour from here to Solo Hill. Behind the rest *fale* is a very steep trail (some sections use ladders) leading 4km down to Vatia.

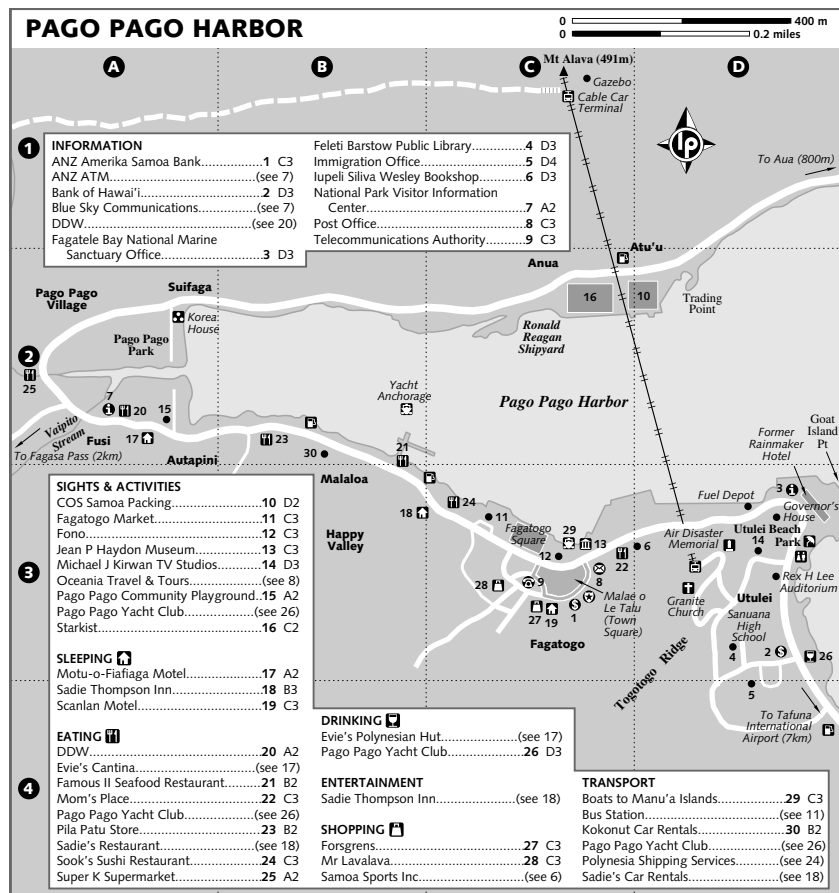
The **Fagatogo market** (Map p526) becomes the town's social centre on Friday night, when Samoans come here to gossip, ransack food stalls, and browse freshly arrived coconuts, breadfruit and other produce. By Saturday, all the good stuff is gone and the market is hushed for another week.

Interested parties can take a free, 30-minute tour of the **Michael J Kirwan TV Studios** (Map p526; ☎ 633 4191), which pioneered the broadcasting of lessons to school students during the frenetic modernisation of American Samoa in the 1960s. Nowadays the studios produce programmes for KVZK, the government-run station. Call at least a day ahead for an appointment.

The **Jean P Haydon Museum** (Map p526; ☎ 633 4347; admission free; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri) is a small, untidy exhibition of old Samoan artefacts, but it's still a fascinating place to visit. Among the interesting displays here are *va'a* (bonito canoes) and *alia* (war canoes), coconut-shell combs, pigs' tusk armlets and native pharmacopoeia, plus information on traditional tattooing.

Near the museum is the **Fono** (legislature), a distinctively Samoan architectural grouping. Those interested in attending the law-making sessions held here in January and July should drop by or call the **Office of the Senate Legislature** (☎ 633 5231).

A far less salubrious place is the north shore of the harbour, which is dominated by two enormous tuna canneries: **Starkist** (Map p526; ☎ 644 4231) and **COS** (Map p526; ☎ 644 5272). If you want to discover the source of the pungent smells that occasionally waft



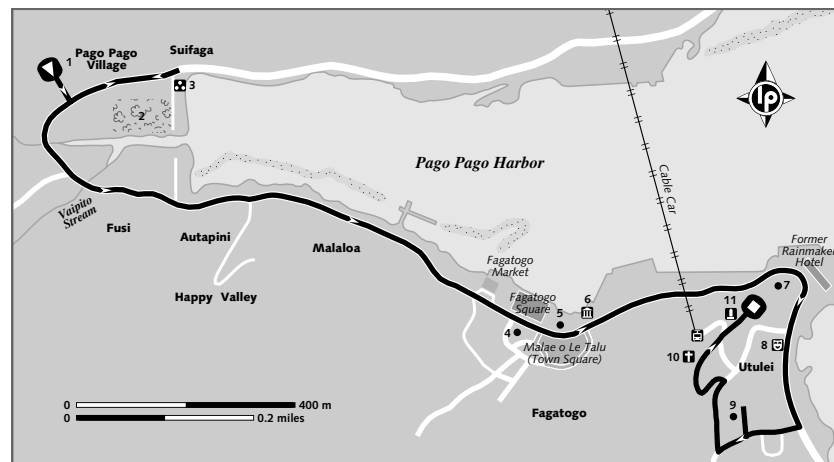
over Fagatogo, take one of the free guided tours offered by both companies. Tours last around 45 minutes and must be arranged at least 48 hours in advance.

Walking Tour

Start your walking tour in **Pago Pago village (1)**, the village that gave its name to the entire harbour area. At the head of the harbour is a large reclaimed area called **Pago Pago Park (2)**, where there's a football field. **Korea House (3)** was built as a social centre for Korean fishers but was gutted by fire in 1997 and is now just an eerie husk.

Double back around the head of the harbour and march east to the attractive colonial-style **courthouse (4)**, built in 1904,

which today houses the territory's High Court. Continue east past the **Fono (5)**; p525) and the **Jean P Haydon Museum (6)**; p525) until you're almost opposite the old Rainmaker Hotel, where you can climb a ragged stone staircase to see how the renovation of the **Governor's House (7)** is progressing. Continue around the point to the **Rex Lee Auditorium (8)**, where concerts and other events are regularly held, and then browse the **Feleti Barstow Public Library (9)**; p524). To check out the strikingly odd **granite church (10)** with the iron bell and cross that sits halfway up the hill behind the library, follow the road around the back of the Office of Samoan Affairs, climb up one of the flights of stone stairs and wind your way up the narrow streets. Continue



WALK FACTS

Start Pago Pago village

Finish Monument

Distance 3km

Duration 1½ hours

north along this road to the **monument (11)** on Solo Hill commemorating a plane crash in 1980 that resulted in eight deaths. On a cautionary note, we encountered a large pack of dogs near Solo Hill and recommend care be taken. For more on four-legged threats to walkers, see the boxed text, p528.

RAINMAKER MOUNTAIN

Also known as Mt Pioa, 523m-high Rainmaker Mountain (Map p523) is the culprit that traps rain clouds and gives Pago Pago Harbor the highest annual rainfall of any harbour in the world. From afar it looks like a single, large peak, but a drive up Rainmaker Pass for close-up views reveals that the summit is actually three-pronged. The mountain and its base area are designated a national landmark site due to the pristine nature of the tropical vegetation on the slopes.

NATIONAL PARK OF AMERICAN SAMOA

The territory's sole national park, created in 1988, protects pristine landscapes on Tutuila, as well as on Ofu and Ta'u in the

Manu'a Islands; for details of the park's Ofu section, see p535; for info on the Ta'u section, see p535. Significant sections of coral reef also fall within the park's tropical boundaries. Get info from the helpful National Park Visitor Information Center (p524).

The 1000-hectare Tutuila section of the national park (Map p523) is in the north-central part of the island between the villages of Fagasa and Afono. The NPS hiking trail (p525) that leads up Mt Alava and then down to Tutuila's north coast via Vatia presents a wonderful way to experience the park's lowland and montane rainforests, its thriving birdlife, and the wonderful peacefulness that permeates it.

From Aua, a surfaced road switchbacks steeply up over Rainmaker Pass and down to Afono and Vatia. Between these two villages is the beautiful, secluded **Amalau Valley** (Map p523), home to many forest bird species and to two rare species of flying fox. Stop at the lookout point just past the western side of Amalau Bay for some wonderful views.

Vatia (Map p523) is a peaceful village situated on a lovely, coral-fringed bay. At the mouth of the bay is a tiny islet called **Pola Tai** (Cock's Comb; Map p523) that has magnificent, sheer, 120m-high cliffs populated by sea birds. For a close-up of soaring rocks and birds, drive through the village and park at the school, then walk 300m to reach the wonderfully isolated beach at the base of the cliffs.

MAN'S BEST FRIEND?

Aggressive dogs are more than a passing nuisance on Tutuila. They are often frightening and sometimes downright dangerous, particularly when in a large pack. We were given conflicting advice by locals on how to deal with menacing dogs. When we were bailed up by two canines outside a house in Utulei, we were advised not to stop or to wave anything at them, but to just slowly and calmly walk on our way. Other locals told us never to turn our back on any dog and to wave a big stick at them if they approached.

Perhaps the best advice we received was to imitate the behaviour that dogs have been conditioned by locals to be afraid of. Sometimes this involves pretending to throw a rock at the dog (or actually throwing it if the animal doesn't get the message). Samoans also make a clucking noise with their tongues or a shhing noise out of the corners of their mouths to tell dogs to move on.

EASTERN BEACHES

Alega Beach (Map p523), a short drive east of Pago Pago, is a lovely stretch of sand that gets crowded with Samoan bodies on the weekend. It's not only a great place to swim and snorkel (check currents and conditions with locals first), but is also overlooked by Tisa's Barefoot Bar (p533), the perfect spot for a cold drink. You can waive the access fee for the beach (US\$5) by simply buying a drink at Tisa's.

Just east of Alega Beach is shallow **2-Dollar Beach** (Map p523). No prizes for guessing the access fee.

MASEFAU & SA'ILELE

A cross-island road leads from the village of Faga'itua up over a pass before winding slowly down to Masefau, one of those villages that look too idyllic to be anything but a mirage.

Back at the pass, a turn-off to the right takes you down a narrow, potholed road to Sai'ilele, which has one of the island's loveliest beaches: coconut palms are anchored into the sand by mounds of rocks and coral fragments, and the water is placid. The sandy area below the large rock outcrop at the beach's western end provides an excellent place for a picnic.

AUNU'U

pop 600 / area 3 sq km

The tiny, tangled confines of Aunu'u are perfect for a day of roaming and exploring on foot. Actually, there's no other choice, as the island doesn't have any vehicles. Walking tracks often disappear into the undergrowth, so take a guide with you (US\$5 is a reasonable fee for a tour of the island).

At the north end of the island is **Pala Lake**, a dead-looking expanse of quicksand whose fiery red hue is best appreciated at low tide. Within Aunu'u's central volcanic crater lies **Red Lake**, filled with eels and suffused by a preternatural glow at dusk. On the island's eastern shore is rough-and-tumble **Ma'ama'a Cove**, a rocky bowl constantly pounded by large waves. Legend says that this is the site of Sina ma Tigila'u (Sina and Tigila'u), two lovers who were shipwrecked here. You can make out bits of crossed 'rope' and broken 'planks' embedded in the rocks.

Below the western slope of Aunu'u's crater are the **Taufusitele Taro Marshes**, which are planted Hawaiian-style with swamp taro.

Small launches head to Aunu'u from the dock at Au'asi (see Map p523). If you catch a boat with other villagers, you pay US\$1 each way. If you have to charter a boat, be prepared to pay around US\$10 for the return trip. Boats don't run on Sunday.

MATAFAO PEAK

Keen climbers will want tackle the island's highest point, 653m-high Matafao Peak (Map p523). The narrow, unrelentingly steep and very rough trail (three to four hours one way) starts opposite the beginning of the Mt Alava walk; look for the metal ladder. Needless to say, only very experienced hikers/climbers should attempt this trail. It's highly recommended that you organise a guide in Fagasa village.

TIA SEU LUPE

The **American Samoa Historic Preservation Office** (Ashpo; Map p523; ☎ 633 2384; www.ashpo.org; Matafao) maintains a well-preserved ancient Polynesian star mound, *tia seu lupe* (literally

'earthen mound to catch pigeons'; Map p523), near the Catholic cathedral at Tafuna. The mound has a unique connecting platform and fine views of Matafao Peak. Call Ashpo to ask about a personalised tour of the site.

TURTLE & SHARK SITE

The most famous of Tutuila's legends is set in the picturesque village of Vaitogi, in the island's southeast. According to just one of the myriad versions of this legend, an old blind lady and her granddaughter jumped into the sea after being turned out of their village during a time of famine. When their family learned what they'd done, they went to the shore, guilt-ridden, and called the pair by name. A turtle and shark appeared, and the family knew that their relatives had been miraculously transformed in the water and were OK.

Even if the turtle and shark have taken the day off, you'll enjoy the rugged character of the place (Map p523), with its black lava cliffs, heavy surf and blowholes. Don't swim here though, as this is a sacred site; also, the currents are treacherous.

FAGATELE BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

One of the least-visited parts of Tutuila is also one of the island's most spectacular. Fagatele Bay (Map p523), a submerged volcanic crater, is fringed by Tutuila's last remaining stretch of coastal rainforest and its cliff-side depths contain 200 species of coral. It's also visited by numerous turtle species and, between August and November,

by migrating southern humpback whales. With these marvellous natural assets, it's little wonder that the bay was designated a marine sanctuary in 1986.

Unfortunately, it's difficult to organise access to Fagatele Bay. At the time of research, there were no dive operators on Tutuila, which left only an expensive boat charter. Contact the **Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary office** (Map p526; ☎ 633 7354; www.fagatelebay.noaa.gov; Pago Pago; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) for an update on access to the bay.

LEONE

The village of Leone welcomed the first missionary to Tutuila in 1832. John Williams subsequently erected the island's first **church** (Map p523), garnishing it with three towers, some stunning woodwork and stained glass. Try to attend a service here on Sunday morning, when villagers congregate in their best whites to sing hymns before heading home for a lunchtime banquet.

Between the church and the sea is a monument to Williams.

MASSACRE BAY

A marvellous 4km **hiking trail** (four hours return) leads from the scenic village of A'oloaoufou, high up on the rocky spine of Tutuila, down to A'asu on Massacre Bay (Map p523). Massacre Bay's foreboding name is due to a skirmish between French sailors and Samoan villagers that occurred there in 1787, leaving 51 people dead.

The track begins near the community garden in A'oloaoufou and is apparently

STAR MOUNDS

More than 140 distinctive earthen (sometimes stone) mounds dating back to late prehistoric times have been found scattered across the Samoan archipelago. Dubbed star mounds, the structures range from 6m to 30m in length, are up to 3m high and have from one to 11 raylike projections radiating from their base. Forty of these star mounds have been discovered (though not yet excavated) in Tutuila's east on the road between Amouli and Aoa.

The main theory regarding the star mounds is that they were used for pigeon-snaring, an extremely important sport of chiefs that was traditionally pursued from June through September. Villagers would follow their *matai* (chiefs) into the forest to observe and support competitions.

However, American archaeologists David Herdrich and Jeffrey Clark believe star mounds also served a much more complex function in Samoan society, including being sites for rituals related to marriage, healing and warfare. The archaeologists also believe the star mounds came to reflect the position of the *matai* and the notion of *mana* (supernatural power).

If you're interested in visiting one of these structures, contact the **Ashpo** (Map p523; ☎ 633 2384; www.ashpo.org; Matafao).

maintained (or not, as the case may be) by the sole family residing in A'asu. It's often overgrown, extremely muddy and difficult to navigate, particularly on the climb back up. Hikers should seriously consider hiring a guide in A'oloaoufou (costs between US\$5 and US\$10).

If driving to A'oloaoufou, take the turn-off in Pava'ia'i opposite Gold Star Mart. To get to A'oloaoufou by bus, take a Leone-bound vehicle to Pava'ia'i (US\$0.75) and wait on the corner for one headed up the hill.

CAPE TAPUTAPU

Cape Taputapu is Tutuila's westernmost point and received its name (*taputapu* means 'forbidden') after imaginatively fearful tales about it were spread around by locals who wanted the cape's valuable grove of paper mulberry trees all to themselves. No such taboos prevent modern-day visitors from enjoying the cape's beautiful location.

Just past Amanave is a lovely white-sand beach known as **Palagi Beach** (Map p523); ask for directions in the village store. Beyond Amanave, the road winds around valleys and over ridges to the small villages of Poloa, Fagali'i, Maloata and Fagamalo, revealing spectacular views of the coastline along the way.

ACTIVITIES

Despite the Samoan reputation for inactivity, there are plenty of things to do on Tutuila, including solitary mountain-top hikes, diving and snorkelling in submerged volcanoes, and driving golf balls.

Diving

It's extremely unfortunate that there are currently no dive operators on Tutuila (at the time of research anyway) because there's plenty of great diving here. At the northern and western ends of the island, visibility is excellent and many places have walls of coral that are 18m deep or more. Divers should definitely check out the possibility of plumbing the depths of the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

Fishing

The **Pago Pago Yacht Club** (Map p526; ☎ 633 2465; Utulei, Pago Pago) serves as the headquarters for the local game-fishing association. Inquire here about fishing charters.

Golf

Tutuila's **'Ili'ili Golf Course** (Map p523; ☎ 699 2995; 'Ili'ili) is a 'very forgiving' 70-par course with dramatic mountain peaks overlooking it to the north and a view of the South Pacific to the east. Green fees for nine/18 holes are US\$3/4 on weekdays and US\$7/9 on weekends. Club hire costs US\$5.

Hiking

We didn't hear of any organised hiking on Tutuila, but one handy resource for hikers is the **National Park Visitor Information Center** (Map p526; ☎ 633 7082; www.nps.gov/npsa/home.htm; Pago Plaza, Pago Pago; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri). The NPS is responsible for maintaining the exemplary trail linking Mt Alava (p525) with Fagasa Pass and Vatia.

Other prime hiking trails lead to Massacre Bay, up Matafao Peak and around Aunu'u.

Snorkelling & Swimming

There are some great spots for swimming and snorkelling along Tutuila's south coast, including Alega Beach (p528) and Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

Bring your own snorkelling gear. Otherwise, your best bet is to buy a snorkel and mask at Samoa Sports Inc (p533).

Surfing

The surfing situation on Tutuila is the same as the diving situation – some great spots, but no operators. Some of the best surfing is found just beyond the reef near **Faganeanea** (Map p523; south of Pago Pago), but if the trade winds are blowing and the tides aren't right, surfing will be impossible. Other breaks worth investigating include those at Poloa and Amanave around Cape Taputapu, and the one at **Sliding Rock** (where Sliding Rock Lodge is located; see opposite).

TUTUILA FOR CHILDREN

Kids will love Tutuila's tropical climate and its delightful diversity of sights. They'll have a wonderful time snorkelling off Alega Beach (p528), scrambling around the wild interior of Aunu'u (p528) and gazing up at the magnificent cliffs of Pola Tai (p527). They'll also get a kick out of the *fiafia* (p533) at Sadie Thompson Inn, and the unique cultural displays in the Jean P Haydon Museum (p525). Take toddlers to the **Pago Pago Community Playground** (Map p526; ☎ 6am-6pm Mon-Sat).

Baby-sitters are virtually impossible to find. Quiz your accommodation provider about child-minding options.

TOURS

Ecotour Samoa (☎ 22144; www.ecotoursamoa.com)

This Apia- (Samoa) based company does a seven-day guided tour of American Samoa – including all transfers, meals, accommodation and transport – costing US\$300 per person per day.

Oceania Travel & Tours (Map p526; ☎ 633 1172; oceania@bluesky.net.as; 1st fl, Post Office Bldg, Pago Pago) Conducts half-/full-day tours (US\$60/95) of Tutuila.

SLEEPING

There's surprisingly little accommodation in Pago Pago – just a handful of motel/hotel setups. Truth be told, there isn't that much accommodation elsewhere on Tutuila either. The majority of the island's beds are found in hotels and private retreats to the southwest of Pago Pago, in and around the Tafuna district. There's only one place to stay in the island's east, but it's a beauty and offers the only *fale*-style sleeping on Tutuila; see the boxed text, below.

Budget

You may be able to arrange an overnight stay in Vatia through the National Park of American Samoa's homestay programme; for details, see p524.

Scanlan Motel (Map p526; ☎ 633 4451; Pago Pago; s & d US\$30-60; 🏠) This authentic backpacker haunt is perfect for those who want to pay as little as possible for a room in pricey

American Samoa. Just be prepared for ultrabasic, ramshackle rooms, most without windows.

Midrange

Motu-o-Fiafiafa Motel (Evalani's; Map p526; ☎ 633 7777; www.amsamoa.com/evie; Pago Pago; r US\$60; 🏠 🏠 🏠) Better known as Evalani's, this idiosyncratic motel has some theatrical interior decoration, probably due to the former stage performer who now runs it. It's a highly hospitable place, with excellent rooms and arguably the best rates on the island. Grab a bite to eat at next-door Evie's Cantina, which moonlights as Evie's Polynesian Hut – a good option for a drink.

Sliding Rock Lodge (Map p523; ☎ 688 7553; www.slidingrockresort.com; Vailoa; r incl breakfast US\$65-85; 🏠 🏠) This five-unit lodge is named after a nearby tidal pool that locals slip into at the end of another hot day. The good-standard units are positioned up on a hill and command outstanding views of the surrounding coastline.

Maliu Mai Beach Resort (Map p523; ☎ 699 7232; Tafuna; s/d US\$65/85; 🏠 🏠) It calls itself a resort, but Maliu Mai is more like a comfy motel with a large entertaining area where bands and other events are staged. Rooms are modern and nicely fitted out, but the best thing about this place is its location on a stormy little beach. The bar (see p533) gets busy on weekends.

Pago Airport Inn (Map p523; ☎ 699 6333; www.pagoairportinn.com; Tafuna; s/d US\$75/100; 🏠 🏠) This inn will suit those who want to dump their suitcases as soon as possible after their flight lands on Tutuila, but the condition of facilities in some rooms does not justify the price tag.

Top End

Le Falepule (Map p523; ☎ 633 5264; lefalepule@samoa.telco.com; Faga'alu; s/d from US\$125/135, st US\$145; 🏠 🏠 🏠) Overlooking Faga'alu Bay is this superb B&B. Its excellent modern facilities are embellished by Samoan decorations and a terrific view from the balcony. Rates include breakfast. You'll find it at the end of a steep driveway 200m north of the LBJ Tropical Medical Center turn-off.

Turtle & Shark Lodge (Map p523; ☎ 688 1212, 699 1212; www.turtleandshark.com; Vaitogi; r US\$75-125; 🏠 🏠 🏠) This fine 10-room guesthouse

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Tisa's Barefoot Bar (Map p523; ☎ 622 7447; www.tisabarefootbar.com; Alega Beach; fale per person incl breakfast & dinner US\$50) This wonderful, environmentally friendly place is run by Tisa and the 'Candyman'. The idiosyncratic bar is fronted by a deck that looks out over lovely Alega Beach. Just off the decking are two *fale*-huts, each gazing toward the ocean and with super-comfortable beds; more accommodation is planned. Breakfast and dinner is supplied by the excellent restaurant (p532). The Candyman can take you on hikes that take full advantage of the beautiful surrounding property.

is located on the same beautiful stretch of coast that gave rise to the Samoan turtle and shark legend (see p529). Plunge into the swimming pool, have a hit on the tennis court, or just breathe in the seclusion.

Talalolo Lodge & Golf Resort (Map p523; ☎ 699 7201; taalolo@samoatelco.com; 'lii'ili; r incl breakfast & dinner US\$80-135; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This lovely split-level home is a mere chip shot from the 'Ili'ili Golf Course. Rooms have fridges, DVD players and other modern facilities – there's little reason for you to emerge except to hit the golf course again.

Sadie Thompson Inn (Map p526; ☎ 633 5981; www.sadiethompsoninn.com; Pago Pago; r US\$95-150; ☎ ☎) Debate continues over whether or not the building occupied by this upmarket inn was the same place that the original Sadie Thompson (immortalised in Somerset Maugham's novel *Rain*) set up her red light. Regardless, the dozen or so rooms here are large and well appointed, and on site is Sadie's Restaurant.

Tradewinds Hotel (Map p523; ☎ 699 1000; www.tradewinds.as; Tafuna; r & st US\$135-240; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) For a five-star hotel, Tradewinds has a disappointingly bland interior, and is sited well away from the sea. That said, rooms have a tad more character than the hotel's empty corridors, and facilities are first-rate.

EATING

American Samoa's reputation for fatty fried foods is not generally contradicted by the eateries on Tutuila. (Steak and eggs with a side order of spam, anyone?) However, there are some good restaurants on the island, including a couple of Asian options and upmarket places where the health of your digestive system is actually taken into account. Most places to eat are in Fagatogo and Nu'uuli.

Cafés & Quick Eats

Pago Pago Yacht Club (Map p526; ☎ 633 2465; Pago Pago; meals US\$4-8; ☎ lunch) The town's convivial yacht club not only serves simple burgers and sandwiches at lunchtime, but also great-value meals of freshly caught fish accompanied by vegetables and rice.

DDW (Don't Drink the Water; Map p526; ☎ 633 5297; Pago Pago; meals US\$7-14; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat; ☎ ☎) This relaxed café gets superbusy at breakfast- and lunchtimes, when local workers stampede through the door to tuck

into well-cooked burgers, omelettes, steaks and tasty cakes.

Mom's Place (Map p526; ☎ 633 1414; Pago Pago; meals US\$4-7; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat; ☎) Mom's rich, diner-style cooking won't help keep your waistline under control, but to hell with it. The burgers here are just too tasty.

Rubble's Tavern (Map p523; ☎ 699 4400; Nu'uuli; mains US\$6-24; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Despite its name, this place has no connection to the Flintstones other than the dinosaur-sized steaks that appear on your plate. Carnivores will be in paradise here, but avoid it if you're a vegetarian.

A & A's Pizza (Map p523; ☎ 699 9428; Nu'uuli; pizzas from US\$12, meals US\$2-5; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Such is the Samoan appetite that they don't bother serving 'small' or 'regular' pizzas here – sizes start at 'medium'. This business has merged with a Filipino eatery called Pinoy's, so Asian noodle dishes and stews are also served.

Restaurants

Tisa's Barefoot Bar (Map p523; ☎ 622 7447; Alega Beach; meals US\$12-18; ☎ 11am-7pm, by reservation after 7pm) The food at this beachside institution is just superb, with vegetarians well catered for. You must book ahead for dinners (two days in advance to guarantee use of the freshest produce). On Wednesday night there's an *umu* (stone oven; US\$30), where traditional Samoan fare is given an international twist.

Sook's Sushi Restaurant (Map p526; ☎ 633 5525; GHC Reid New Bldg, Pago Pago; mains US\$8-25; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☎) This one-room Japanese restaurant offers a welcome respite from burgers and eggs. Try the tasty sushi, sashimi and tempura dishes, or the Korean *kalbi* (ribs).

Famous II Seafood Restaurant (Map p526; ☎ 633 1159; Pago Pago; meals US\$8-17; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☎) 'Famous' might be overstating it, but the Fagatogo branch of this small Tutuila chain does make excellent soups and other Chinese meals, and seafood-lovers can't complain about the Saturday night buffet (US\$20).

Sadie's Restaurant (Map p526; ☎ 633 5981; Pago Pago; lunch US\$11-20, dinner US\$15-30; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎) The spacious, quiet interior of Sadie's is a good place to escape the crowds that normally throng Pago Pago's cafés, and

to indulge in some good seafood offerings. Vegetarians will usually find something palatable here.

Evie's Cantina (Map p526; ☎ 633 4776; Pago Pago; mains US\$8-16; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, dinner Sat & Sun) Attached to the Motu-o-Fiafiaga Motel, this cavernous Mexican restaurant serves big, tasty burritos, enchiladas and other cheese-soaked treats. Grab a booth and watch your stomach bulge once the food arrives.

Reef Bar & Grill (Map p523; ☎ 699 7717; Tafuna; meals US\$7-20; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) As you'd expect from a place called The Reef, lots of seafood appears on the menu here, including a fine Samoan *oka* (marinated raw fish). This sizable restaurant sits across the Cost U Less car park.

Hong Kong House (Map p523; ☎ 699 8983; Nu'uuli; mains US\$7-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun; ☎) Very good Chinese food is on offer in this open-plan restaurant, including soups, and beef, chicken and seafood dishes. There's a small selection of tofu and other vegetarian meals.

Self-Catering

Get fresh produce at Fagatogo's Friday night market (p525). Other options for self-caterers:

Pila Patu Store (Map p526; Pago Pago; ☎ 24hr) Sells canned goods, snacks and drinks around the clock.

Super K Supermarket (Map p526; Pago Pago; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Sat) A well-stocked option.

DRINKING

Samoans and expats alike enjoy the occasional (OK, make that regular) drink. Bars at top-end hotels tend to be uniform, drab affairs. Try some of the following places for real local character.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Pago Pago Yacht Club (Map p526; ☎ 633 2465; Pago Pago) From the outside deck of the yacht club, there's a magnificent sea-level view of Rainmaker Mountain. If you're seated out there just as water-swollen clouds blow in from the northeast, you'll actually see the rain drops marching across the surface of the harbour and climbing up the foreshore to smack down on the yacht club roof. Expat yachties love to gather here and gab while clutching cold beers.

Tisa's Barefoot Bar (Map p523; ☎ 622 7447; Alega Beach) Want to escape the dishevelled Pago Pago streetscape? Tisa's driftwood bar is the perfect place to rest your elbows and wash your throat while gazing out over some typical Polynesian beachfront beauty.

Evie's Polynesian Hut (Map p526; ☎ 633 4776; Pago Pago) At meal times, this establishment masquerades as Evie's Cantina (left), a Mexican eatery. But the oval bar dominating one end of the room and the lack of windows reveal its true personality – a drinking den that hosts DJs on Friday and Saturday nights.

Maliu Mai Beach Resort (Map p523; ☎ 699 7232; Tafuna) Come down to Maliu Mai in the evening and drag a chair and a drink onto the sand. On clear nights, you can see Matafao Peak silhouetted by the glow of Pago Pago's lights.

ENTERTAINMENT

Organised entertainment on Tutuila is mainly provided by the local cinemas and an exuberant group of Samoan singers and dancers.

Fiafia

Sadie Thompson Inn (Map p526; ☎ 633 5981; Pago Pago; US\$20) A *fiafia* is held here on Thursday night. It's very popular, so book ahead for a place at the buffet.

Cinemas

Nu'uuli Place Cinemas (Map p523; ☎ 699 9334; Nu'uuli; adult/child US\$6.50/4) This two-screen cinema hosts the latest-release commercial flicks.

SHOPPING

High-quality crafts are hard to come by on Tutuila, but you can stock up on good-value *lava-lava* (wraparound sarongs), sporting goods and Samoan crooners.

Forsgrens (Map p526; ☎ 633 5431; Pago Pago) This local shopping institution gets trampled in the late afternoon by Samoans who come to ransack its racks of T-shirts and *lava-lava*.

Samoa Sports Inc (Map p526; ☎ 633 4075; Pago Pago) This is your best bet for snorkelling, fishing and golfing gear, should you require it.

Mr Lavalava (Map p526; ☎ 633 7061; Pago Pago) Mr Lavalava sells handicrafts and a good selection of Samoan CDs. Staff recommend the greatest hits of Anisetu (Seto) Falemoe.

MANU'A ISLANDS

pop 1500 / area 65 sq km

Anchored about 100km to the east of Tutuila are three of the most remote and beautiful islands you could hope to encounter in the Pacific. Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u may be separate islands, but their environments all share the same marvellous characteristics: enormous cliffs sheltering sea-bird colonies; expired volcanic cones; undisturbed beaches that flow into lagoons stocked with a brilliant array of coral; and a sense of timelessness that makes watches completely redundant. The Manu'a Islands make the laid-back environs of Tutuila seem just about chaotic by comparison, so when you visit, pack plenty of extra reading material and a willingness to fall asleep in the middle of the day.

INFORMATION

Ofu village has a bank near the wharf and a basic medical clinic. The only post office on Ofu-Olosega is in Olosega village.

The sleepy village of Fiti'uta on Ta'u has several stores selling basic supplies, as well as a post office and a bank.

AND GOD CREATED SAMOA

Samoans claim their land is the 'cradle of Polynesia', a place created by the sky god Tagaloa (Tangaroa). Before the sea, earth, sky, plants or people existed, Tagaloa lived in the expanse of empty space. He created a rock, commanding it to split into clay, coral, cliffs and stones. As the rock broke apart, the earth, sea and sky came into being. From a bit of the rock emerged a spring of fresh water.

Next, at Saa in the Manu'a Islands, Tagaloa created man and woman, whom he named Fatu and 'Ele'ele ('Heart' and 'Earth'). He sent them to the region of fresh water and commanded them to people the area. He ordered the sky, which was called Tu'ite'elagi, to prop itself up above the earth.

Tagaloa then created Po and Ao ('Night' and 'Day'), which bore the 'eyes of the sky' – the sun and the moon. At the same time he made the nine regions of heaven, inhabited by various gods.

In the meantime, Fatu and 'Ele'ele were 'peopling the area'. Tagaloa, reckoning that all these people needed some form of government, sent Manu'a, a son of Po and Ao, to be the people's chief. The Manu'a Islands were named after this chief, and from that time on, Samoan kings were called Tu'i Manu'a tele ma Samoa 'atoa (King of Manu'a and all of Samoa).

Next, the countries were divided into islands or groups of islands. The world now consisted of Manu'a, Viti (Fiji), Tonga and Savai'i. Tagaloa then went to Manu'a and noticed that a void existed between it and Savai'i. Up popped 'Upolu and then Tutuila.

Tagaloa's final command was: 'Always respect Manu'a; anyone who fails to do so will be overtaken by catastrophe'. Thus, Manu'a became the spiritual centre of the Samoan islands and, to some extent, of all Polynesia.

TRANSPORT Getting There & Away

AIR

Ofu's airport is a 500m surfaced strip at Va'oto, squeezed in between the sea and mountains. On Ta'u, there's an airport at Fiti'uta.

For details of Inter-Island Airways flights between the Manu'a Islands and Tutuila, see p540.

BOAT

For information on boat services between the Manu'a Islands and Tutuila, see p540.

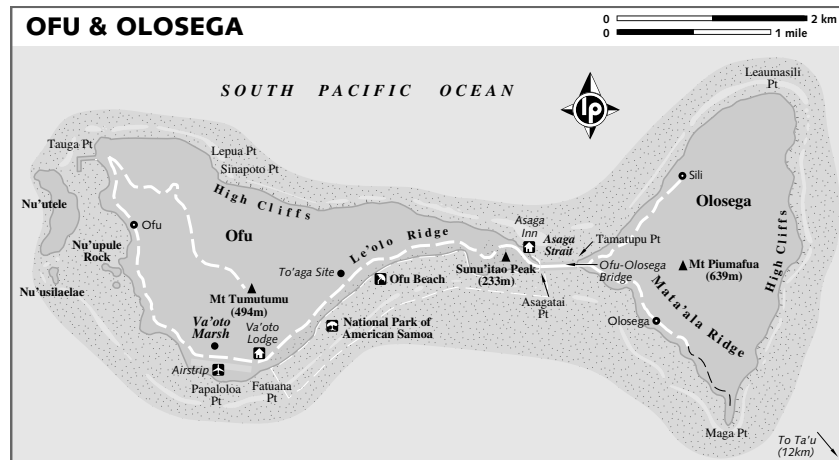
Getting Around

There are no established plane or boat services between individual Manu'a islands. Getting around on the islands themselves involves walking or sticking your thumb out. There's a small number of vehicles on the islands and few drivers will pass a walker without offering a lift.

OFU

pop 400 / area 5.2 sq km

Ofu is the most fêted of the Manu'a Islands mainly because of the exquisite beach on its southern shoreline. **Ofu Beach** (Map p535) is a natural marvel – 4km



of shining, palm-fringed white sand. The strip of beach stretching from 500m past Va'oto Lodge (p537) to the beginning of the bridge connecting Ofu to Olosega, plus 140 hectares of offshore waters, comprise the Ofu section of the **National Park of American Samoa** (Map p535). The reef off Ofu Beach is considered to be one of the few healthy, intact reefs in all the Samoas.

Behind Ofu Beach is the **To'aga site** (Map p535), where in 1987 archaeologists found an unprecedented array of artefacts, ranging in age from the earliest times of Samoan prehistory to modern day. The excavations have been filled so there's nothing to actually see here. Samoans believe the area of bush between the road and the beach is infested with devilish *aitu* (spirits or ghosts).

The 5.5km-long, often indistinct track (five hours return) to the summit of **Mt Tumutumu** (494m; Map p535) begins just north of Ofu village wharf and twists up to the TV relay tower atop the mountain. It's possible to climb this tower to get the full view, but a large rock on the summit is an equally handy viewpoint.

OLOSEGA

pop 300 / area 3 sq km

Olosega shares the same marvellous encircling reef system as Ofu. The two islands look conjoined, but are separated from each other by the 137m-wide Asaga Strait. Local kids regularly jump off the cyclone-proof

bridge (Map p535) that crosses the strait, letting the current carry them to shore. Before attempting this yourself, make sure you assess the water's depth and the strength of the current.

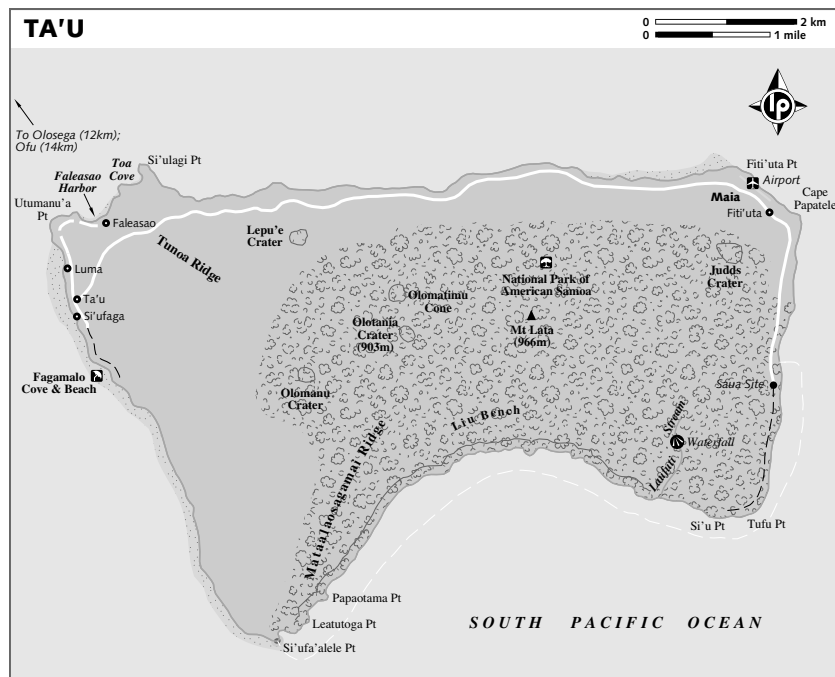
The 1.5km walk from Olosega village up to **Maga Point** (Map p535) on the island's southern tip is a highlight of a visit. The point's steep cliffs, the reefs marching out from the shore, and the view of distant Ta'u and the Pacific horizon are simply unforgettable. To avoid local dogs, veer around Olosega village on the beach. After passing the rubbish tip, pick your way along the coral-strewn beach and look for the narrow trail that climbs up the hillside.

TA'U

pop 800 / area 39 sq km

On the dramatic south coast of this remote, sparsely populated island, some of the highest sea cliffs in the world rise 966m to Mt Lata, the territory's highest point. Much of Ta'u is covered in dense rainforest and dotted with inactive cones and craters. If you do venture out here, you'll invariably have the island's marvellous forests, volcanic remnants and numerous bird species mostly to yourself.

The Ta'u unit of the **National Park of American Samoa** (Map p536) occupies 2160 hectares of land and 400 hectares of offshore waters. Its lowland and montane **rainforests** are home to flying foxes and numerous native **birds**, including black noddies, white



terns, multicoloured fruit doves and the revered *lupe* (Pacific pigeon). Ta'u is also the only habitat of the Pacific boa.

About 2.5km from Fiti'uta is the legendary **Saua site** (Map p536), where Tagaloa is said to have created the first humans before sending them out to Polynesia (see the boxed text, p534). Only volcanic boulders, wild surf and a windswept beach mark this very sacred place.

The main settlement on Ta'u consists of the villages of Ta'u, Luma and Si'ufaga in the island's northwest. It was in **Luma** that the young Margaret Mead researched and wrote her classic anthropological work, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, in 1925.

ACTIVITIES

Walkers will adore the Manu'a Islands. On Ofu they can tackle Mt Tumutumu (p535), while Olosega offers the wonderful walk up Maga Point (p535). The three-hour climb to **Judds Crater** (Map p536) in Ta'u's northeast is best done with a local guide. Hikers can also follow a rough track down the east coast to Tufu Point, and from there

hike 2km to the waterfall at **Laufuti Stream** (Map p536); anyone going beyond Si'u Point should take a guide. Another good walk on Ta'u is the one heading south from Ta'u village to secluded **Fagamalo Cove** (Map p536).

If you plan to go hiking anywhere in the Manu'a Islands, first contact the **National Park Visitor Information Center** (Map p526; ☎ 633 7082; www.nps.gov/npsa/home.htm; Pago Plaza, Pago Pago; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) on Tutuila.

For snorkelling, you just can't beat the stunning reef off **Ofu Beach** (p534).

SLEEPING & EATING

There are only two accommodation options in the Manu'a group, both on Ofu. However, you may be able to arrange accommodation on Ta'u through the National Park of American Samoa (see p524).

Asaga Inn (Map p535; ☎ 655 1164, 655 1306; s/d US\$40/60; 🚽) Located beside the Ofu-Olosega bridge. It was damaged by hurricane Olaf at the beginning of 2005 but has since reopened. The guesthouse has four comfortable rooms and meals are available.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Va'oto Lodge (Map p535; ☎ 655 1120; vaoto@hotmail.com; s/d US\$35/70; 🚽 📺) This must be one of the few places in the world where you can watch planes take off through your bedroom window. It's set off a paradisaal beach where you can snorkel in a coral lagoon undisturbed by rips. Hearty (nontraditional Samoan) meals are prepared (US\$15 for three meals) and beer and other drinks are available. There are 10 big basic units facing the ocean here, each with a bathroom and firm beds. Bring plenty of insect repellent as the mosquitoes are vicious.

There are basic stores in Ofu and Olosega villages.

AMERICAN SAMOA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Fale accommodation for tourists has never quite caught on in American Samoa. Instead, beds are almost all found in generic motels, hotels and a handful of B&B establishments.

The sleeping options listed in this chapter are given in order of author preference – leading each section are the places our author recommends the most. In American Samoa, budget accommodation peaks at US\$50, midrange places charge between US\$50 and US\$100, and top-end facilities levy over US\$100.

The National Park of American Samoa operates a village homestay programme; for details, see p524.

ACTIVITIES

For full details of where and how you can undertake the following activities (as well as fishing and golfing), see the Activities sections for Tutuila (p530) and the Manu'a Islands (opposite).

Diving

Corals are prolific and underwater visibility is excellent at the northern and western ends of Tutuila, as well as in Fagatele Bay. However, at the time of research, American

Samoa had no dive operators and getting out to these dive sites was extremely difficult. Get an update on this situation from the territory's **Office of Tourism** (Map p536; ☎ 699 9411; www.amsamoa.com, www.amerikasamoa.info; Tafuna, Tutuila).

Hiking

The high rocky ridges and cliffs that are the most prominent feature of American Samoa's islands afford some spectacular hiking. However, only a couple of trails on Tutuila are regularly maintained. The condition of the rest depends on the severity of recent storms and whether any villagers have bothered to clear a way through. For these reasons, local guides are highly recommended; on Ta'u in the Manu'a group, they're a necessity and tend to nominate a high fee with this knowledge in mind.

Wear long trousers due to the trailside thorns and sharp grasses that will slice unprotected skin. Sturdy walking shoes are also essential. A big stick is another useful piece of hiking gear, used to dissuade village dogs. Also carry plenty of insect repellent, sunblock, water and snacks.

Snorkelling & Swimming

In Pago Pago itself, there's a beach at Utulei where the locals swim. But although pollution levels have dropped in recent

PRACTICALITIES

- The *Samoa News* (US50c) is published daily Monday to Saturday, while the *Samoa Post* (US50c) is published on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.
- The main radio stations are Radio KHJ 93FM and Radio KSBS (FM 92.1). The government-owned TV station, KVZK, broadcasts Channel 2 (local programmes, noncommercial USA fare) and Channel 4 (commercial US programmes).
- The video format used is NTSC.
- USA-style plugs are used in American Samoa (110V, 60Hz AC).
- American Samoa uses the American version of the imperial system. See the Quick Reference page for conversions.

years, the town's harbour definitely isn't the cleanest swimming spot on the island. In general, snorkelling is safe on the north side of the island in winter when the trade winds blow in from the southeast, and on the southern coast in summer when winds come from the north. However, shallow reefs, pounding surf and the swift movement of water through breaks in the *ava* (reefs) make much of the coastline of American Samoa treacherous. Always seek local advice on the best places to swim, and never swim or snorkel alone.

Surfing

According to those in the know, the surf in American Samoa is (or was) one of the best-kept secrets of the South Pacific. Powerful 2m waves breaking in very shallow water over very sharp coral, however, make it an activity only for the very experienced. Bring all your own surfing gear to American Samoa.

BUSINESS HOURS

Banks open from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday (some branches open Saturday between 8.30am and 12.30pm). Shops operate from 8am to 4.30pm on weekdays and from 8am to noon on Saturday, though village stores keep longer hours. Eateries serve breakfast and lunch between 8am and 4pm, and dinner from 6pm to 10pm. Bars in the main towns often open for drinking around lunchtime and often close at midnight. Government offices open from 9am to 5pm.

We don't give opening hours for establishments mentioned in the text unless they differ greatly from the standard hours outlined in this section.

For details about Samoan public holidays, see p829.

CHILDREN

The sunny tropical climate enjoyed for much of the year by American Samoa – with the possible exception of rain-harassed Pago Pago – emboldens children to make the most of the islands' beaches, warm waters and lush valleys. There are few natural threats to the health of children here, but note that walking trails and beaches are entirely unsupervised.

See Lonely Planet's *Travel With Children* for advice on family travel.

See the Tutuila for Children section (p530) for suggestions on how to keep kids occupied during your visit. For details of the practicalities concerning children visiting the South Pacific, see p826.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

All American Samoan diplomatic affairs are handled by the USA. There are no consulates or embassies in American Samoa and currently no places that are able to issue visas for the USA.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

American Samoa's main public holiday is Flag Day (17 April), which commemorates the raising of the US flag over the islands in 1900 with an arts festival and much traditional fanfare. In May there's National Tourism Week, which is meant to attract international visitors to the islands but seems to have had a low profile in recent times. Far more vivacious is Tisa's Tattoo Festival in October, the inaugural version of which took place in 2005 at Tisa's Barefoot Bar on Tutuila. Also in October (on the second Sunday of the month) is White Sunday, when kids get to celebrate themselves.

INTERNET ACCESS

Tutuila's handful of top-end hotels and guesthouses allow guests to connect their computers to the Internet. There are also a couple of Internet cafés in Pago Pago (see p524), which charge around US\$13 per 15 minutes.

INTERNET RESOURCES

American Samoa Historic Preservation Office (www.ashpo.org) This site includes information about the office and its aims, along with a good walking tour.

National Park of American Samoa (www.nps.gov/npsa/home.htm) This excellent site has information on the park's homestay programme and local flora and fauna.

Office of Tourism (www.amerikasamoa.info/) A good site on American Samoa, with information on history, language and customs, and a calendar of events.

Samoa News (www.samoanews.com) For the latest American Samoan news.

MAPS

The University of Hawai'i's *Islands of Samoa* map (US\$4) has good topographic detail of the territory, but dates from 1990. It's usually available from the **Iupeli Siliva**

Wesley Bookshop (Map p526; ☎ 633 2201) in Pago Pago.

The US NPS publishes a handy free map and guide to American Samoa. It's available from the **National Park Visitor Information Center** (Map p526; ☎ 633 7082; www.nps.gov/npsa/home.htm; Pago Plaza, Pago Pago).

MONEY

The US dollar, divided into 100 cents, is the unit of currency in use in American Samoa. For exchange rates, see the Quick Reference page. In this book, unless otherwise stated, all prices given are in US dollars.

ATMs

Automated teller machines are provided by the ANZ Amerika Samoa Bank and the Bank of Hawai'i on Tutuila in both Pago Pago and Tafuna.

Tipping

Tipping is not expected or encouraged in American Samoa. It is, however, deemed acceptable for exceptional service at finer restaurants.

TELEPHONE

The **Telecommunications Authority** (Map p526; ☎ 633 1121; Pago Pago) of American Samoa handles local and international calls. Local calls cost US10c. Station-to-station calls to the US mainland and Hawai'i cost US\$6 for the first three minutes and US40c for each minute thereafter, with evening and

weekend discounts. To Australia, NZ and the Pacific, the charge is US\$5.70 for the first three minutes and US\$1.10 thereafter. Calls to Europe cost US\$8 for the first three minutes and US\$1.60 thereafter.

Mobile Phones

Hire phones or buy SIM cards for use in GSM 900-compatible phones from **Blue Sky Communications** (Map p526; ☎ 699 2759; Pago Plaza, Pago Pago).

Phone Codes

The country code for Samoa is ☎ 1-684. The territory has no area codes.

Phonecards

Phonecards are usually available for US\$5, US\$10 and US\$20, though cardphones are virtually nonexistent outside of Pago Pago, Tafuna and Nu'uuli.

TIME

The local time in American Samoa is Greenwich Mean Time/Coordinated Universal Time (GMT/UTC) minus 11 hours. Therefore, when it's noon in American Samoa, it's 11pm the same day in London, 3pm the same day in Los Angeles, and 9am the following day in Sydney.

VISAS

US citizens equipped with a valid passport and an onward ticket can visit American Samoa visa-free. Nationals of the following countries equipped with a valid passport and an onward ticket will receive a free one-month visa on arrival: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Federated States of Micronesia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, NZ, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. Nationals of all other countries must apply in advance for their one-month visa (US\$40).

Visa extensions are handled by the **Immigration Office** (Map p526; ☎ 633 4203; www.asg.gov.net/LEGAL%20AFFAIRS.htm; ground fl, Executive Office Bldg, Utulei; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Mon-Fri), located within the Department of Legal Affairs in Pago Pago. Visas can only be extended by one month (US\$50) and you must be sponsored by a resident.

HOW MUCH?

- **Restaurant meal:** from US\$7
- **Night in a midrange hotel:** from US\$60
- **Nine holes of golf in Tutuila:** from US\$3
- **Day tour of Tutuila:** US\$95
- **Car hire:** from US\$60 per day

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- **Gallon of unleaded petrol:** US\$2.96
- **1L of bottled water:** US\$1.50
- **355mL bottle of Vailima beer:** US\$2.50
- **Souvenir T-shirt:** US\$5 to US\$7
- **Samoa pancakes:** US\$1

TRANSPORT IN AMERICAN SAMOA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

There's no better illustration of the physical isolation of American Samoa than the fact that you can only fly direct to Tutuila from Apia (Samoa) and Honolulu (Hawai'i). It's for this reason that many visitors tie a trip to this far-flung US territory to an exploration of Samoa and/or other South Pacific destinations.

Direct flights between Pago Pago and Honolulu start from around US\$580 from Honolulu with Hawaiian Airlines. From Samoa, you can fly to Pago Pago with Inter-Island Airways and Polynesian Airlines from around US\$180 one way; for information on flights to Samoa from outside the Pacific, see p516.

Visitors fly in to Tafuna International Airport, 15km southwest of Pago Pago Harbor on Tutuila. Airlines that service American Samoa include the following (telephone numbers listed here are for dialling from within American Samoa):

Hawaiian Airlines (www.hawaiianairlines.com)

Inter-Island Airways (☎ 699 7100; www.interislandair.com)

Polynesian Airlines (☎ 699 9126; www.polynesianairlines.com)

Sea

FERRY

A car ferry called *Lady Naomi* runs between Pago Pago and Apia once a week. It departs Pago Pago each Thursday at 3.30pm for the seven-hour trip. The return deck/cabin fare from American Samoa is US\$75/100. Tickets must be purchased at least one day in advance from **Polynesia Shipping Services** (Map p526; ☎ 633 1211; Pago Pago).

YACHT

During the region's dry (and cyclone-free) season between May and October, yachts cruise all around the South Pacific. Pago Pago's deep, spectacular harbour serves as the official entry point for private yacht owners.

Yachts should be granted free anchorage in the harbour for the first week of their

stay, but are liable for a monthly rate after that. The rate depends on the length of the yacht but is usually between US\$12 and US\$30. Vessels arriving from Hawai'i will need to present a US customs clearance document from Honolulu.

The **Pago Pago Yacht Club** (Map p526; ☎ 633 2465; Utulei, Pago Pago) is where yachties hang out and share information, usually out on the deck with a Vailima beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other.

GETTING AROUND

Air

Inter-Island Airways (in Pago Pago ☎ 699 7100, in Ofu 655 7100, in Ta'u 677 7100; www.interislandair.com) services the 30-minute air route between Tutuila and the Manu'a Islands. Flights between Tutuila and Ofu cost from US\$140 return, as do flights between Tutuila and Ta'u. Services are frequently cancelled due to unsafe cross-winds at the Manu'a airstrips.

Bicycle

Tutuila is not very conducive to a cycling tour. The island is mountainous, traffic can be heavy, and a complete circuit is impossible since there are no roads across the rugged north coast. Dogs can also be a major hassle here. You could conceivably take a bike over to the Manu'a Islands by boat, but the minimalist road networks of these islands make this a rather dubious plan.

Cyclists heading to American Samoa should come prepared for the almost incessant heat and humidity, and should bring their own repair kits, spares, a good lock and heavy-duty panniers.

Boat

The **American Samoa Inter-Island Shipping Company** (☎ 633 4707) operates a cargo vessel called the *Manu'a Tele*, which departs Pago Pago for the Manu'a Islands on Wednesday at 10pm; the trip takes eight hours. Passengers pay US\$35 one way, plus US\$5 per piece of luggage. Tickets are only sold from 8am on the day of departure; the boat operator's waterfront kiosk is otherwise unmanned. This boat is a good option for divers who want to transport tanks to the Manu'a Islands, which they cannot do by plane.

The **MV Sili** (☎ 633 5532) also chugs between Pago Pago and the Manu'a group. It departs

Tutuila every second Friday at 10pm and one-way tickets cost US\$20 (plus US\$1 per piece of luggage); tickets are sold between 8am and 4pm on the day of departure. This boat doesn't enter Manu'a harbours – rather, you transfer to a smaller boat at the harbour entrance.

Ask each operator about pick-up times from Ofu and Ta'u.

Bus

Villages and towns on the island of Tutuila are serviced by 'aiga-owned buses. The vehicles – modified pick-up trucks with deadly sound systems – theoretically run until early evening, but don't try to test this theory out after 2pm on Saturday, or on Sunday after church services are finished. All buses display the name of their final 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. Pay the fare to the driver; try to have the exact fare.

Details of routes and fares are given on p525.

Car

Hiring a car allows you to explore Tutuila quickly and comfortably via the island's good sealed roads. That said, complete reliance on a hire car will rob you of the unique cultural experiences that can be gained on public transport.

At the time of writing, motorcycles were not available for hire in American Samoa.

DRIVING LICENCE

A valid foreign driving licence should allow you to drive in American Samoa, though you can always get yourself an international driving licence to be absolutely certain.

HIRE

When hiring a vehicle, check for any damage or scratches before you get into the car and note everything on the rental agreement, lest you be held liable for damage when the car is returned.

For details of car-hire firms on Tutuila, see p525.

INSURANCE

It's essential to have your hire car covered by insurance, as repair costs are extremely high. Several local car-hire firms offer contracts where there's no option of accepting a CDW (collision/damage waiver). The lack of a CDW technically means that the car hirer is liable for *all* costs resulting from an accident, regardless of whose fault it is, so sign such contracts at your peril. You should insist on a CDW, for which you pay an extra fee of around US\$8 to US\$10 per day.

ROAD RULES

Vehicles drive on the right-hand side of the road. The speed limit is 32km/h (20mph) through villages and 55km/h (35mph) outside populated areas.

Local Transport

TAXI

Taxis on Tutuila are expensive and are only convenient for short trips.

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