

# South Pacific Directory

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This guide has two types of Directories: the South Pacific Directory and individual country directories. The South Pacific Directory is a comprehensive resource for the whole region. The country directories appear at the end of each country chapter and round up specific details relevant to that country. Some subjects are covered in both directories (eg accommodation options in the region are given in this directory, but specific accommodation prices are covered in the country directories.) When seeking information, consult both directories and note the cross-references.

## ACCOMMODATION

From no-frills *fales* (houses) to luxury resorts, the Pacific has these and the whole spectrum in between. That said, not all countries cover all budgets: some places are top-heavy with top-end options but offer few budget choices, while other countries can't muster a single five-star joint. These differences often all boil down to the state of the country's tourist industry: if it's thriving, like in Fiji or French Polynesia for example, there will be something for everyone; in

countries where tourism hasn't taken hold, you can kiss choice goodbye. To find out what's offered where, plus detailed prices, check Accommodation in the individual country directories.

Accommodation listings in this guide have been divided into three price categories (budget, midrange and top end) and then ordered by author preference. Leading each section are the places our authors recommend the most. Depending on the country, budget accommodation may include camping grounds, homestays, hostels and cheap hotels. Midrange options range from hotels and motels to guesthouses and fully furnished houses for weekly rental. Hotels and resorts dominate the top-end options but keep in mind the word 'resort' is loosely applied in some countries and is not always synonymous with luxury.

Accommodation is often fully booked and may be more expensive during peak tourist times; for more information see *When to Go* (p28). A few countries, such as Tokelau, Pitcairn Island and theoretically the Cook Islands, require accommodation to be booked before arrival, but most don't. In the more expensive countries, such as New Caledonia and French Polynesia, pre-booked package tours that include accommodation are well worth investigating. See p840 for more details.

## Camping

Self-sufficient, outdoorsy type? Good. You'll need to be when you're camping in the South Pacific. Forget amenities blocks with hot and cold running water, games rooms, flick-a-switch cooking facilities and the oh-so-essential on-site convenience store. You'll be lucky to find one or two like that in the whole huge region. Here we're talking coconut palms, thatched shelters, coconut palms, pit toilets, coconut palms, camp-fire rocks, and that's about it except for the buzz of mozzies and, inevitably, a long slice of heavenly beach. In a few countries, an occasional hotel will allow you to pitch your tent.

Camping is an excellent way to save precious francs in expensive Tahiti or New Caledonia. However, not many countries

cater for campers; the only other places with facilities are Easter Island, Fiji, Palau, Tonga and Vanuatu. In one or two countries, camping is even discouraged as it is not customary (Tonga is also one of these countries). Check the individual country chapters for more information.

If you want to camp somewhere other than a designated camping area (and that means secluded, seemingly deserted beaches), it's important to seek permission from customary land owners before pitching your tent. In many cultures, camping near a village can cast shame on the villagers for failing to invite the strangers into their homes, hence the reason it's discouraged in some places. If you do camp out, try to leave no trace of your visit; carry out everything you carry in.

## Homestays

In the odd event you don't get invited to stay with a family, don't immediately blame your armpits or unshaven legs. Experience village life by simply booking a homestay. This form of accommodation has taken off in some countries in recent years, and it offers a fab alternative to the gloss of hotels or resorts. Think of it as the Pacific's simple version of a bed and breakfast, though here you may have to take all meals with your hosts, not just breakfast. Reserve homestays in advance (either directly or through the local tourist office), and keep your expectations at ground level – a thatched hut with mats or mattresses on the floor, a pit toilet and cold shower are as flash as some come. Homestays have been listed throughout this guide; see Accommodation in the individual country directories for prices and details.

## Hostels

Backpackers beware! Rustling up your own dinner and bunking down in a cheap hostel dorm is not much of an option in the pricey Pacific. Many countries offer no hostels, or one at the very most (eg New Caledonia). The exceptions to this gloomy situation are Fiji and the Cook Islands where it's more than possible to do a hostel hop. French Polynesia also has hostel-style digs on its larger islands. The Pacific's sole hostel affiliated with **Hostelling International** ([www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com)) is in New Caledonia. The following websites are a good resource for hostellers:

**Hostel Planet** ([www.hostelplanet.com](http://www.hostelplanet.com))  
**Hostels.com** ([www.hostels.com](http://www.hostels.com))  
**Hostelz** ([www.hostelz.com](http://www.hostelz.com))

## Hotels

Hotels in this guide cover all budgets. What you get for what you pay is determined by the country: lower those expectations for the more expensive destinations (like French Polynesia and New Caledonia), and revel in the 'extras' that may materialise in cheaper countries (eg Fiji).

Cheap hotels offer very basic rooms, and may have dorm facilities as well. In some countries, the budget end of the spectrum is bolstered by motels and guesthouses. Motels generally supply rooms with a kitchenette – a fabulous money-saving device, especially for families or a bunch of backpackers. The term 'guesthouse' is used in several countries but it's variously defined: expect anything from a hostel to a midrange hotel. Many budget-end accommodation options will not accept credit cards.

Midrange and top-end hotels generally offer those little luxuries you've come to expect: air-con, tea- and coffee-making facilities, a restaurant, bar and the mandatory swimming pool. The latter tend to range in size from postage stamp to mini-Pacific; if pool size is going to make or break your holiday, regard publicity shots in brochures with scepticism and ask for measurements. Hotels may offer garden and beachfront bungalows, or a room in the main building; check all the prices as they often differ. Increasingly, hotels in this range can be contacted and booked via websites, and most accept credit cards.

## Rental Accommodation

Rentals can be good for families or groups of travellers who want to stay in one place for at least a week. They are not necessarily the cheapest option, though you'll be able to save on meals by shopping locally and making good use of the kitchen. That said, rentals are not that easy to come by in the Pacific – Rarotonga (p450) is your best bet.

## Resorts

If you've ever wanted to spoil yourself rotten, a top-end resort in the Pacific is about as good as it gets. Idyllic over-the-water

bungalows lapped by azure waters, glass-bottomed coffee tables that double as an ever-changing looking glass into the underwater world, white-sand beaches that you may have to yourself...these are the type of luxuries that tip the scale for many travellers. French Polynesia is often regarded as the best of the best (see the boxed text, p583), but if that's just a tad too pricey, options abound in other countries.

Getting hitched is another reason to consider a resort. More and more couples are choosing the Pacific for their wedding and honeymoon; see the boxed text, below.

Pacific resorts are a wide and varied lot. If you're after specifics, like the features just mentioned, do some investigations: quiz travel agents, ring resorts, study this guide and the Internet. Depending on the country, resorts located on the mainland may offer better facilities in terms of entertainment, dining, and tours while those on offshore islands usually have better beaches. In the end, the choice boils down to what you *really* want: a resort offering loads of things to keep you busy, or one on a palm-fringed speck in the ocean that has little more than divine décor and a secluded beach.

Needless to say, resorts are almost always much cheaper if prebooked before you leave home as a package tour including meals, airfares and airport transfers (see p840). Walk-in rates are often over the top.

### Staying in Villages

The Pacific islands are famous for their hospitality, and in many countries it is almost inevitable that you will get an invite home. Revel in this first-hand experience of local

culture and lifestyle. But remember too that such invitations confer a degree of honour on the host family – staying with a family shouldn't be viewed as a cheap form of accommodation. Even the most welcome guest will eventually strain a family's resources. They may never kick you out or even hint that you should leave, but after a few days it may be more considerate to move on. When leaving, make sure you express your gratitude. Gather the family, offer thanks with a short speech, and present a gift. Don't call it 'payment' or it may be refused. It may well be refused anyway, but do your best to leave it behind. Cash will not always be accepted, but kava, alcohol or shop goods (such as canned meat) may be. And if you're looking for a home for that toy kangaroo or stuffed kiwi that's stashed in your bag, this is the moment to bid it a fond farewell.

### ACTIVITIES

What the Pacific islands lack in landmass, they make up for in water. It's hardly surprising then that water junkies come here en masse – scuba diving, snorkelling, surfing, swimming, sea kayaking and sailing are all key activities – and then there's fishing. If pruned fingers and wet feet are not you, get stuck into some serious whale watching or hiking. Depending on your destination, other activities include cycling, horse riding, abseiling (p347), bird-watching (p259) and caving (p726), not to mention visiting archaeological or sacred sites and WWII relics.

In the devoutly Christian Pacific, many countries effectively close down on Sunday and many activities are not appropriate.

Rules are often relaxed in cities accustomed to the heathen ways of tourists and at resorts (so spending the day at a resort is one way to escape the Sunday blues). Another Sunday option is to join in: attend an island church and listen to the beautiful singing.

### Diving

The Pacific is paradise for scuba divers. 'Surreal Scuba' (p36) in the Itinerary chapter is an appetiser; for full details on dive sites, conditions, centres and courses, see the South Pacific Diving chapter (p69). Dive shop details are listed in the individual country chapters.

### Fishing

The South Pacific lures anglers with sport fishing and excellent big-game fishing. Common catches include yellowfin and skipjack tuna, wahoo, barracuda, sailfish, and blue, black and striped marlin. For something out of the ordinary, in Kiribati you can try a bit of bonefishing (p261), or in Niue flying-fish fishing (see the boxed text, p363).

For more information on fishing opportunities, see the following chapters: Marshall Islands (p282), New Caledonia (p348), Palau (p401), Rarotonga & Cook Islands (p444), Samoa (p512), Solomon Islands (p573), Tonga (p726) and Vanuatu (p805).

### Hiking

Although a hike from one side of the island to the other may be a matter of minutes on small coral atolls, on the higher Pacific islands there are opportunities to walk through magnificent forest and even climb live volcanoes. Many tracks cross land under customary ownership, so ask around before heading off; you may need to get permission and possibly pay a small fee. In some cases it may be wise to hire the services of a local guide.

Countries that offer substantial hiking opportunities are Fiji (p210), French Polynesia (p668), New Caledonia (p348), Samoa (p512) and Tonga (p726). To whet your appetite further, see the itinerary 'Land Ahoy' (p36).

Bushwalking in the heat has the potential to be a truly miserable experience. Undertake long walks in the cooler parts of the year; check the Climate & When to Go

### SURFING

Modern surfers will identify with James Cook's observations of a Tahitian surfer in 1777: 'I could not help concluding that this man felt the most supreme pleasure while he was driven on so fast and so smoothly by the sea.'

Frustrated surfers may also be interested to learn an ancient Hawaiian chant used to make the surf rise:

*Kumai! Kumai!*

*Ka nalu nui mai Kahiki mai*

(Arise! Arise!

You great surfs from Tahiti)

section in the individual country chapters. Take plenty of water with you.

### Sailing

See p842 for information about taking your own yacht to the Pacific or getting a berth on someone else's. Yacht clubs are a good first port of call for information about renting a yacht. For details of yacht clubs and yacht rentals in the individual country chapters, check under Boat in the Getting Around sections and under Activities in the Directory section. French Polynesia is an excellent place to rent a yacht; see p669.

### Surfing

The sport of board surfing was invented first by the sea-loving cultures of Polynesia. The first recorded observations of surfing on a board come from Hawai'i and Tahiti in the 1770s. Some 200 years later the Pacific is still popular among surfers. Apart from the most famous beaches in Hawai'i, surfers flock to French Polynesia (p668) and Fiji (p210). The Solomon Islands (p574) has a fledgling industry, and surfing in Samoa (p513) is now also on the map.

Surfing over coral reefs is obviously dangerous and should only be attempted at high tide. As always, local knowledge is the best guide regarding both safety and where the best waves are to be found.

### Water Sports

Snorkelling is a great introduction to the underwater world and there's no shortage of places to try it out. In some places it's possible to rent a mask, snorkel and flippers,

### 'I DO', THE PACIFIC WAY

If you want to do it in an outrigger canoe, on the rim of a volcano, on a private island or simply underwater...the Pacific caters for all types when it comes to getting married. Some couples prefer a historic chapel, others engage a local choir, and there are those who just want to exchange vows on a sublime stretch of blonde beach.

French Polynesia, Fiji and Vanuatu are the big three in the marriage and honeymoon market. Loads of resorts in these countries offer wedding packages and will happily make all the arrangements for you; alternatively DIY but ensure you have all the necessary documents (a marriage licence for starters). Either way, the following websites are well worth checking: www.fijiweddings.com, www.vanuatuweddings.com or http://destination-weddings-abroad.com. If nothing but top-notch will do, take a look at the resorts listed in the boxed text on p583. And don't forget to seriously consider the weather when planning (see When to Go, p28) – your beloved won't even hear that special 'I Do' if it's said bracing an umbrella in cyclonic conditions.

but there's no beating the freedom of having your own equipment. For more details see Activities in the Directory of the individual country chapters.

Sea kayaking is popular, and kayak tours are offered in a handful of countries, including Fiji (p210), Palau (p406), Tonga (p716) and Samoa (p496).

Some countries also offer opportunities to windsurf and jet ski.

**Whale Watching**

Humpback whales spend much of the second half of the year in Pacific waters, and several countries offer excellent opportunities to view and even swim with them. Tonga is unquestionably the best place for this experience; see p717 as well as the boxed text on p718. Another place to take a dive with whales is Rurutu (p663) in French Polynesia. New Caledonia (p349) and the Cook Islands (p446) also have whale-watching opportunities.

**BUSINESS HOURS**

Opening hours in the Pacific are fairly fluid and, for this reason, we haven't been too pedantic about listing them in this book. Banks generally have quite conservative hours; 9.30am to 3pm Monday to Friday is average but, depending on the country, they may close even earlier. A few banks open on Saturday morning, but the majority don't. In general, businesses and government offices open from 9am to 4pm or 5pm; however, in countries with French ties (New Caledonia and French Polynesia, for example), they get going as early as 7.30am. Many businesses shut for an hour at lunch time; make this two hours in those French-connection countries. Small shops often trade from early morning to well into the evening. For more detailed information on standard opening hours, see Business Hours in the individual country directories. And keep in mind that, throughout the guide, reviews won't list business hours unless they differ from the standard hours.

**CHILDREN**

Those wee'ns will love it! Sandy beaches, swimming, snorkelling, scaling coconut trees...what kid doesn't love hanging out in bathers all day and working up an appetite big enough to break any budget? The

climate, natural setting, aquatic games and relative lack of poisonous creatures are a boon for youngsters of all ages. However, apart from major destinations such as Fiji, which is well set up for children, few travellers tote tots anywhere in the Pacific. In fact, some resorts and hotels ban little people for all or part of the year, so check when booking. Ask about kids' discounts on everything from accommodation (some resorts take kids for free) to air fares.

Children are highly valued in Pacific cultures. Locals will often be keen to talk to your kids, play with them and invite them to join activities or visit homes. However, local kids are expected to behave, so try (ha!) to curb your child's crying and tantrums if visiting a village. Childcare is a shared responsibility in the Pacific, and locals will sometimes correct your children for you if they misbehave!

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* has useful information for travel with children anywhere in the world.

**Practicalities**

Before leaving home, update vaccinations (p845) and don't forget to pack your child's health records. Ensure that your health and travel insurance also covers your child. Bring plenty of high UV-protection sunscreen (it's essential in the tropics), a hat and light clothes that cover the whole body. It's important to keep small children well hydrated in a hot climate. Gastrolite helps prevent dehydration and also masks unpleasant tastes in the water. If your child is sensitive to the local water, boil drinking water or buy bottled water. Also see the Medical Checklist (p846) for more on what to bring from home.

If you're travelling with kids small enough to be carried in a backpack or baby-sling, this is the way to go. A small stroller may *occasionally* be useful, but you'll have to weigh this up with its nuisance value – a pain on crowded public buses and it'll rust if taken to the beach.

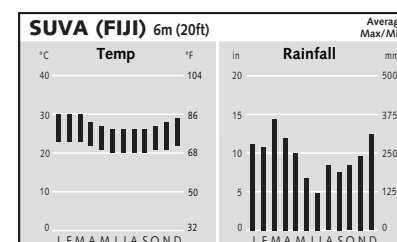
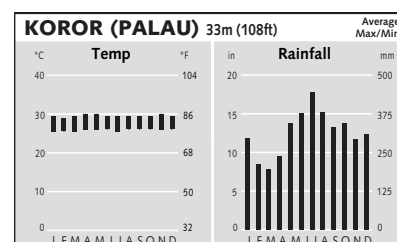
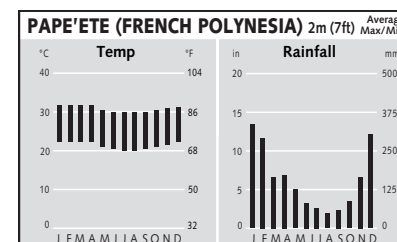
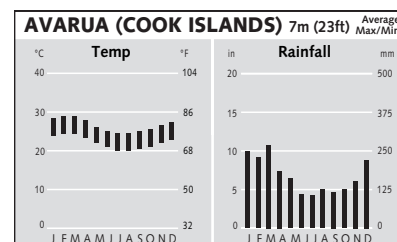
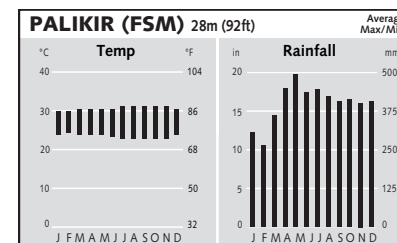
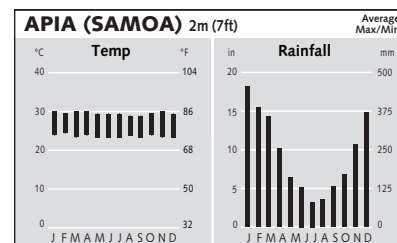
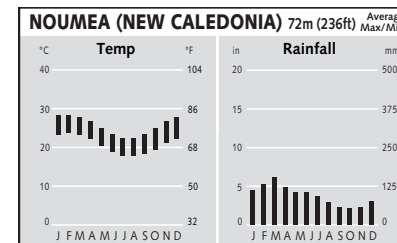
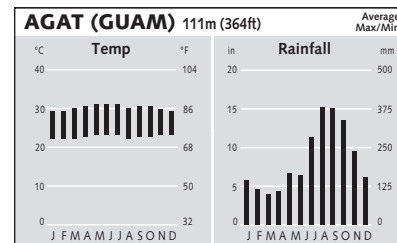
Smaller towns and outer islands may have few resources for Westerners wanting to pamper their kids. You will usually be able to buy disposable nappies (diapers), infant formula, long-life milk etc in the main town, but don't leave the capital without buying everything you need or checking the local situation.

Supervision is essential, especially when swimming, snorkelling or playing on beaches. Make sure kids understand that touching coral is a no-no (see the boxed text, p851).

For more on travelling with children, see Children in the Directory of the individual country chapters.

**CLIMATE CHARTS**

Consult the following charts while you're planning your trip.



when walking around at night, even as a couple. See Women Travellers in the Directory of individual countries for hassles that women may encounter.

In some areas at peak season, the sheer number of tourists can be a nuisance, but you can hardly complain about that when you're one of them.

### Mosquitoes

Even in places where mosquito-borne malaria is not a risk, the bites of mosquitoes can still cause considerable discomfort and, in some cases, dengue fever (p849). They are less of a problem around the coast where sea breezes keep them away, but inland they can be a pest. For more information see the boxed text, p848.

### Marine Hazards

The safest ocean swimming is within the protected waters of lagoons. However, when swimming or snorkelling, be aware of tides and currents, and particularly of the swift movement of water out of a lagoon and through a pass into the open sea. Avoid swimming alone, seek local advice about the conditions and stay alert for venomous marine life (see the boxed text, p851).

Attacks by sharks are rare but not unknown in Pacific waters. It's wise to seek the advice of local people before diving in. Swimming inside a reef offers some protection from sharks but if you are approached, stay calm (as calm as possible, anyway) and swim steadily away.

### Theft

Like the European explorers before you, you might run into different attitudes to personal property while in the Pacific. You'll also sympathise with Cook's dilemma: it can be difficult to stay Zen about another culture's attitude to property when someone has just run off with the ship's sextant!

The most important things to guard are your passport, papers, tickets and money – in that order. Carry these with you at all times in a money belt or in a sturdy leather pouch on your belt. Belongings are normally safe in hotel rooms but bear in mind that privacy is far from a sacred right in the Pacific. Many Pacific cultures have a relaxed attitude to property. It's best not to

leave expensive gear lying around in homes unless you share that relaxed attitude.

And remember what happened to Captain Cook. Don't let your overreaction to the threat of stealing spoil your holiday.

### DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Most Pacific nations have very poor facilities for disabled travellers. Getting around can be a real problem for wheelchair users: small domestic aeroplanes have narrow doors and shipping services may not have ramp access. What's more, hotels and guesthouses are not used to receiving guests with a physical disability; Western resorts and hotels are more likely to have some facilities.

On the other hand, disabled people are simply part of the community in the Pacific, looked after if necessary but expected to play a useful role. You won't have people pretending you don't exist; where a Sydney taxi cab might just accelerate away, a Samoan bus driver will call someone over to help him carry you aboard.

For pretrip planning advice, consult the Health & Safety link under [www.lonelyplanet.com/travellinks](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travellinks). Also get in touch with your national support organisation (preferably the 'travel officer' if there is one) and inquire about the countries you plan to visit.

### EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

See the individual country directories for the addresses of embassies and consulates.

As a tourist, it's vitally important to realise what your own embassy – the embassy of the country of which you are a citizen – can and can't do. Generally speaking, it won't be much help in emergencies if the trouble you're in is remotely your own fault. Remember that you are bound by the laws of the country you are in. Your embassy will not be sympathetic if you end up in jail after committing a crime locally, even if such actions are legal in your own country.

In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if other channels have been exhausted. For example, if you need to get home urgently, a free ticket home is exceedingly unlikely as the embassy would expect you to have insurance. If all your money and documents are stolen,

it might assist with getting a new passport, but a loan for onward travel is usually out of the question.

### GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Pacific attitudes to homosexuality are complex. Pacific cultures are conservative, and some more enthusiastic religious leaders occasionally whip themselves into a frenzy about homosexuality. However, in Polynesia at least, there is an ancient tradition of male 'cross-dressing', which is usually, but not always, associated with homosexuality. See the boxed texts on p690 and p585 for more information.

This guide lists contact addresses and venues under Gay & Lesbian Travellers in the Directory of the individual countries. That said, there is very little in the way of clubs or other facilities for gays and lesbians in the region; the exception is Tahiti (p671).

Male homosexuality is technically illegal (although this is rarely enforced) in many Pacific countries, including the Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu. Female homosexuality only gets an official mention in Samoa, where it is also illegal. In the more liberal French colonies of New Caledonia and French Polynesia, homosexuality is legal. Excessive public displays of both heterosexual and homosexual affection are frowned upon in most Pacific societies.

### HOLIDAYS

The standard Western holidays are observed in the Pacific islands. For extra national holidays, check Festivals & Events in the Directory of the individual country chapters.

Easter includes Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday. Many Catholic countries observe the Ascension 40 days after Easter Sunday; Whit Sunday (Pentecost) is seven weeks after Easter. The Assumption is celebrated on 15 August.

The US-influenced nations may celebrate Martin Luther King Day, US Independence Day, Columbus Day, Veterans' Day and Thanksgiving. French territories celebrate Labour Day, Bastille Day, All Saints' Day and Armistice Day. It's strange to listen to children on the other side of the world to France practising *La Marseillaise*

for 14 July, with its stirringly militaristic lines about fertilising our fields with impure blood! Countries associated with New Zealand (NZ) and Australia often celebrate Anzac Day.

If a public holiday falls on a weekend, the holiday is often taken on the preceding Friday or following Monday.

The following is a list of some standard Western public holidays:

**New Year's Day** 1 January  
**Martin Luther King Day** Third Monday in January  
**Easter** March/April  
**Anzac Day** 25 April  
**Labour Day** 1 May  
**Whit Sunday & Monday** May/June (Pentecost)  
**US Independence Day** 4 July  
**Bastille Day** 14 July  
**Assumption Day** 15 August  
**Columbus Day** 2nd Monday in October  
**All Saints' Day** 1 November  
**Veterans' (Armistice) Day** 11 November  
**Thanksgiving** Fourth Thursday in November  
**Christmas Day** 25 December  
**Boxing Day** 26 December

### INSURANCE

A travel insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is a good idea. There are a wide variety of policies available; those handled by STA Travel and other student travel organisations are usually good value. See the Health chapter (p845) for details on medical insurance.

Some policies exclude 'dangerous activities', which can include scuba diving, motorcycling, and even hiking. A locally acquired motorcycle licence is not valid under some policies. See p843 for more details on car and motorcycle insurance.

### INTERNET ACCESS

The major international Internet service providers (ISPs), such as **AOL** ([www.aol.com](http://www.aol.com)), **CompuServe** ([www.compuserve.com](http://www.compuserve.com)), and **IBM Net** ([www.ibm.com](http://www.ibm.com)), have few dial-in nodes in the South Pacific. This means it really isn't feasible to take a portable computer on holiday with you in order to stay in touch with life back home. You're better off relying on Internet cafés and other public access points – hotels, resorts, hostels, post offices, Telecom offices, libraries or universities – to collect your electronic mail. See the Directory of the individual country

chapters for information about Internet access in that country. For interesting websites to check before leaving home, see p31; see also Internet Resources in the individual directories.

## MONEY

The Pacific is not Western Europe where a single currency (almost) rules. Here a variety of currencies exists – everything from vatu in Vanuatu to tala in Samoa. That said, about half the countries in the Pacific do not have their own currency; instead they use US, Australian or NZ dollars, or the Pacific franc (the Cour de Franc Pacifique). The countries you'll be visiting will determine which of these four currencies you'll need to take; if you're travelling through a handful of countries, you may need more than one. See Money in the individual country directories to find out which currencies operate where.

To get an idea of exchange rates, see the Quick Reference page. The Getting Started chapter (p29) gives a rundown on local costs.

## ATMs & Credit Cards

Getting money out from your home bank account via ATMs is probably the best way to access cash in many Pacific countries. If you're not familiar with the options, ask your bank to explain the workings of credit, credit/debit, debit, charge and cash cards.

Two major advantages of credit cards are that they allow you to pay for expensive items (eg airline tickets) without having to carry wads of cash around, and they give you the best exchange rate (often lower than the advertised rate) on purchases. They also allow you to withdraw cash at selected banks or from the many ATMs that are linked up internationally. However, if an ATM in the Pacific swallows a card that was issued outside the Pacific, it can be a major headache. Also, some credit cards aren't hooked up to ATM networks unless you specifically ask your bank to do this. ATMs are common in major Pacific centres, but unknown in the outer islands or rural areas.

Cash cards, which you use at home to withdraw money directly from your bank account or savings account, can be used in

the Pacific at ATMs linked to international networks like Cirrus and Maestro.

Credit and credit/debit cards, such as Visa (sometimes called Carte Bleue) and MasterCard, are widely accepted. However, these cards often have a credit limit that is too low to cover major expenses like airline tickets and can be difficult to replace if lost abroad. Also, a cash advance against your Visa or MasterCard credit card account incurs a transaction fee and/or finance charge. With some issuers, the fees can reach as high as US\$10, *plus* interest per transaction, so it's best to check with your card issuer before leaving home and compare rates.

Charge cards such as American Express (Amex) have offices in many countries that will replace a lost card within 24 hours. However, Amex offices in this part of the Pacific are limited to Australia, French Polynesia, New Caledonia and NZ. Charge cards are not widely accepted off the beaten track.

Another option is Visa TravelMoney, a prepaid travel card that gives 24-hour access to your funds in local currency via Visa ATMs. The card is pin-protected and its value is stored on the system, not on the card. So if you lose your card, your money's safe.

The best advice is not to put all your eggs in one basket. If you want to rely heavily on bits of plastic, go for two different cards – an Amex along with a Visa or MasterCard. Better still is a combination of credit or cash card and travellers cheques so you have something to fall back on if an ATM swallows your card or the banks in the area are closed.

A word of warning: fraudulent shopkeepers have been known to quickly make several charge slip imprints with your credit card when you're not looking, and then simply copy your signature from the one that you authorise. Try not to let your card out of sight, and always check your statements upon your return.

## Cash

Nothing beats cash for convenience...or risk. If you lose it, it's gone forever and very few travel insurers will come to your rescue. Those that will, limit the amount to somewhere around US\$300.

For tips on carrying your money safely, see Theft (p828).

## Moneychangers

Every time you change money, you lose out through commissions and customer exchange rates, so if you only visit American Samoa, for example, buy US dollars before travelling from your bank at home (if it can provide them).

All Pacific currencies are fully convertible, but you may have trouble exchanging some of the lesser-known ones at small banks, while currencies of countries with high inflation face unfavourable exchange rates. Get rid of any leftover Pacific currencies before you leave the region as no bank outside the Pacific will touch them.

Most airports and big hotels have banking facilities that are open outside normal office hours, sometimes on a 24-hour basis. Post offices often perform banking tasks and outnumber banks in remote places; they also tend to have extended hours of operation. Be aware, though, that while they always exchange cash, they might balk at handling travellers cheques.

The best exchange rates are offered at banks. Exchange bureaus usually – but not always – offer worse rates or charge higher commissions. Hotels are almost always the worst places for exchanging money. American Express and Thomas Cook usually don't charge a commission for changing their own cheques, but may offer a less favourable rate than banks.

## Tipping & Bargaining

Attitudes to tipping vary in the Pacific but in general, tipping is not expected and in some cases it may cause offence. It's far better to keep your 'tip' to a smile of thanks. In Melanesian societies, a tip is a gift that creates an obligation that the receiver must reciprocate, and they can't do this if you're passing through. Tipping is becoming more common in cities like American Samoa's Pago Pago or French Polynesia's Pape'ete.

The Pacific is not Asia; bargaining is not the practice in any Pacific country and it may also offend. Although bargaining is becoming more common in the tourist shops of major cities, village people will often take their produce back home from market rather than accept a lower price than what's

asked. The exception to all this is Fiji where Indo-Fijians, as part of their culture, expect to bargain and will initiate it.

Occasionally, people in isolated areas will quote you grossly inflated prices for artefacts or accommodation, usually because they are not up to date with prices. When this happens, explain that you can't afford that much and then tell them what it would cost in the city. If they don't accept it, you'll have to either pay the first price or try elsewhere.

## Travellers Cheques

The main reason for carrying travellers cheques rather than cash is the protection they offer from theft, though they are losing popularity as more travellers deposit their money in their bank at home and withdraw it as they go along through ATMs.

American Express and Thomas Cook travellers cheques are widely accepted and have efficient replacement policies. If you're going to remote places, stick to American Express, since small local banks may not accept other brands.

When you change cheques, don't look at just the exchange rate; ask about fees and commissions as well. There may be a service fee per cheque, a flat transaction fee or a percentage of the total amount irrespective of the number of cheques. Some banks charge fees (often exorbitant) to change cheques and not cash; others do the reverse.

Keep a record of cheque numbers; without them, replacement of lost cheques will be a slow and painful process. Many institutions charge a per-cheque fee, so most of your cheques should be in large denominations, say US\$100. It's only at the end of your stay that you might want to change a US\$10 or US\$20 cheque just to get through the last day or two.

## Value-Added Tax

Value-added tax (VAT), known as TVA (*taxe sur la valeur ajoutée*) in French-speaking countries, is levied in some Pacific nations such as French Polynesia, New Caledonia, the Cook Islands and Fiji. It's generally added to goods and services, including hotel and restaurant bills, and can significantly bump up prices you may be quoted. Throughout this guide, all prices listed include VAT unless otherwise stated.

## POST

Postage costs vary from country to country, as does post office efficiency: the 'slowest post' award must go to Pitcairn Island – expect three months for letters either way.

You can collect mail at poste restante counters at major post offices. Ask people writing to you to print your name and underline your surname. Then mark the envelope 'Poste Restante (General Delivery)' with the name of the city and country. When collecting mail, your passport may be required for identification and a fee may be charged. Check under your first name as well as your surname. Post offices usually hold letters for a month.

If you're arriving by yacht, letters should have the name of the vessel included somewhere in the address. Mail is normally filed under the name of the vessel rather than by surname.

## TELEPHONE Mobile Phones

In some South Pacific countries, it's feasible to take a mobile phone on holiday; see the individual country chapters for more information on how you can get mobile phone coverage.

## Phone Codes

For international calls, you can dial directly from most countries in the South Pacific to almost anywhere in the world. This is usually cheaper than going through the operator. To call abroad you simply dial the international access code (IAC) for the country you are calling from (most commonly 00 in the Pacific, but see the following table), the international telephone code (ITC) for the country you are calling (also see the following table), the local area code (if there is one, and usually dropping the leading zero if there is one) and then the number. If, for example, you are in the Cook Islands (IAC 00) and want to make a call to the US (ITC 1), San Francisco (area code 415), number 415 123 4567, then you dial 00-1-212-123 4567. To call from Fiji (IAC 05) to Australia (ITC 61), Sydney (area code 02), number 1234 5678, then you dial 05-61-2-1234 5678 (dropping the zero from Sydney's area code). There are no area codes in any of the countries of the South Pacific.

## TELEPHONE CODES

Country	ITC (☎)	IAC (☎)
American Samoa	684	00
Cook Islands	682	00
Easter Island	56-32	00
Federated States of Micronesia	691	011
Fiji	679	05
French Polynesia	689	00
Guam	1-671	011
Hawai'i	1-808	011
Kiribati	686	00
Marshall Islands	692	011
Nauru	674	00
New Caledonia	687	00
Niue	683	00
Northern Marianas	1-670	011
Palau	680	011
Pitcairn Island	872	00
Samoa	685	00
Solomon Islands	677	00
Tokelau	690	00
Tonga	676	00
Tuvalu	688	00
Vanuatu	678	00
Wallis & Futuna	681	19

ITC – International Telephone Code (to call into that country)

IAC – International Access Code (to call internationally from that country)

Other country codes include: Australia ☎ 61, Canada ☎ 1, France ☎ 33, Germany ☎ 49, Hong Kong ☎ 852, Indonesia ☎ 62, Japan ☎ 81, Malaysia ☎ 60, New Zealand ☎ 64, Papua New Guinea ☎ 675, Singapore ☎ 65, South Africa ☎ 27, UK ☎ 44, USA ☎ 1.

## Phonecards

Depending on the individual country, public telephones can be a rarity but it's usually not too hard to find a shop owner who will let you use their phone for a local call. Some top-end hotels charge pretty steeply for the privilege of using their phones. Phonecards are used in various Pacific countries – even Pitcairn Island, with just one public telephone, has its own phonecards. See Telephone in the Directory of the individual countries for more details.

## TIME

Local time relative to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT, which is the same as UTC) is specified in the Practicalities boxed text in the Directory of each individual country chapter; see also the World Time Zones map (p883). Since this is the tropics, most Pacific islands don't use daylight saving time (summer time); the exceptions are Vanuatu and Pitcairn Island. It is well worth checking your airline tickets and itinerary very carefully if a country on your route is either starting or finishing daylight saving.

Time zones in the Pacific are complicated by the International Date Line, which splits the region in half. Crossing from east to the west, you go forward one day. The Date Line runs along the 180-degree longitude, detouring 800km to the east around Fiji and Tonga, and 3600km to the east to accommodate all of Kiribati in one day.

Times that are valid at midday in Fiji:

Country	Time
American Samoa	1pm, previous day
Cook Islands	2pm, previous day
Easter Island	6pm, previous day
Federated States of Micronesia's Chuuk & Yap	10am, same day
Federated States of Micronesia's Kosrae	midday, same day
Federated States of Micronesia's Pohnpei	11am, same day
Gambier Archipelago	3pm, previous day
Hawai'i	2pm, previous day
Kiribati's Gilbert Islands	midday, same day
Kiribati's Line Islands	2pm, same day
Kiribati's Phoenix Islands	1pm, same day
Marquesas Islands	2.30pm, previous day
Marshall Islands	midday, same day
Nauru	midday, same day
New Caledonia	11am, same day
Niue	1pm, previous day
Northern Mariana Islands	10am, same day
Pitcairn Island	3.30pm, previous day
Samoa	1pm, previous day
Society Islands including Tahiti	2pm, previous day
Solomon Islands	11am, same day
Tokelau	2pm, previous day
Tonga	1pm, same day
Tuvalu	midday, same day
Vanuatu	11am, same day
Wallis & Futuna	midday, same day

Some international hours at the same time:

Country	Time
Berlin	1am, same day
London	midnight, same day
Los Angeles	4pm, previous day
New Zealand	midday, same day
New York	7pm, previous day
Paris	1am, same day
Singapore	8am, same day
Sydney	10am, same day
Tokyo	9am, same day

Throughout the Pacific you'll hear such terms as 'Tongan time', 'Fijian time' or 'island time'. This could be translated to a wish for tourists to 'relax, it'll happen eventually'. The concept of time is a bit fluid in the tropics and you'll find it a lot less stressful to adopt the same relaxed approach. It's also worth building some flexibility into your plans; don't count on split-second transfers from bus to ferry, and if you need government approval for anything, be prepared to wait for it.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The quality and quantity of tourist information varies from one Pacific country to another. But thanks to the Internet, even the most remote islands, like Tokelau for example, now have websites to browse. See under Tourist Information in the Directory of the individual country chapters for more details.

The **South Pacific Tourism Organisation** (SPTO; ☎ 679-330 4177; www.spto.org) is an intergovernmental organisation that fosters regional cooperation in the development and promotion of tourism in the Pacific. The SPTO serves as a tourist office for a few countries; however, it doesn't offer a lot in the way of services to independent travellers.

## VISAS

A visa is a stamp in your passport or on a separate piece of paper permitting you to enter the country in question and stay for a specified period of time. More often than not in the Pacific, you will get a visa or tourist permit at the airport or port on arrival, but not always; it's worth checking with the embassies or consulates of the countries

you plan to visit or with a reputable travel agent before travelling as visa requirements can change.

Most readers of this book will have very little to do with visas. With a valid passport, you should be able to visit most Pacific countries for up to three months, provided you have some sort of onward or return ticket and/or 'sufficient means of support' (ie money).

See the Visa section in the Directory of the individual chapters for more details.

## WORK

Generally it's hard to get a work visa for Pacific countries. To find out the rules and regulations regarding work in a particular country, contact the relevant embassy, consulate or immigration office, or check their website.

Volunteer work is an excellent way to get to know a country but it's not an option for

the casual tourist: volunteer programmes require a serious and long-term commitment. Most organisations require volunteers to have tertiary qualifications or work experience in their particular field, and to hold residency in the organisation's base country. Volunteer organisations active in the Pacific region include:

**Australian Volunteers International** (☎ 03-9279 1788; [www.ozvol.org.au](http://www.ozvol.org.au); PO Box 350, Fitzroy, Vic 3065, Australia)

**UN Volunteers** (☎ 228-815 20 00; [www.unv.org](http://www.unv.org); Postfach 260 111, D-53153, Bonn, Germany)

**US Peace Corps** (☎ 1 800 424 8580; [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov); 1111, 20th St NW, Washington DC 20526, USA)

**Voluntary Service Overseas** (VSO; ☎ 020-8780 7200; [www.vso.org.uk](http://www.vso.org.uk); 317 Putney Bridge Rd, London SW15 2PN, UK) There are also offices in Canada, Ireland and the Netherlands.

**Volunteer Service Abroad** (VSA; ☎ 04-472 5759; [www.vsa.org.nz](http://www.vsa.org.nz); PO Box 12-246, Wellington, New Zealand)

# Transport in the South Pacific

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This chapter gives the nuts and bolts about getting to the South Pacific, as well as information related to getting around the region once you're there. For detailed, country-specific information, see the Transport section of the individual country chapters. Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_services](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services).

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### AIR

Just getting to the South Pacific can be an expensive exercise. The relatively small number of travellers visiting this region means that airfares are generally high. The main gateways are the US, Australia, New Zealand (NZ) and Japan; large international airlines flying between these

countries link a number of South Pacific destinations. There are also many small local airlines that service only the Pacific region. For a list of the airlines that can get you into the region, see the following Airlines section. For a list of airlines that will get you around once you are in the region, see p841. Also check the Transport section of individual country chapters for specific schedule information.

### Airlines

**Air France** (in France ☎ 08 20 82 08 20; [www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com)) Flies from Paris to New Caledonia and Tahiti (French Polynesia), and from Japan to New Caledonia.

**Air Nauru** (☎ 674-625 3409; [www.airnauru.com.au](http://www.airnauru.com.au)) As an interim measure since its last plane was repossessed in late 2005, the airline has been contracting an aircraft to run a weekly service between Brisbane (Australia), Honiara (Solomon Islands), Nauru and Tarawa (Kiribati). Check the Internet for updates.

**Air New Zealand** (in NZ ☎ 0800 737 000; [www.airnz.co.nz](http://www.airnz.co.nz)) Flies to most Pacific countries.

**Air Niugini** (☎ 675-327 3444; [www.airniugini.com.pg](http://www.airniugini.com.pg)) Connects Papua New Guinea with the Solomon Islands.

**Air Pacific** (☎ 679-672 0888; [www.airpacific.com](http://www.airpacific.com)) Flies between Fiji, Japan, Australia, NZ and the US (Honolulu). It also flies to Kiribati, New Caledonia, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands.

**Air Tahiti Nui** (☎ 689-46 02 02; [www.airtahitiniui.com](http://www.airtahitiniui.com)) Flies between Tahiti (French Polynesia), the US, France, Australia, NZ and Japan.

**Air Vanuatu** (☎ 678-23848; [www.airvanuatu.com](http://www.airvanuatu.com)) Flies to Australia, NZ, Fiji, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands.

**Aircalin** (☎ 687-26 55 00; [www.aircalin.nc](http://www.aircalin.nc)) Flies from New Caledonia to Australia, NZ, Japan, Vanuatu, Fiji and French Polynesia. It is the only airline that flies to Wallis and Futuna.

**All Nippon Airways** (☎ 81-03-3490 8800; [www.ana.co.jp](http://www.ana.co.jp)) Flies from Japan to Guam.

**Asiana Airlines** (in South Korea ☎ 1588 8000; [www.flyasiana.com](http://www.flyasiana.com)) Flies from South Korea to the Northern Mariana Islands.

**China Airlines** (☎ 86-02-2715 1212; [www.china-airlines.com](http://www.china-airlines.com)) Flies from China to Guam.

**Continental Airlines** (in the US ☎ 1 800 231 0856; [www.continental.com](http://www.continental.com)) Serves Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands and Palau from the US, Australia, Indonesia (Bali), the Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.

### THINGS CHANGE

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works, and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.



**Far Eastern Air Transport** (☎ 886-2-3393 5388; www.fat.com.tw) Flies from Taiwan to Palau.

**Freedom Air** (☎ 64-9-523 8686; www.freedomair.com) Flies from NZ to Fiji.

**Hawaiian Airlines** (in Hawai'i ☎ 808-838 3700; www.hawaiianair.com) Flies from the US to American Samoa and Tahiti (French Polynesia).

**Japan Airlines** (in Japan ☎ 0120 25 5931; www.jal.co.jp) Flies from Japan to Guam and French Polynesia.

**Korean Air** (☎ 850-2-2667 0386; www.koreanair.com) Flies from South Korea to Guam and Fiji.

**LAN** (☎ 56-2-526 2000; www.lan.com) Flies between Chile and French Polynesia, with stops at Easter Island.

**Northwest Airlines** (in the US ☎ 1 800 692 6955; www.nwa.com) Flies to Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands from the US and Japan.

**Pacific Blue** (☎ 61-7-3295 2284; www.flypacificblue.com) Offshoot of Virgin Blue flying from Australia and NZ to the Cook Islands, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu.

**Phillipine Airlines** (☎ 632-817 800; www.philippineairlines.com) Flies from the Philippines to Guam.

**Polynesian Airlines** (☎ 685-22172; www.polynesianairlines.com) A joint venture between Virgin Blue and the Samoan government. Flies from Samoa to American Samoa, Fiji, Niue and Tonga.

**Polynesian Blue** (☎ 685-22172; www.polynesianblue.com) Partnership between Virgin Blue and Polynesian Airlines. Flies from Australia and NZ to Samoa.

**Qantas** (in Australia ☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com) Code shares with some Pacific airlines, flying from Australia, NZ and the US to New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Tahiti (French Polynesia), Fiji and Samoa.

**United** (in the US ☎ 1 800 538 2929; www.united.com) Flies or code shares with Star Alliance partners from the US and Japan to the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Fiji, Guam and Samoa.

## Tickets

Most destinations in the South Pacific are relatively expensive transportwise both to get to and to get around. Most of your travel will need to be planned in advance. Depending on where you're coming from, consider purchasing a round-the-world (RTW) ticket with stopovers in the Pacific; alternatively an air pass (see opposite) may be what you need to ease the cost of travel between countries.

In addition to traditional travel operators, there are agencies that specialise in diving tours and other activity-based tours. Their packages typically include flights and accommodation, plus any activity fees and tours.

For long-term travel there are plenty of discount tickets valid for 12 months, allowing multiple stopovers with open dates.

Use the fares quoted in this book as a guide only (all quoted fares are return). Applicable airport taxes are not included in the fares – and be warned that these taxes can quickly add up to hundreds of dollars. Under the different regions later in this section we give prices to get to the main centres in the South Pacific: Honolulu (Hawai'i), Pape'ete (French Polynesia), Nadi (Fiji), Sydney (Australia) and Auckland (NZ). From these cities, you will be able to pick up connecting flights to most destinations elsewhere in the region.

Full-time students and people under 26 who can show a valid International Student Identity Card (ISIC) have access to better deals than other travellers. The better deals may not always be cheaper fares but can include more flexibility to change flights and/or routes.

## INTERCONTINENTAL TICKETS

Choose between RTW fares or Circle Pacific tickets to get you to and around the Pacific.

## Round-the-World Tickets

Various airline alliances offer RTW tickets, which give travellers an almost endless variety of possible airline and destination combinations.

RTWs can be excellent value; expect to pay from US\$2500, A\$3000, €2000 or UK£1300. Star Alliance (a code-sharing group of airlines that includes Air NZ) and OneWorld (including Qantas) offer some of the best RTWs for the South Pacific region. The SkyTeam group (including Air France, Continental Airlines, Korean Air and Northwest Airlines) is particularly interesting for visiting some Micronesian destinations.

Fiji is the most popular destination for travellers on RTWs, but Micronesia, Samoa, Tahiti, Tonga and the Cook Islands can all be visited as part of a RTW.

## Circle Pacific Tickets

Circle Pacific tickets are similar to a RTW ticket but are used for travel between countries in the Pacific Rim region only (ie the US, South Pacific, Southeast Asia, NZ and Australia). They are excellent value if you wish to combine your Pacific journey with a few destinations in, for example, Australasia or North America. As with RTW tickets,

there are advance-purchase restrictions as well as limits on how many stopovers you can make. Fares are mileage-based.

For an idea of price, you should expect to pay around US\$2800 for a fare which includes Los Angeles–Tahiti (Pape'ete)–Cook Islands (Rarotonga)–Fiji (Nadi)–Auckland–Brisbane–Singapore–Los Angeles.

## AIR PASSES

Intercountry flights in the Pacific are prohibitively expensive. The only really workable way to travel to a handful of countries is by using an air pass. Fortunately, there are some excellent air passes taking in several South Pacific countries for a reduced price. Some passes are arranged by airlines, while others are put together by travel agents. Seating availability for heavily discounted fares can be quite limited, so book early. Note that most air passes have to be bought well in advance, and many must be purchased before travel to the South Pacific commences.

## Asia AirPass

This SkyTeam pass (valid for two months; from US\$750 to US\$1400) allows travel to 21 countries in both Asia and the South Pacific via Seoul or Tokyo. Some of the destinations serviced are Fiji, Guam, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands and Palau. You can choose from three to six sectors.

The pass is available for purchase with either a SkyTeam RTW ticket or an intercontinental ticket on a SkyTeam carrier.

## Boomerang

This Qantas pass can be used to travel between Australia, NZ and the southwest Pacific islands of Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands. The pass is also valid on Air Pacific, Air Vanuatu and Polynesian Airlines flights. It costs from US\$260 per sector, depending on mileage. The pass is only available when you purchase a ticket to Australia, NZ, Fiji and Vanuatu and is not available to residents of Australia, NZ or the southwest Pacific countries listed earlier.

## Circle South West Pacific

This pass allows travel from Australia's east coast to two or more islands in the southwest Pacific, including Samoa, Tonga, NZ, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji or New

Caledonia. Passes start at A\$850 (depending on which countries you visit). For an extra A\$200 to A\$500 (depending on the flight), you can add an extra country.

Travel must start and finish in Australia and must be completed within 28 days. Accommodation must be prebooked for the full period.

## Island Explorer

With this Polynesian Airlines pass you can fly from NZ to Niue, Samoa, Tonga and Australia (Sydney) and either Fiji or Hawai'i. The 45-day pass is only available for departures from NZ. It costs NZ\$1799.

## Océanie Pass

This Aircalin pass is available on Aircalin's network and is sold outside the South Pacific (not available also in Australia and NZ) to nonresident travellers. A minimum of two sectors (from US\$160 per sector) must be purchased prior to arrival in the region.

## Polypass

Polynesian Airlines' Polypass is a cheap way to fly between Tonga, Samoa, American Samoa, Fiji, Australia and NZ. It's good for 45 days (excluding the Christmas holiday period) and allows five stops in the Pacific. In the USA, this is sometimes called the Pacific Explorer Air Pass and costs upwards of US\$1100. Travel to Honolulu, Los Angeles and Tahiti can also be included for an additional amount.

The airline also offers various Polypacks, where travellers are given up to two months to complete an itinerary that includes several Pacific destinations (these cost from US\$1000); see the Polynesian Airlines website for more details. Note, however, that at the time of writing the future of these passes was in doubt due to the launch of the Polynesian Blue airline (a joint venture between Virgin Blue and the Samoan government), which is slated to take over most of Polynesian Airlines' international routes.

## South Pacific Pass

Using the route network of Air NZ and its Star Alliance partners, this Air NZ pass allows travel to Fiji, New Caledonia, Rarotonga, Tahiti and Tonga. Fares range from NZ\$400 to NZ\$700, depending on the

countries you choose. A minimum of two sectors must be purchased.

This pass is not available to residents of NZ, Australia or any of the countries listed in the previous paragraph, and must be bought in conjunction with an international ticket.

### Visit Micronesia

This Continental Airlines pass offers substantial savings over the normal fares in this region. It must be purchased outside Micronesia in conjunction with an international ticket to Guam on Continental. Travel starts in Guam and costs US\$400 to go to Saipan (Northern Marianas), Palau and Yap (FSM); US\$500 if you add on Chuuk (FSM); or US\$600 if you also add Pohnpei (FSM). The pass is valid for 30 days.

### Visit South Pacific Pass

This pass offers discounted airfares (by up to 50%) on a wide variety of South Pacific routes. Nine airlines are involved and you can travel between Australia, NZ, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji, Tonga, Nauru, Niue, Samoa and French Polynesia. You can pretty much tailor-make your itinerary, so discuss options with a travel agent.

The pass costs US\$220 to US\$370 per sector (depending on the sector) and you must purchase a minimum of two sectors. Additional sectors can be bought at participating airline offices in the South Pacific. The pass must be bought in conjunction with an international air ticket from outside the region, and it isn't available to residents of Australia, NZ or any of the countries listed above.

### ONLINE BOOKING AGENCIES

A selection of online booking agencies is listed here, together with the country or region in which the website is based.

**Air Brokers International** (www.airbrokers.com) USA.

**CheapTickets** (www.cheaptickets.com) USA.

**ebookers.com** (www.ebookers.com) UK, Continental Europe.

**Expedia.ca** (www.expedia.ca) Canada.

**Expedia.com** (www.expedia.com) USA, UK, France, Netherlands.

**House of Travel** (www.houseoftravel.co.nz) NZ.

**JustFares** (www.justfares.com) USA.

**My Travel** (www.mytravel.com) UK.

**Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com) USA.

**travel.com.au** (www.travel.com.au) Australia.

**Travelocity.ca** (www.travelocity.ca) Canada.

**Webjet** (www.webjet.com.au) Australia.

**World Travellers' Club** (www.around-the-world.com) USA.

### Asia

Flying from Japan, there are direct flights to the FSM, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia and the Northern Mariana Islands. There are also direct flights from Taiwan to Palau, from China and the Philippines to Guam, and from South Korea to Fiji, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. From other Asian destinations, the easiest option is to fly to Australia or to NZ and connect there with onward flights to the South Pacific. Most Asian countries offer fairly competitive airfare deals; Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong are some of the best places to shop around for discount tickets.

### JAPAN & KOREA

Recommended agencies in Japan include **STA Travel** (☎ 03-5391 2922; www.statravel.co.jp) and **No 1 Travel** (☎ 03-3205 6073; www.no1-travel.com).

From Japan, return fares to Nadi are around ¥86,000 and to Guam are ¥45,000. Fares from South Korea to Fiji start from US\$1250.

### Australasia

Despite its proximity to Australia and NZ, travel to the South Pacific from that region can be reasonably expensive. Generally there is not much variation between the low- and high-season fares except during Christmas holiday season when fares increase considerably.

The east coast of Australia (Brisbane and Sydney) has excellent connecting flights to Melanesia (Vanuatu, Fiji and New Caledonia), while Auckland or Wellington in NZ have good connections to Polynesia (Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga and French Polynesia).

Australia's east coast and NZ are both included in the routing of several air passes (see p837).

### AUSTRALIA

Quite a few travel offices specialise in discount air tickets. Some travel agents, particularly smaller ones, advertise cheap air fares in

the travel sections of weekend newspapers, such as the *Age* (in Melbourne) and *Sydney Morning Herald*.

**Hideaway Holidays** (☎ 02-8799 2500; www.hideaway.com.au) is a Pacific travel specialist and comes highly recommended. Other travel agencies specialising in the Pacific include **Talpacific Holidays** (☎ 02-9262 6318; www.talpacific.com) and **Pacific Holidays** (☎ 02-9080 1600; www.pacific.holidays.com.au).

Return fares to Fiji start from A\$500/800 in the low/high season, to French Polynesia A\$1200/1600 and to Vanuatu A\$500/800. As well consulting the big-name airlines such as Qantas and Air New Zealand, it's also worth checking out fares with Virgin's new Polynesian Blue.

### NEW ZEALAND

The *New Zealand Herald* has a travel section in which travel agents advertise fares. Both **Talpacific Holidays** (☎ 09-914 8728; www.travel.arrange.co.nz) and **Air New Zealand** (☎ 0800 737 000; www.airnewzealand.co.nz) offer a range of fares and packages from NZ to most South Pacific destinations.

Return fares to Fiji or Vanuatu start from NZ\$500/800 in the low/high season. To French Polynesia fares start from NZ\$1000/1300.

### Europe

There are flights from most major cities to Los Angeles, Honolulu, Sydney or Auckland, from where there are connecting flights to the South Pacific. Frankfurt and London have the most flight options, but generally there is not much variation in fares between cities. Flights via Japan and South Korea are shorter but there are fewer Pacific connections from these two countries.

Considering how far the South Pacific is from Europe, a RTW ticket (see p836) could be the most economical way to get to the region. Low season for travel from Europe is from January to June and October to November. High season is July to September and during the Christmas and New Year period.

### CONTINENTAL EUROPE

In the Netherlands, try **Wereldcontact** (☎ 0343 530 530; www.wereldcontact.nl) and **Pacific Island Travel** (☎ 020-626 13 25; www.pacificislandtravel.com) for flight/accommodation deals.

In Germany, **Adventure Travel** (☎ 0911 979 95 55; www.adventure-holidays.com) and **Art of Travel** (☎ 089-21 10 76-13; www.artoftravel.de, in German) specialise in South Pacific travel.

Recommended agencies in France include **OTU Voyages** (☎ 08 20 81 78 17; www.otu.fr) and **Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 08 25 00 07 47; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr). **Ultramarina** (☎ 08 25 02 98 02; www.ultramarina.com) specialises in travel to the South Pacific.

From Paris and Frankfurt low season return fares to Pape'ete start from €1300, while fares to Nadi start from €1100. From major cities expect to pay around €900 for a return fare to Honolulu.

### UK

Discount air travel is big business in London. Advertisements for many travel agencies appear in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers, in *Time Out*, the *Evening Standard* and in the free magazine *TNT*.

Recommended travel agencies include: **All Ways Pacific** (☎ 01494 432747; www.all-ways.co.uk) **Trailfinders** (☎ 0845 058 5858; www.trailfinders.co.uk) **Travelbag** (☎ 0800 082 5000; www.travelbag.co.uk)

From the UK, flights via Los Angeles are generally the easiest – and often the cheapest – option for travel to the South Pacific. Air New Zealand flights from London to Australia or NZ often allow for stopovers in the South Pacific. Flights from London via Seoul and Tokyo are another possibility.

Return fares from London to Nadi start from £800/1100 in the low/high season; to Pape'ete expect to pay around £1200/1500; to Honolulu, Sydney and Auckland fares start from £600.

### North America

Los Angeles and Honolulu are the main gateway cities for travel between North America and the South Pacific. There are direct flights to the Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Samoa, Guam, the Marshall Islands and Palau – as well as numerous flights to Australia and NZ – from where you can connect to other destinations in the Pacific. From Canada, most flights to the South Pacific will travel via Los Angeles and/or Honolulu.

Many of the air passes mentioned (p837) are excellent value for travellers from North America.

In general, June to August is the cheapest and November and December are the most expensive months to travel to the South Pacific.

### CANADA

The *Toronto Globe & Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *Montreal Gazette* and *Vancouver Sun* are good places to start looking for cheap fares. **Goway** (☎ 800 387 8850; www.goway.com) is a Toronto-based travel agency specialising in trips to the South Pacific.

Year-round fares to Honolulu are around C\$500 from Vancouver or C\$600 from Toronto. Fares from Vancouver to Nadi start from C\$1900/2500 in the low/high season, or C\$2200/2600 to Pape'ete. From Toronto and Ottawa, return low season fares to Nadi start from C\$2300 and C\$2700 to Pape'ete.

### USA

Discount travel agencies in the US can be found through the Yellow Pages or major newspapers. The *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *San Francisco Examiner* and *Chicago Tribune* have weekly travel sections with ads and information.

Travel agents in the US who specialise in the South Pacific region include:

**Newmans Vacations** (☎ 800 342 1956; www.newmansvacations.com)

**Pacific for Less** (☎ 808 875 7589; www.pacific-for-less.com)

**South Seas Adventures** (☎ 800 576 7327; www.south-seas-adventures.com)

Year-round fares to Honolulu start from around US\$400 from Los Angeles and US\$650 from New York. From Los Angeles, low/high season fares start from US\$1000/1500 to Pape'ete and Nadi. From New York and other east coast cities, return low/high season fares start from US\$1400/1800 to Pape'ete and US\$1600/1900 to Nadi.

Air New Zealand flights from the US to Australia and NZ often include one free stopover in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Tahiti or Tonga. In the low/high season, expect to pay around US\$1500/1850 for a return fare to Auckland, including this stopover.

### South America

LanChile operates flights between Santiago and Pape'ete; one flight a week has a stopover on Easter Island. For more information

on fares and schedules, contact LanChile or **Student Flight Centre** (☎ 02-335 0395; www.sertur.d.in Spanish) in Santiago, an affiliate of STA Travel. From Santiago, return fares to Pape'ete cost about US\$1500.

### SEA

Within the South Pacific countries, inter-island shipping routes can be used to reach smaller islands that do not have an air service. Cruise ships provide an expensive way of reaching the major tourist destinations. Cargo vessels, some of which carry passengers, travel between island groups and the main Pacific-trading nations. Another option is to get to the South Pacific on your own yacht (or on someone else's). All of these options are detailed in the Getting Around section on opposite.

### TOURS

Travel agents and airlines have a range of packages which are worth considering. Convenient and cost effective, packages often include flights, airport transfers, accommodation and possibly meals. They often work best for families, wedding parties and groups travelling together, however those going it alone and couples should also give them more than a cursory glance. Although not pushed by travel agents, it is possible to book a package and extend your stay with independent travel. Once your package of relative luxury ends, there's nothing stopping you from staying on in the South Pacific a while longer (usually a maximum of one month).

## GETTING AROUND

### AIR

Air travel is the primary way of getting around the South Pacific. As well as the major international airlines, there are many smaller airlines run by Pacific nations that make island hopping around the South Pacific not that difficult. Keep in mind though that some flights operate only once or twice per week and are often heavily booked. Many of the local airlines also operate a domestic service around their own country, providing access to the more remote parts of the region. Details on these domestic airlines and their flight schedules are given in the Transport section of individual country chapters.

Unlike in Europe or Africa, in the South Pacific you usually can't just decide which country you'd like to visit next and arrange travel on the spot – unless you have your own yacht! If, like most South Pacific tourists, you're travelling by plane, the only reasonable way to get to more than one or two countries is by buying an air pass. Otherwise, costs for intercountry flights will quickly break the bank. There are a number of international and domestic air passes available which can make things more affordable. See p837 for more information on international air passes that include regional routes.

### Airlines in South Pacific

The following airlines (some international, some domestic) fly between several South Pacific countries. Check the Transport section of the individual country chapters for more detailed information on schedules and airfares.

**Air Fiji** (☎ 679-331 3666; www.airfiji.com.fj) Flies between Fiji and Tuvalu three times a week.

**Air Nauru** (www.airnauru.com.au) As an interim measure since its last plane was repossessed in late 2005, the airline has been contracting an aircraft to run a weekly service between Brisbane (Australia), Honiara (Solomon Islands), Nauru and Tarawa (Kiribati). Check the Internet for updates.

**Air Pacific** (☎ 679-672 0888; www.airpacific.com) Flies from Fiji to Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

**Air Vanuatu** (☎ 678-23848; www.airvanuatu.com) Flies from Vanuatu to Fiji, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands.

**Aircalin** (☎ 687-26 55 00; www.aircalin.nc) Flies from New Caledonia to Fiji, French Polynesia, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.

**Continental Airlines** (in the US ☎ 1 800 231 0856; www.continental.com) Flies between Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

**Inter-Island Airways** (☎ 684-699 5700; www.interislandair.com) Flies between American Samoa and Samoa.

**Polynesian Airlines** (☎ 685-22172; www.polynesianairlines.com) Flies from Samoa to American Samoa, Fiji, Niue and Tonga.

**Solomon Airlines** (☎ 667-20031; www.solomonairlines.com.au) Flies from the Solomon Islands to Vanuatu and Fiji.

### BOAT

There's a certain romance in the idea of doing at least some of your travel around the Pacific by sea. It's much slower than flying, and usually not any cheaper – but if

you've got lots of books you want to read, or just a love of the ocean, this could be the route for you. For information about chartering a yacht or sailing on board a tall ship, see p842.

### Cargo Ship & Ferry

Cargo and dual-purpose cargo/passenger ships ply between the following countries: Tuvalu and Fiji, Vanuatu and New Caledonia, Samoa and Tokelau, Kiribati and Tuvalu, and Kiribati and Fiji. There's also a car ferry operating between Samoa and American Samoa. See Getting There & Away in the Transport section of the individual country chapters for more detailed information on all of these services.

Getting to the South Pacific by cargo ship is not a done thing, but within the region a couple of islands, such as Pitcairn Island and Tokelau, rely on cargo ships for connection to the outside world. See the Getting There & Away section in those chapters for details. Travel agents don't book cargo-ship travel. You can either book through a freighter agent or directly with a shipping company.

### Cruise Ship

Cruise ships will never be the cheapest, or the fastest way, from A to Z but they're not just about getting there. The facilities on board usually range from luxurious to even more luxurious. Cruise-ship fares vary enormously, but generally prices start at about US\$200 per day. Major port-of-calls are Noumea (New Caledonia), Port Vila (Vanuatu) and Pape'ete, Mo'orea and Bora Bora (all in French Polynesia). Out-of-the-way destinations include Pitcairn Island. Melanesian cruises usually depart from Australia's east coast. Other cruises depart from the US east coast, and Honolulu is another hub.

Travel agents, or the cruise companies themselves, need to be contacted well in advance if you are planning on taking a South Pacific cruise. A few companies include:

**Crystal Cruises** (www.crystalcruises.com)

**Discovery World Cruises** (www.discoveryworldcruises.com)

**P&O** (www.pocrises.com)

**Phoenix Reisen Cruises** (www.phoenixreisen.com)

**Princess Cruises** (www.princess.com)

**ResidenSea** (www.residensea.com)

**Saga Cruises** (www.sagacruises.com)

## Yacht

Between May and October, the harbours of the South Pacific swarm with cruising yachts from around the world. If you have your own yacht, you've probably got the most flexible system of transport in the Pacific. Slightly less flexible options are chartering a yacht or joining the crew on someone else's yacht.

Almost invariably, yachts follow the favourable westerly winds from the Americas towards Asia, Australia or NZ.

Popular routes from the US west coast take in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll (p753) before following the traditional path through Samoa and American Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and NZ. From the Atlantic and Caribbean, yachties access this area via Panama, the Galápagos Islands, the Marquesas, the Society Islands and the Tuamotus. Possible stops include Suvarrow (northern Cook Islands), Rarotonga or Niue.

Because of the cyclone season, which begins in November, most yachties try to be on their way to NZ by the early part of that month.

The yachting community is quite friendly, especially toward those who display an interest in yachts and other things nautical. Yachties are a good source of information about world weather patterns, navigation and maritime geography. They're also worth approaching to ask about day charters, diving and sailing lessons.

## CREWING

Often yachties are looking for crew, and for those who'd like a bit of low-key adventure, this is a great opportunity. Most of the time, crew members will only be asked to take a turn on watch; that is, scan the horizon for cargo ships, stray containers and the odd reef – and possibly to cook or clean up the boat. In port, crew may be required to dive and scrape the bottom, paint or make repairs. In most cases, sailing experience is not necessary and crew members can learn as they go. Most yachties charge crew around US\$15 per day for food and supplies.

If you'd like to enjoy some relative freedom of movement on a yacht, try to find one that has wind-vane steering; the tedious job of standing at the wheel staring at a compass all day and all night is likely to go to the crew members of the lowest status (that's you). Comfort is also greatly increased on yachts

## RESPONSIBLE YACHTING

- Don't add to the unsightly (and ecologically hazardous) trash floating up on island beaches by allowing rubbish to fall into the sea, even if you are nowhere near an island. Rubbish can float a long way!
- Many harbours are fished for food. So unless you have holding tanks or on-board sewerage treatment, use on-shore toilet facilities when you are in harbour.
- Never anchor on coral, or allow your anchor to drag through live coral.
- When in public view, observe the local customs regarding dress. Don't lounge about the deck topless on Sunday, for example!

that have a furling jib, a dodger to keep out the weather, a toilet and shower.

Yachts rigged for racing are usually more manageable than simple liveboards. As a general rule, about 3m of length for each person aboard affords relatively uncrowded conditions.

If you're trying to find a berth on someone else's yacht (or trying to find crew for your own boat) ask at local yacht clubs and look at noticeboards at marinas and yacht clubs. In the US, Honolulu and the west coast – San Francisco, Newport Beach and San Diego – are the places to start looking. Australia's northeastern seaboard is good and so are Auckland, Whangarei and the Bay of Islands in NZ. In the South Pacific, it shouldn't be too difficult to find crew or a yacht in Pape'ete, Pago Pago, Apia, Nuku'alofa, Noumea or Port Vila.

Some companies that organise sailing trips around the South Pacific are:

**Ocean Voyages** ([www.oceanvoyages.com](http://www.oceanvoyages.com)) Organises yacht charters in the South Pacific. It's possible to charter the whole boat or book a single berth on a yacht sailing a particular route. In some cases a charter could be about the only way to get to remote islands or atolls if you don't have your own yacht.

**Søren Larsen** ([www.sorenlarsen.co.nz](http://www.sorenlarsen.co.nz)) This 45m tall ship sails from Auckland to various South Pacific countries between March and November. It's possible to join the crew in Auckland or at any of the ports on its trip. Count on NZ\$250 per day.

## RED TAPE

Even on your own yacht, you're not completely free to do as you please (you are if you stick to the high seas, but if you want to take advantage of a country's facilities, you have to obey its laws). You must enter a country at an official 'port of entry' (usually the capital). If this means sailing past a dozen beautiful outlying islands on the way to an appointment with an official in a dull capital city, bad luck. Ports of entry are listed in the Transport section of the country chapters.

When you arrive, hoist your yellow quarantine flag (Q flag) and wait for the appropriate local official to contact you. Often, you are expected to alert them by VHF radio (usually on channel 16). Some countries, like the Marshall Islands for example, charge visiting yachties a hefty entrance fee (see Sea p286). Ask customs officials at the port of entry about requirements for visiting other islands in the country. Bear in mind that you are legally responsible for your crew's actions as well as your own.

## LOCAL TRANSPORT

### Bicycle

On flat South Pacific islands, riding a bicycle can be an excellent way to get around. See Getting Around in the Transport section of the individual country chapters for more specific information, such as details about renting a bike. Most bikes will not come with a safety helmet or a bike lock unless you ask for them.

Watch for poor road surfaces, and check your travel insurance for disclaimers about hazardous activities. If you're bringing your own bike into the country, ask the airline about costs and rules regarding dismantling and packing the bike.

## Boat

Within a country, ferries and/or cargo boats are often the only way to get to some of the outer islands. See Getting Around in the Transport section of individual country chapters for details about inter-island travel within a country.

## Bus

Large and populous islands will usually have some kind of bus service. However, Pacific island public transport is rarely described as ruthlessly efficient. Buses

are often privately (or sometimes family) owned. It is not unusual for owner-drivers to set their own schedules, and if there aren't many people travelling on a particular day, the buses may just stop altogether. Build flexibility into your plans.

## Car & Motorcycle

Larger islands and tourist destinations will usually have some car- or motorcycle-hire companies. Fares and rules vary enormously; see Transport in the individual country chapters for more details.

Most Pacific countries drive on the right-hand side of the road. The exceptions are the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Nauru. Take extra care when you're driving on the 'wrong' side of the road – or when crossing the road on foot.

In rural areas, roads may be no more than dirt tracks used mostly for foot traffic. Be wary of people or animals on the road; drive especially carefully near villages. Road conditions can be atrocious if there has been cyclone or flood damage recently (or even if there hasn't!).

When you rent a car, ask about petrol availability if you're heading off the main routes, and make sure you get the insurance rules and conditions explained. Check your own travel insurance policy too; some do not cover unsealed roads or riding a motorcycle.

Prior to travelling, check whether you need an International Driving Permit to drive in the countries you are visiting.

## Hitching

In some Pacific countries hitching is an accepted way of getting where you're going, and is practised by locals and tourists alike. In others it's not the local custom and only tourists are seen trying it. It is possible anywhere, however, and can be quite fast.

The main difficulty on a Pacific island is that rides won't be very long, perhaps only from one village to the next, and it could take you a while to go a longer distance. Still, given the sorry state of the bus service in some regions, hitching is a way to see the area without renting a car. It's also a great way to meet the locals and is an option for getting home after the buses have stopped, which can happen at almost any time in

some areas. You might be expected to pay a small fee for a ride, so offer what you think the ride is worth – although offers of payment will often be refused.

Keep in mind that hitching is never entirely safe; if you do choose to hitch, it is safer to travel in pairs.

## TOURS

Many travellers now seek activity-based holidays, and several of these types of trips are packaged into organised tours. Local companies often specialise in activity-based tours – see the Tours sections in the individual country chapters.

# Health

Dr Michael Sorokin

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With sensible precautions and behaviour, the health risk to travellers to the Pacific region is low. Mosquito-transmitted disease is the main problem. The Solomon Islands and Vanuatu share the one serious hazard: malaria (the Solomons also has saltwater crocodiles). Elsewhere the main danger is from mosquito-borne dengue fever. The region is rabies-free.

## BEFORE YOU GO

Prevention is key to staying healthy while abroad. A little planning before departure, particularly for pre-existing illnesses, will save trouble later. See your dentist before a long trip, carry a spare pair of contact lenses and glasses, and take your optical prescription with you. Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity or obtain a prepared pack from a travel health clinic.

## INSURANCE

If your health insurance does not cover you for medical expenses abroad, consider supplemental insurance. Check the Travel Links section of the Lonely Planet website at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_links](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_links) for more information. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. In many countries doctors expect payment in cash.

For Americans, check whether your health plan covers expenses in countries associated with the USA – American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands and Palau. If you are a EU citizen you have the same rights in French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna as you do in France, but remember to obtain the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before leaving home. It is still best to have private health insurance cover. New Zealanders may have free access to public but not private facilities in the Cook Islands. Serious illness or injury may require evacuation, for example from Saipan to Guam or from Tuvalu to Fiji, or even from those countries with 'good' health facilities to a major regional centre, for example from Suva to Auckland. Make sure that your health insurance has provision for evacuation. Under these circumstances hospitals will accept direct payment from major international insurers, but for all other health-related costs cash up front is the usual requirement.

## RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, regardless of their destination. Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, visit a physician at least six weeks before departure. A recent influenza vaccination is always a good idea when travelling. If you have not had chicken pox (varicella), consider being vaccinated.

## MEDICAL CHECKLIST

It is a very good idea to carry a medical and first-aid kit with you in case of minor illness or injury. Following is a list of items you should consider packing.

- Antibiotics (prescription only), eg ciprofloxacin (Ciproxin) or norfloxacin (Utinor, Noroxin)
- Antibiotic plus steroid eardrops (prescription only), eg Sofradex, Kenacort otc
- Antidiarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- Acetaminophen (paracetamol) or aspirin\*
- Anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- Antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- Antibacterial ointment (prescription only; eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions
- Antimalarial pills
- Antigiardia tablets (prescription only; eg tinidazole)
- Steroid cream or hydrocortisone cream (for allergic rashes)
- Bandages, gauze, gauze rolls, waterproof dressings
- Adhesive or paper tape
- Scissors, safety pins, tweezers#
- Thermometer
- Pocket knife#
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- Permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- Sun block
- Oral rehydration salts (eg Gastrolyte, Diarolyte, Repllyte)
- Iodine tablets (for water purification)
- Syringes and sterile needles, and intravenous fluids if travelling in very remote areas

\*Aspirin should not be used for fever; it can cause bleeding in cases of dengue fever  
#Not in carry-on luggage

If you are travelling more than 24 hours away from a town area, consider taking a self-diagnostic kit that can identify, from a finger prick, malaria in the blood (applies only to Solomons and Vanuatu).

## INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel-health advice on the Internet. For further information, the Lonely Planet website ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) is a good place to start. The WHO

### REQUIRED & RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

If you have been in a designated yellow fever country within the previous six days, you need an International Certificate of Vaccination against yellow fever for entry into American Samoa, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Pitcairn, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

Marshall Islands and Palau may require evidence of vaccination against cholera if you have arrived from a currently infected country.

For all countries in the region, vaccinations are recommended for hepatitis A, hepatitis B and typhoid fever.

For Guam and Northern Mariana Islands, it is recommended that some visitors are vaccinated against Japanese B encephalitis (see p849).

### Side Effects of Vaccinations

All vaccinations can produce slight soreness and redness at the inoculation site, and a mild fever with muscle aches over the first 24 hours. These side effects are less likely with hepatitis A inoculations and a little more common with hepatitis B and typhoid inoculations. Japanese B encephalitis vaccine has been associated with allergic reactions that require an antihistamine. Yellow-fever vaccine is dangerous for anyone with an egg allergy, and in about 5% of cases causes a flu-like illness any time within a week of vaccination.

publishes a superb book called *International Travel and Health*, revised annually and available online at [www.who.int/ith](http://www.who.int/ith) at no cost. Other websites of general interest are **MD Travel Health** ([www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com)), which provides complete travel-health recommendations for every country and is updated daily, also available at no cost; the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)); **Fit for Travel** ([www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk)), which has up-to-date information about outbreaks and is very user-friendly; and [www.traveldoctor.com.au](http://www.traveldoctor.com.au), a similar Australian site.

It's also a good idea to consult your government's travel-health website before departure, if one is available:

**Australia** ([www.dfat.gov.au/travel](http://www.dfat.gov.au/travel))

**Canada** ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspssp/tmp-pmv/pub\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspssp/tmp-pmv/pub_e.html))

**UK** ([www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice/index.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice/index.htm))

**USA** ([www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel))

## FURTHER READING

Good options for further reading include *Travel with Children*, by Cathy Lanigan, and *Healthy Travel Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, by Dr Isabelle Young.

## IN TRANSIT

### DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle, or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulties. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights, you should walk about the cabin, contract the leg muscles while sitting, drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol and tobacco. There is no good evidence that aspirin prevents DVT.

### JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

To avoid jet lag (common when crossing more than five time zones), try drinking plenty of nonalcoholic fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep and so on) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine), meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) or promethazine (Avomine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness, but they are more effective in prevention than in treatment. A herbal alternative is ginger.

## IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

### AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

The quality of health care varies over the region and within each country. Health facilities range from 'very good' in Guam; 'good' in Fiji, French Polynesia, Palau and

American Samoa; 'reasonable' in the Cook Islands, New Caledonia, Northern Mariana Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu; and 'basic' in the other countries. These are all small countries with limited budgets, so even 'good' does not necessarily equate to the facilities you could expect in a well-developed country.

Having 'good' health services means that the country has readily available doctors in private practice and standard hospital and laboratory facilities with consultants in the major specialties – internal medicine, obstetrics/gynaecology, orthopaedics, ophthalmology, paediatrics, pathology, psychiatry and general surgery. Private dentists, opticians and pharmacies are also available. Guam and, to a lesser extent French Polynesia, have very good military medical facilities, but the private sector is so well developed that civilians will not normally have access to these.

In countries where facilities are 'reasonable', specialised services may be limited or available periodically, but private general practitioners, dentists and pharmacies are present.

'Basic' services refers to the presence of nurses, midwives and a few doctors, limited government dental services, unreliable pharmaceutical supplies and hospitals far removed from Western standards.

Even in the countries with more developed facilities, the further you get from main cities the more basic the services. In secondary centres and outer islands, the quality of service is generally lower – not necessarily because of staffing but because of lower-quality diagnostic and treatment facilities. Small hospitals, health centres and clinics are situated conveniently throughout the region, but staffing and facilities will vary. Intergovernmental or church-mission aid and doctors may well be present in some of these facilities.

Private consultation and private hospital fees are approximately equivalent to Australian costs, varying from more expensive in Guam (where pharmaceuticals can be at least as costly as in the USA) to much less expensive in Tonga. Government-provided service fees vary from modest to negligible, but waiting times can be very long. Direct payment is required everywhere except where a specific arrangement is made, eg in

the case of evacuation or where a prolonged hospital stay is necessary; your insurer will need to be contacted by you. Although most of the larger hospitals are coming into line in accepting credit cards, there will be difficulty with the more remote small hospitals. Also, most private practitioners are reluctant to acceptable this form of payment, except for the larger private doctor groups in Guam, American Samoa, Fiji and Tahiti. Even these still prefer cash, and not all credit cards are accepted – check with the relevant company beforehand. If a credit card is not accepted you should be able to arrange cash on credit through the local banking system, but in more remote areas, such as Tokelau and Futuna, you won't find a bank. Keeping a few hundred dollars in travellers cheques is a wise move.

Most commonly used medications are available in countries with good or reasonable health care. Where only basic care is available, even aspirin and antiseptics may be hard to come by. Private pharmacies are not allowed by law to dispense listed drugs without prescription from a locally registered practitioner, but many will do so for travellers if shown the container. While the container should preferably specify the generic name of the drug, this has become much less of a problem with the use of Internet search engines.

Commonly used drugs, including oral contraceptives and antibiotics, can be found in the main centres, where there are private pharmacies, but don't expect large supplies. Oral contraceptives are obtainable without prescription in Fiji, as is the 'morning after' pill. Asthma inhalers and the majority of anti-inflammatories are over-the-counter preparations in Guam, the Samoas, Fiji and Tahiti. Even in the 'good' countries it's best to have a sufficient supply of a regularly taken drug, as particular brands may not be available and quantities can be limited. This applies particularly to psychotropic drugs, such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, anti-epileptics and mood elevators.

Insulin is available even in the smaller centres, but you cannot guarantee getting a particular brand, combination or preferred administration method. If you have been prescribed the very latest oral antidiabetic or antihypertensive make sure you have enough for the duration of your travel.

Except in the remote poorly staffed clinics, the standard of medical and dental care is generally quite good even if facilities are not sophisticated. The overall risk of illness for a normally healthy person is low; the most common problems are diarrhoeal upsets, viral sore throats, and ear and skin infections, all of which can mostly be treated with self-medication. For serious symptoms, such as sustained fever or chest or abdominal pains, it is best to go to the nearest clinic or private practitioner in the first instance.

Tampons and pads are readily available in main centres but do not rely on getting them if you travel to one of the outer islands. Dengue fever, especially in the first three months of pregnancy, poses a hazard because of fever, but otherwise there is no reason why a normal pregnancy should prevent travel to the region (except perhaps to the Solomon Islands and parts of Vanuatu, because of malaria; see p850). However, on general principles immunisation in the first three months of pregnancy is not recommended, and Japanese B encephalitis or yellow fever vaccines should not be given.

#### AVOIDING MOSQUITO BITES

Travellers are well advised to prevent mosquito bites at all times to avoid potentially serious diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever, and for their own comfort. The best advice:

- Wear light-coloured clothing
- Wear long trousers and long-sleeved shirts
- Use mosquito repellents containing the compound DEET on exposed areas (prolonged overuse of DEET may be harmful, especially to children, but its use is considered preferable to being bitten by disease-transmitting mosquitoes)
- Avoid perfumes or aftershaves
- Use a mosquito net impregnated with mosquito repellent (permethrin) – it may be worth taking your own net
- Impregnate clothes with permethrin to effectively deter mosquitoes and other insects.

For young children, it is again dengue fever that could be a problem. The disease tends to come in epidemics mainly in the hotter, wetter months, so it should be possible to plan holidays accordingly. In tropical climates dehydration develops very quickly when a fever and/or diarrhoea and vomiting occur.

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES

### Dengue Fever

**Risk** All countries, especially in the hotter, wetter months  
Dengue fever is spread through the bite of the mosquito. It causes a feverish illness with headache and severe muscle pains similar to those experienced with a bad, prolonged attack of influenza. There might also be a fine rash. Mosquito bites should be avoided whenever possible – be obsessive about the use of insect repellents (see the boxed text, opposite). Self-treatment includes paracetamol, fluids and rest. Danger signs are prolonged vomiting, blood in the vomit and/or a blotchy dark red rash.

### Eosinophilic Meningitis

**Risk** Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Tonga  
A strange illness manifested by scattered abnormal skin sensations, fever and sometimes by the meningitis symptoms (headache, vomiting, confusion, stiffness of the neck and spine), which give it its name. Eosinophilic meningitis is caused by a microscopic parasite – the rat lungworm – that contaminates raw food. There is no proven specific treatment, but symptoms may require hospitalisation. For prevention, pay strict attention to advice on food and drink.

### Hepatitis A

**Risk** All countries  
Hepatitis A is a viral disease causing liver inflammation. Fever, debility and jaundice (yellow colouration of the skin and eyes, together with dark urine) occur and recovery is slow. Most people recover completely over time, but the virus can be dangerous to people with other forms of liver disease, the elderly and sometimes to pregnant women towards the end of pregnancy. It is spread by contaminated food or water. Self-treatment consists of rest, a low-fat diet and avoidance of alcohol. The vaccine is close to 100% protective.

### Hepatitis B

**Risk** All countries  
Like hepatitis A, hepatitis B is a viral disease causing liver inflammation, but the problem is more serious and the virus frequently goes on to cause chronic liver disease and even cancer. It is spread, like HIV, by mixing bodily fluids as in sexual intercourse, by contaminated needles and by accidental blood contamination. Treatment is complex and specialised, but vaccination is highly effective.

### Hepatitis C

**Risk** Incidence is uncertain within the region but must be assumed to be present  
Hepatitis C is a viral disease similar to hepatitis B. It causes liver inflammation that can go on to become chronic liver disease or result in a symptomless carrier state. The virus is spread almost entirely by blood contamination from shared needles or contaminated needles used for tattooing or body piercing. Treatment is complex and specialised. There is no vaccine available.

### HIV/AIDS

**Risk** All countries  
The incidence of HIV infection is on the rise in the whole Pacific region. Government reports usually underestimate the size of the problem, so when international conference discussions say that the incidence is reaching epidemic proportions you can take it that the danger posed by unprotected sex is huge; condoms are essential. If you require an injection for anything, check that a new needle is being used or have your own supply.

### Japanese B Encephalitis

**Reported outbreaks** Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Nauru (the potential exists for other countries in the region)  
Japanese B encephalitis is a serious viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes. Early symptoms are flu-like and this is usually as far as the infection goes, but sometimes the illness proceeds to cause brain fever (encephalitis), which has a high death rate. There is no specific treatment. Effective vaccination is available – it involves three inoculations over a month and is expensive. Allergic and sensitivity reactions to the vaccine, though rare, can occur. Vaccination



is usually recommended for anyone staying more than a few weeks and/or going to work in villages.

### Leptospirosis

**Risk** American Samoa, Guam, Fiji, French Polynesia, Palau, possibly elsewhere

Also known as Weil's disease, leptospirosis produces fever, headache, jaundice and, later, kidney failure. It is caused by a spirochaete organism found in water contaminated by rat urine. The organism penetrates skin, so swimming in flooded areas is a risk practice. If diagnosed early, the disease is cured with penicillin.

### Malaria

**Risk** Solomon Islands (except the outlying atolls and Honiara), Vanuatu (except Port Vila and Futuna, Tongoa, Aneityum and Mystery Islands)

Malaria is a parasite infection transmitted by infected anopheles mosquitoes. While these mosquitoes are regarded as night feeders, they can emerge when light intensity is low (eg in overcast conditions under the jungle canopy or the interior of dark huts). In the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, both malignant (*falciparum*) and less threatening but relapsing forms are present. Since no vaccine is available, travellers must rely on mosquito-bite prevention (including topical insect repellents, knockdown insecticides and, where necessary, bed nets impregnated with permethrin – see the boxed text, p848) and taking antimalarial drugs before, during and after risk exposure. No antimalarial is 100% effective.

Malaria causes a variety of symptoms but the essence of the disease is fever. In a malarial zone it is best to assume that fever is due to malaria unless blood tests rule it out. This applies to up to a few months after leaving the area as well. Malaria is curable if diagnosed early.

### Tuberculosis

**Risk** Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, Northern Mariana Islands, Tuvalu

The scourge of the 19th century, tuberculosis has not been eliminated in the region and there is something of a resurgence where HIV/AIDS is prevalent. It is spread by droplet infection from an infected person and is a risk for household contacts or healthcare workers but not for transient

travellers. Vaccination with the related BCG organism has been abandoned by US authorities, and other countries recommend it only for special cases. The best protection against tuberculosis is a healthy diet and lifestyle.

### Typhoid Fever

**Risk** Sporadic in all countries

Typhoid fever is a bacterial infection acquired from contaminated food and/or water. The germ can be transmitted by food handlers and flies, and can be present in inadequately cooked shellfish. It causes fever, debility and late-onset diarrhoea. Untreated it can produce delirium and is occasionally fatal, but the infection is curable with antibiotics. Vaccination is moderately effective, but care with eating and drinking is equally important.

### Yaws

**Risk** Solomon Islands

Yaws is a bacterial infection that causes multiple skin ulcers. It was thought to have been eliminated, but there has been a recent resurgence. Infection is conveyed by direct contact. Treatment with penicillin produces a dramatic cure.

### TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

Diarrhoea (ie frequent, loose bowel movements) is caused by viruses, bacteria or parasites present in contaminated food or water. In temperate climates the cause is usually viral, but in the tropics bacteria or parasites are more usual. If you develop diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution (eg Dioralyte, Gastrolyte, Replyte). A few loose stools don't require treatment, but if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should take an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an anti-diarrhoeal agent (such as Loperamide). If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking, chills or severe abdominal pain, seek medical attention.

### Giardiasis

A parasite present in contaminated water, giardia causes bloating and a foul-smelling and persistent although not 'explosive' diarrhoea. A single dose (four tablets) of tinidazole usually cures the infection.

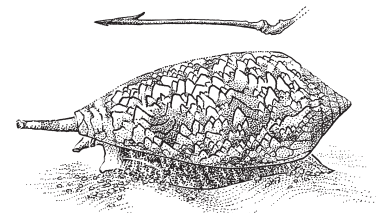
### VENOMOUS MARINE LIFE

Probably the most dangerous thing you'll have to worry about when snorkelling over a reef is sunburn. However, there are several venomous critters worth mentioning in case of a chance encounter.

The well-camouflaged stonefish spends much of its time on the sea floor pretending to be a weed-covered rock. If you tread on a stonefish's sharp, extremely venomous dorsal spines, you'll find that the pain is immediate and incapacitating. Bathing the wound in hot water reduces the pain and the effects of the venom, but medical attention should be sought urgently.

The lionfish, a relative of the stonefish, is a strikingly banded brown and white fish with large, graceful dorsal fins containing venomous spines. Lionfish are obvious when they're swimming around, but they can also hide under ledges.

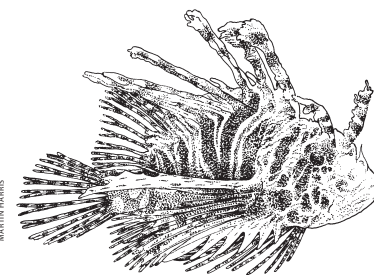
Then there's the cone shell, several species of which have highly toxic venom. The bad ones have a venomous proboscis – a rapidly extendible, dartlike stinging device that can reach any part of the shell's outer surface. Cone shell venom can be fatal. Stings should be immobilised with a tight pressure bandage (not a tourniquet) and splint. Get medical attention immediately.



Lionfish

Avoid contact with jellyfish, which have stinging tentacles; seek local advice. Dousing in vinegar will deactivate any stingers that have not 'fired'. Calamine lotion, antihistamines and analgesics may reduce the reaction and relieve the pain. Other stinging sea creatures include flame or stinging coral and sea urchins.

Generally speaking, the best way to avoid contact with any of the above while you're in the water is to look but don't touch. Shoes with strong soles will provide protection from stonefish, but reef walking damages the reef, so you shouldn't be doing it anyway – regard the stonefish as an environmental protection officer.



Cone Shell

### ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Threats to health from animals and insects are rare indeed, but travellers need to be aware of them.

#### Bites & Stings

Saltwater crocodile attacks, though rare, are well recorded in the Solomon Islands. Crocodiles can swim into tidal rivers; heed local warnings.

#### JELLYFISH

Watch out for the whip-like stings of the blue-coloured Indo-Pacific man-of-war. If you see these floating in the water or stranded on the beach, it is wise not to go in the water. The

sting is very painful and is best treated with vinegar or ice packs. Do not use alcohol.

#### POISONOUS CONE SHELLS

Poisonous cone shells abound along shallow coral reefs. Avoid handling them (for an illustration, see above). Stings mainly cause local reactions, but nausea, faintness, palpitations or difficulty in breathing are signs that flag the need for medical attention.

#### SEA SNAKES

As in all tropical waters sea snakes may be seen around coral reefs. Unprovoked, sea snakes are extremely unlikely to attack and their fangs will not penetrate a wet suit.

## Coral Ear

Coral ear is a common name for inflammation of the ear canal. It has nothing to do with coral, and is caused by water entering the canal activating any fungal spores that may be lying around and predisposing the area to bacterial infection and inflammation. Inflammation usually starts after swimming but can be reactivated by water dripping into the ear canal after a shower, especially if long, wet hair lies over the ear opening.

Apparently trivial, it can be very, very painful and can spoil a holiday. Apart from diarrhoea, it is the most common reason for travellers to consult a doctor. Self-treatment with an antibiotic plus steroid eardrop preparation is very effective. Stay out of the water until pain and itching have gone.

## Coral Cuts

Cuts and abrasions from dead coral cause no more trouble than similar injuries from any other sort of rock, but live coral can cause prolonged infection. Never touch coral. If you do happen to cut yourself on live coral, treat the wound immediately. Get out of the water as soon as possible, clean the wound thoroughly, getting out all the little bits of coral, apply an antiseptic and cover with a waterproof dressing. You can then get back in the water if you want to.

## Diving Hazards

Because the region has wonderful opportunities for scuba diving, it is easy to get over-excited and neglect strict depth and time precautions. Few dives are very deep, but the temptation to spend longer than safe amounts of time at relatively shallow depths is great and is probably the main cause of decompression illness (the 'bends') in the region. Early pains may not be severe and may be attributed to other causes, but any muscle or joint pain after scuba diving must be suspect.

At the time of writing, privately run compression chambers can be found in Guam, Fiji, Nauru, Palau (this one is state-of-the-art), Tahiti, Vanuatu and Yap (Federated States of Micronesia), but transport to a chamber can be difficult. Supply of oxygen to the chambers is sometimes a problem. Novice divers must be especially careful. Even experienced divers should check with organisations like Divers' Alert Network

(DAN; <http://www.diversalertnetwork.org>) about the current site and status of compression chambers, and insurance to cover costs.

## Food & Water

The municipal water supply in capital cities and other large towns in the region can be trusted, but elsewhere avoid untreated tap water. In some areas the only fresh water available may be rainwater collected in tanks and this should be boiled. Steer clear of ice. Only eat fresh fruits or vegetables if cooked or peeled; be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurised milk. Eat food that is heated right through and avoid buffet-style meals. Food in restaurants frequented by locals is not necessarily safe, but most resort hotels have good standards of hygiene, although individual food-handlers can carry infection. Food that comes to you piping hot is likely to be safe. Be wary of salads. If you are preparing your own salads from market produce, make sure that each piece and leaf is thoroughly washed with water that is safe. Be adventurous by all means, but expect to suffer the consequences if you succumb to temptation and try raw fish or crustaceans as eaten by some locals.

## FISH POISONING

Ciguatera is a form of poisoning that affects otherwise safe and edible fish unpredictably. Poisoning is characterised by stomach upsets, itching, faintness, slow pulse and bizarre inverted sensations – cold feeling hot and vice versa. Ciguatera has been reported in many carnivorous reef fish, including red snapper, barracuda and even Spanish mackerel; in French Polynesia it is quite frequent in the smaller reef fish. There is no safe test to determine whether a fish is poisonous or not and although local knowledge is not entirely reliable it is reasonable to eat what the locals are eating. Fish caught

after times of reef destruction, such as after a major hurricane, are more likely to be poisonous. Deep-sea tuna is perfectly safe.

Treatment consists of rehydration, and if the pulse is very slow medication may be needed. Healthy adults will make a complete recovery although disturbed sensation may persist for some weeks – sometimes much longer.

## Heat

The region lies within the tropics so it is hot and for the most part humid.

Heat exhaustion is actually a state of dehydration associated, to a greater or lesser extent, with salt loss. Natural heat loss is through sweating and so it is easy to become dehydrated without realising it. Thirst is a late sign. Heat exhaustion is prevented by drinking at least 2L to 3L of water per day – more if actively exercising. Salt-replacement solutions are useful, as muscle weakness and cramps are due to salt as well as water loss and can be made worse by drinking water alone. The powders used for treating dehydration due to diarrhoea are just as effective when dehydration is due to heat exhaustion. Apart from commercial solutions, a reasonable drink consists of a good pinch of salt to a pint (half-litre) of water. Salt tablets can result in too much salt being taken, and can cause headaches and confusion.

## HEAT STROKE

When sweating's cooling effect fails, heat stroke ensues. This is an emergency condition characterised not only by muscle weakness and exhaustion but also by mental confusion. Skin will be hot and dry. If this occurs, 'put the fire out' by cooling the body with water on the outside and if possible with cold drinks for the inside. Seek medical help for follow up.

## Sunburn

Exposure to the ultraviolet rays of the sun causes burning of the skin with accompanying pain and misery and the long-

term danger of skin cancer. The time of highest risk is between 11am and 3pm; remember that cloud cover does not block out UV rays. Sunburn is likely to be a particular problem for those taking doxycycline as an antimalarial. The Australian 'slip, slop, slap' slogan is a useful mantra: slip on a shirt, slop on sunscreen and slap on a hat. Treat sunburn as you would any other burn – cool, wet dressings are best. Severe swelling may respond to a cortisone cream.

## TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

The Pacific region has been settled for thousands of years and systems of treatment involving local herbs, roots and leaves have evolved over the centuries, with each region or village having its own traditional healers. Some of these folk remedies undoubtedly have effective ingredients, and governments and research institutions are currently actively investigating many of them. Extravagant claims (eg AIDS cures, aphrodisiacs) can be ignored, and it is best to avoid the more exotic compounds made with animal ingredients. Tree-bark concoctions for fever are similar to aspirin in their effects. Chinese herbs are available in all of the main towns.

Kava (see p82) is a concoction made from the root of *Piper methysticum* and has sedative and muscle relaxant properties. When taken in concentrated form (eg tablets) or when mixed with alcohol it has been linked with liver damage, but mild 'tourist' social drinking will cause little harm other than indigestion. Kava is drunk throughout the region, most commonly in Fiji, New Caledonia, the Samoan islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Betel-nut chewing (see p132) is common in the Solomon Islands, Palau and Yap (Federated States of Micronesia). It has an astringent effect in the mouth, but claims about other healing properties remain unproven. Prolonged users are predisposed to mouth cancers.

### DRINKING WATER

To prevent diarrhoea, avoid tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (with iodine tablets), and steer clear of ice. This is a sensible overall precaution, but the municipal water supply in capital cities in the region can be trusted.

# Glossary

**'aiga** – see *kainga* (Samoa)  
**'ainga** – see *kainga*  
**'ava** – see *kava* (Samoa)  
**ahima'a** – earth/stone oven  
**ahu** – raised altar or chiefly backrest found on ancient *marae* (Polynesia)  
**aitu** – spirit, ghost (Polynesia)  
**aliki** – see *ariki*  
**ali'i** – see *ariki*  
**ari'i** – see *ariki*  
**ariki** – paramount chief; members of a noble family  
**atoll** – low-lying island built up by coral deposits  
**atua** – god or gods (Polynesia)  
**auaaluma** – society of unmarried women (western Polynesia)  
**aumaga** – see *aumanga* (Samoa and Tokelau)  
**aumanga** – society of untitled men who do most of the fishing and farming (Polynesia)  
**Austronesians** – people or languages from Indonesia, Malaysia and the Pacific islands

**babai** – large plant resembling taro, commonly eaten in Kiribati  
**bai** – traditional men's meeting house (Palau)  
**barrier reef** – a long, narrow coral reef lying offshore and separated from the land by a lagoon of deep water that shelters the land from the sea; see also *fringing reef*  
**bêche-de-mer** – lethargic bottom-dwelling sea creature  
**beka** – see *peka* (Fiji)  
**bigman** – chief (Solomons, Vanuatu)  
**bilibili** – bamboo raft (Fiji)  
**bilu** – vessel made from half a coconut shell and used for drinking *kava* (Fiji)  
**biu** – treehouse for initiated boys (Solomon Islands)  
**blackbirding** – a 19th-century recruitment scheme little removed from outright slavery  
**bonito** – blue-fin tuna  
**borrow pits** – pits dug out to provide landfill (Tuvalu)  
**bougna** – traditional *Kanak* meal of yam, *taro* and sweet potatoes with chicken, fish or crustaceans, wrapped in banana leaves and cooked in coconut milk in an earth oven (New Caledonia)  
**bringue** – family event with friends (French Polynesia)  
**bula** – Fijian greeting  
**burao** – wild hibiscus tree  
**bure** – thatched dwelling (Fiji)

**cagou** – flightless bird with a call like a dog's bark; unofficial symbol of New Caledonia

**Caldoche** – white people born in New Caledonia whose ancestral ties go back to the convicts or the early French settlers  
**cargo cults** – religious movements whose followers hope for the imminent delivery of vast quantities of modern wealth (cargo), from either supernatural forces or the inhabitants of faraway countries  
**case** – traditional *Kanak* house (New Caledonia); see also *grande case*  
**CFP** – Cour de franc Pacifique (also called the Pacific franc); the local currency in all three of France's Pacific territories  
**Chamorro** – the indigenous people of the Mariana Islands including Guam  
**chef** – customary leader of a clan (New Caledonia)  
**CNMI** – Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

**dalo** – see *taro* (Fiji)  
**dapal** – a women's meeting house in Yap  
**drua** – double-hulled canoe (Fiji)

**'ei** – necklace (Cook Islands)

**fa'a** – see *faka*  
**fa'afafine** – see *fakaleiti* (Samoa)  
**fafine** – see *vahine*  
**faka** – according to (a culture's) customs and tradition, eg *fa'a Samoa* or *faka Pasifika*  
**fakaleiti** – man who dresses and lives as a woman (Tonga)  
**fale** – house with thatched roof and open sides, but often used to mean any building  
**fale fonu** – meeting house, village hall or parliament building  
**fale umu** – kitchen huts  
**faluw** – a Yapese meeting house for men  
**fanua** – see *fenua* (Samoa)  
**fare** – see *fale*  
**fatele** – traditional music and dance performance (Tuvalu)  
**fenua** – land  
**fiafia** – dance performance (Samoa)  
**fonu** – governing council (Polynesian)  
**FSM** – Federated States of Micronesia  
**fusi** – cooperative stores (Tuvalu)

**gite** – group of bungalows used for tourist accommodation (French territories)  
**grade-taking** – process by which Melanesian men progress through a series of castes, proving their worth through feasts and gifts; see *nimangki*

**grande case** – big house where tribal chiefs meet; see also *case*

**heilala** – Tonga's national flower  
**honu** – turtle (French Polynesia)  
**horue** – surfing (French Polynesia)  
**hôtel de ville** – see *mairie*

**i'a** – see *ika*  
**ika** – fish  
**I-Kiribati** – a native of Kiribati  
**I-Matang** – foreigner (Kiribati)  
**inati** – sharing (Tokelau)  
**iroij** – chief (Marshall Islands)

**jambos** – picnics or trips (Marshall Islands)

**kahlek** – night fishing using burning torches to attract flying fish into hand-held nets (FSM)  
**kai** – food  
**kaiga** – see *kainga*  
**kainga** – extended family (Polynesia)  
**kaleve** – see *kaokioki* (Tokelau)  
**kaloama** – juvenile goatfish (Niue)  
**Kanak** – indigenous New Caledonians  
**kanaka** – people (Polynesia)  
**kaokioki** – beer-like fermented coconut drink  
**kastom** – custom; rules relating to traditional beliefs (Solomons, Vanuatu)  
**kastom ownership** – traditional ownership of land, objects or reef  
**katuali** – black-and-grey-striped sea kraits (Niue)  
**kava** – mud-coloured, mildly intoxicating drink made from the roots of the *Piper methysticum* plant  
**kikau** – thatch-roofed  
**kilikiti** – see *kirikiti*  
**kirikiti** – cricket with many players on each side (French Polynesia, Samoa, Tokelau, Tuvalu, and Wallis and Futuna)  
**korkor** – a Marshallese dugout fishing canoe made from a breadfruit log  
**koutu** – ancient open-air royal courtyard (Cook Islands)  
**kuli** – see *kuri*  
**kumala** – see *kumara*  
**kumara** – sweet potato  
**kuri** – dogs

**la coutume** – custom (New Caledonia); see *kastom*  
**lanai** – a Hawaiian word commonly used in Micronesia to refer to a veranda  
**Lapita** – ancestors of the Polynesians  
**laplap** – Vanuatu national dish  
**latte stones** – the stone foundation pillars used to support ancient Chamorro buildings in the Marianas; the shafts and capstones were carved from limestone quarries

**lava-lava** – sarong-type garment; wide piece of cloth worn as a skirt by women and men  
**lei** – see *'ei*  
**LMS** – London Missionary Society  
**lovo** – traditional feast (Fiji)

**mahimahi** – dolphin fish  
**mahu** – see *fakaleiti* (French Polynesia)  
**maire** – aromatic leaf (Cook Islands)  
**mairie** – town hall (French Polynesia, New Caledonia)  
**makatea** – geological term for a raised coral island; coral coastal plain around an island  
**mal mal** – *T-piece* of cotton on *tapa* cloth worn by male dancers (Vanuatu)  
**malae** – see *marae*  
**malo** – Polynesian greeting  
**man blong majik/posen** – sorcerers  
**mana** – personal spiritual power  
**maneaba** – community meeting house (Kiribati)  
**maneapa** – community meeting house (Tuvalu)  
**manu** – birds  
**Maohi** – see *Maori*  
**Maori** – indigenous people (Cook Islands, Society Islands)  
**marae** – community village green (western Polynesia); pre-Christian sacred site (eastern Polynesia); ceremonial meeting ground (Cook Islands)  
**masi** – bark cloth with designs printed in black and rust (Fiji)  
**matai** – senior male, political representative of a family (Samoa, Tokelau and Tuvalu)  
**mataiapo** – see *matai* (Cook Islands)  
**me'ae** – see *marae*  
**meke** – dance performance that enacts stories and legends (Fiji)  
**Melanesia** – islands of the western Pacific comprising Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji; the name is Greek for 'black islands'  
**Métro** – someone from France (New Caledonia)  
**Micronesia** – islands of the northwestern Pacific, including Palau, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, FSM, Marshall Islands, Nauru and Kiribati; the name is Greek for 'small islands'  
**mission dress** – see *muu-muu*  
**moa** – chicken  
**moai** – large stone statues (Easter Island)  
**Mother Hubbard** – see *muu-muu*  
**motu** – island, islet  
**muu-muu** – long, loose-fitting dress introduced to the Pacific by the missionaries  
**mwaramwars** – head-wreaths of flowers and fragrant leaves (FSM)

**naghol** – land-diving ritual (Vanuatu)  
**nahnmwarki** – district chief (Pohnpei)

**nahs** – traditional ceremonial house (Pohnpei)  
**nakamal** – men's clubhouse (New Caledonia, Vanuatu)  
**namalao** – fowl-like megapode  
**namba** – traditional sheath (Vanuatu)  
**natsaro** – traditional dancing ground (Vanuatu)  
**nguzunguzu** – carved wooden canoe figurehead (Solomons)  
**nimangki** – status and power earned by *grade-taking* (Vanuatu)  
**niu** – coconut  
**ni-Vanuatu** – people from Vanuatu  
**noni** – age-defying juice (French Polynesia)  
**nono** – small gnats, sandflies (French Polynesia)  
**nuku** – village (Polynesian)  
**nu'u** – see *nuku*

**omung** – a perfumed love potion (FSM)  
**ono** – barracuda  
**ota** – raw fish marinated in coconut milk and lime juice (Niue)

**pa'anga** – the currency of Tonga  
**PADI** – Professional Association of Dive Instructors  
**pae pae** – paved floor of a *marae*  
**pakalolo** – marijuana (French Polynesia)  
**palagi** – see *palangi*  
**palangi** – white person, westerner (Polynesia)  
**Papuans** – ancient people who are among the ancestors of modern Melanesians  
**pareo** – see *pareu*  
**pareu** – *lava-lava* (Cook Islands, French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Vanuatu)  
**parpa** – see *pareu*  
**pe'a** – see *peka* (Samoa)  
**pebai** – a Yapese community meeting house  
**peka** – bat, small bird  
**pelagic** – creatures living in the upper waters of the open ocean  
**pilou** – *Kanak* dance, performed for important ceremonies or events  
**Polynesia** – the huge triangle of ocean and islands bounded by Hawai'i, New Zealand and Easter Island; includes the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Niue, Pitcairn Island, Samoa, American Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Wallis and Futuna; the name is Greek for 'many islands'  
**Polynesian Outliers** – the islands of eastern Melanesia and southern Micronesia that are populated by Polynesians  
**popaa** – Westerner (French Polynesia)  
**pua'a** – see *puaka*  
**puaka** – pig (Polynesia)  
**pukao** – topknot  
**pulenuku** – head man, village mayor (Polynesia)  
**pulenu'u** – see *pulenuku*

**purse seine** – large net generally used between two boats that is drawn around a school of fish, especially tuna; boats that use this method are called *purse seiners*

**quonset hut** – WWII military storage shed made from corrugated iron

**ra'atira** – see *rangatira* (Tahiti)  
**rae rae** – see *fakaleiti* (French Polynesia)  
**ragatira** – see *rangatira* (Samoa)  
**rai** – Yapese stone money (FSM)  
**rangatira** – chief, nobility (Polynesia)  
**ratu** – chief (Fiji)  
**RFO** – Radio France Outre-Mer  
**rori** – see *bêche-de-mer* (French Polynesia)

**sa** – sacred, forbidden; holy day, holy time (Samoa and Tuvalu)  
**sakau** – see *kava*  
**Saudeleur** – tyrannical royal dynasty that ruled ancient Pohnpei (FSM)  
**scrab faol** – see *skrab dak*  
**seka** – narcotic ceremonial drink similar to *kava* (FSM)  
**sevusevu** – presentation of a gift to a village chief and, by extension, to the ancestral gods and spirits (Fiji)  
**siapo** – *tapa* (Samoa)  
**skrab dak** – megapode bird (Solomon Islands)  
**snack** – cheap café (French Territories)  
**SPF** – South Pacific Forum  
**SPTO** – South Pacific Tourism Organisation  
**sulu** – see *lava-lava* (Fiji and Tuvalu)  
**swim-through** – hole or tunnel large enough to swim through

**tabu** – see *tapu*  
**tagimoucia** – national flower of Fiji  
**tahua** – see *tufanga* (Tahiti)  
**tamaaraa** – traditional-style feast  
**tamtam** – slit-gong, slit-drum; made from carved logs with a hollowed-out section (Vanuatu)  
**tanata** – people (Polynesia)  
**tangata** – see *tanata*  
**tano'a** – multi-legged wooden bowl used for mixing *kava* (Wallis and Futuna)  
**ta'ovala** – distinctive woven pandanus mats worn around the waist in Tonga  
**tapa** – see *masi*  
**tapu** – sacred, prohibited  
**taro** – plant with green heart-shaped leaves, cultivated for both its leaf and edible rootstock  
**tatau** – tattoo  
**taulasea** – traditional healer (Samoa)  
**taupo** – ceremonial virgin (Samoa)  
**taupou** – title bestowed by high-ranking chief upon a young woman of his family (Polynesia)

**taupulega** – village council of elders and *matai* (Tokelau)  
**thu** – a loincloth worn by Yapese males and by outer island Chuukese  
**tifaifai** – see *tivaevae* (French Polynesia)  
**tiki** – carved human figure (Polynesia)  
**tivaevae** – colourful intricately sewn appliqué works (Cook Islands)  
**tokosra** – paramount chief (FSM)  
**to'ona'i** – Sunday lunch (Samoa)  
**T-piece** – small piece of cloth covering only the groin area (Solomons, Vanuatu)  
**trepang** – *bêche-de-mer*  
**tu'** – see *tui* (Tonga)  
**tuba** – see *kaokiaki* (Yap, FSM)  
**tufanga** – priest, expert (Polynesia)  
**tufuga** – see *tufanga* (Samoa)  
**tui** – paramount king (central Pacific)  
**tumunu** – hollowed-out coconut-tree stump used to brew bush-beer; also bush-beer drinking sessions

**'umala** – see *kumara*  
**uga** – coconut crab  
**ulihega** – bait fish (Niue)  
**umete** – wooden dishes (French Polynesia)  
**umu** – earth oven  
**umukai** – feast of foods cooked in an *umu*  
**unimane** – respected old men or village elders (Kiribati)  
**USP** – University of the South Pacific

**va'a** – see *vaka*  
**vahine** – woman (Polynesia)  
**vaka** – canoe  
**vale** – see *fale* (Fiji)  
**vanua** – see *fenua* (Melanesia)

**wantok** – one talk; the western Melanesian concept that all those who speak your language are allies (Solomon Islands)

**yaqona** – see *kava* (Fiji)

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