

Samoa

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Best Places to Stay

- » Seabreeze Resort (p119)
- » Namu'a Island Beach Fale (p119)
- » Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows (p106)
- » Samoan Outrigger Hotel (p106)
- » Virgin Cove Resort (p120)

Best Places to Eat

- » Bistro Tatau (p112)
- » Seabreeze Restaurant (p119)
- » The Mangrove Garden (p121)
- » Sunday lunch (p128)

Why Go?

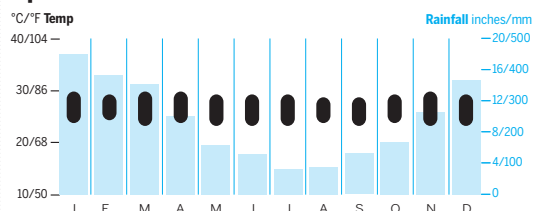
Anchored at the heart of Polynesia, Samoa rises languidly from the sea, draped in jungle, dotted with flower-filled villages and surrounded by iridescent lagoons.

This tiny nation's proud history spans more than 3000 years and its people were the first Polynesians to reclaim independence following European colonisation. As such, Samoans have firmly held on to their customs. Village life is still the norm here, and traditional governance and communal ownership carry much legal weight. The result is sweet, safe and gentle; a trip to Samoa is like sipping the world's purest water on a warm day.

If your ideal for a South Pacific holiday involves spa treatments and jet skis, Samoa may not be for you. What Samoa excels in is affordable, unpretentious beachside accommodation, friendly people and a peace and quiet rare to this world. It's easy to get around, everyone speaks English and political stability is almost guaranteed.

When to Go

Apia



Dec–Jan Peak holiday period when Samoans living abroad visit home.

May–Oct Dry season and festival time.

Nov–Apr Wet weather and cyclone season.

Connections

Regular ferries ply the 22km between 'Upolu and Savai'i. Manono is reached by either a regular taxi boat that meets the bus, or by arrangement with your lodging. It's only possible to reach Namu'a with the owners of the beach *fale* operation on the otherwise deserted island. Getting around 'Upolu and Savai'i is easiest in a hire car but everyone should try and take the crowded, friendly and colourful bus at least once.

ITINERARIES

Five Days

Spend a day or two exploring **Apia**, making sure to visit **Palolo Deep Marine Reserve**, the **Robert Louis Stevenson Museum** and seeing a *fiafia* (dance performance) at **Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows**. The following day begin the loop around 'Upolu, heading east and stopping for the sights and village calm. Spend your first night at **Namu'a Island Beach Fale** then continue on around the island, stopping two more nights at the resort or *fale* of your choice. Don't miss splashing around the **To Sua Ocean Trench** and stopping at **Aganoa** and **Matareva** beaches.

Ten Days

Start as above, then continue north up the coast of 'Upolu, stopping for a night on the island of **Manono**. The following day take the ferry to **Savai'i** and spend the next four days leisurely driving around the island counter-clockwise, making sure to get covered in mud at the **Dwarf's Cave**, take the eerie, scenic drive to **Fafa O Sauai'i**, and get blown away by the **Alofaaga Blowholes**. If you're keen on archaeology and adventure, search for the lost and mysterious **Pulemelei Mound**.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Umu** Traditional Samoan hot-stone ovens are built above ground and used to cook breadfruit, fish, *palusami* and more.
- » **Oka** Tender chunks of raw fish are marinated in lime juice, mixed with vegetables and topped with coconut cream.
- » **Palusami** Calorie bombs of coconut cream wrapped in young taro leaves and cooked in a stone oven. Find it at the market in Apia.
- » **Fish & chips** Found on every menu. We thought the best was at Seafood Gourmet in Apia.
- » **Koko Samoa** Strong coffee-like beverage made with hot water and ground Samoan cacao.
- » **Vailima** One of the best beers in the Pacific. A crisp and refreshing lager.

AT A GLANCE

Currency Samoan tala (ST)

Language Samoan, English

Mobile phones
Prepaid SIM cards

Money ATMs in and around Apia, at Salelologa and Manase.

Visas Free

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 2934 sq km
- » **Capital** Apia ('Upolu)
- » **Country code** 685
- » **Emergency** 999
- » **Population** 183,081

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	ST2.45
Canada	C\$1	ST2.35
Europe	€1	ST3.05
Japan	¥100	ST3.05
New Zealand	NZ\$1	ST1.91
UK	UK£1	ST3.75
USA	US\$1	ST2.40

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

Set Your Budget

- » **Main course in a fine-dining restaurant** from ST25
- » **Night in a Samoan fale** from ST30
- » **'Custom fee' to access beaches** ST5-10
- » **Ferry to Savai'i** ST12
- » **Car hire** from ST120 per day