

Tonga

📍 676 / POP 106,000

Includes ➔

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Nuku'alofa	166
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Lifuka Group	181
Vava'u Group	185
Neiafu	186
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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Hideaway (p179)
- ➔ Port Wine Guest House (p190)
- ➔ Matafonua Lodge (p184)
- ➔ Sandy Beach Resort (p184)
- ➔ Nerima Lodge (p171)

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Friends Cafe (p173)
- ➔ Tiger Inn (p173)
- ➔ Mariner's Cafe (p183)
- ➔ Aquarium Café (p192)
- ➔ Bellavista Cafe & Restaurant (p192)

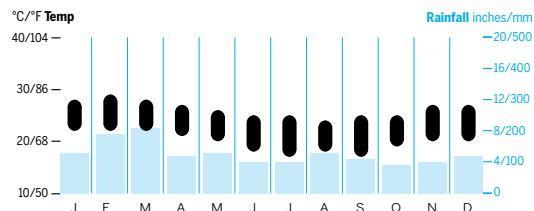
Why Go?

Kiss the tourist hype goodbye – and say a warm *malo e lelei* (hello!) to the Kingdom of Tonga. Resolutely sidestepping flashy resorts and packaged cruise-ship schtick, Tonga is unpolished, gritty and unfailingly authentic. Life here ticks along at its own informal pace: church life is all pervasive, chickens and pigs have right of way, and there's nothing that can't wait until tomorrow. You don't have to seek out a cultural experience in Tonga – it's all around you!

Once you've shifted down into 'Tonga time', you'll find these islands awash with gorgeous beaches, low-key resorts, myriad snorkelling, diving, yachting and kayaking opportunities, hiking trails, rugged coastlines and affable locals (especially the kids!). Gear up for some active pursuits, then wind down with a cool sunset drink to the sound of waves folding over the reef. In Tonga, there really is nothing that can't wait until tomorrow.

When to Go

Nuku'alofa



Jun–Oct

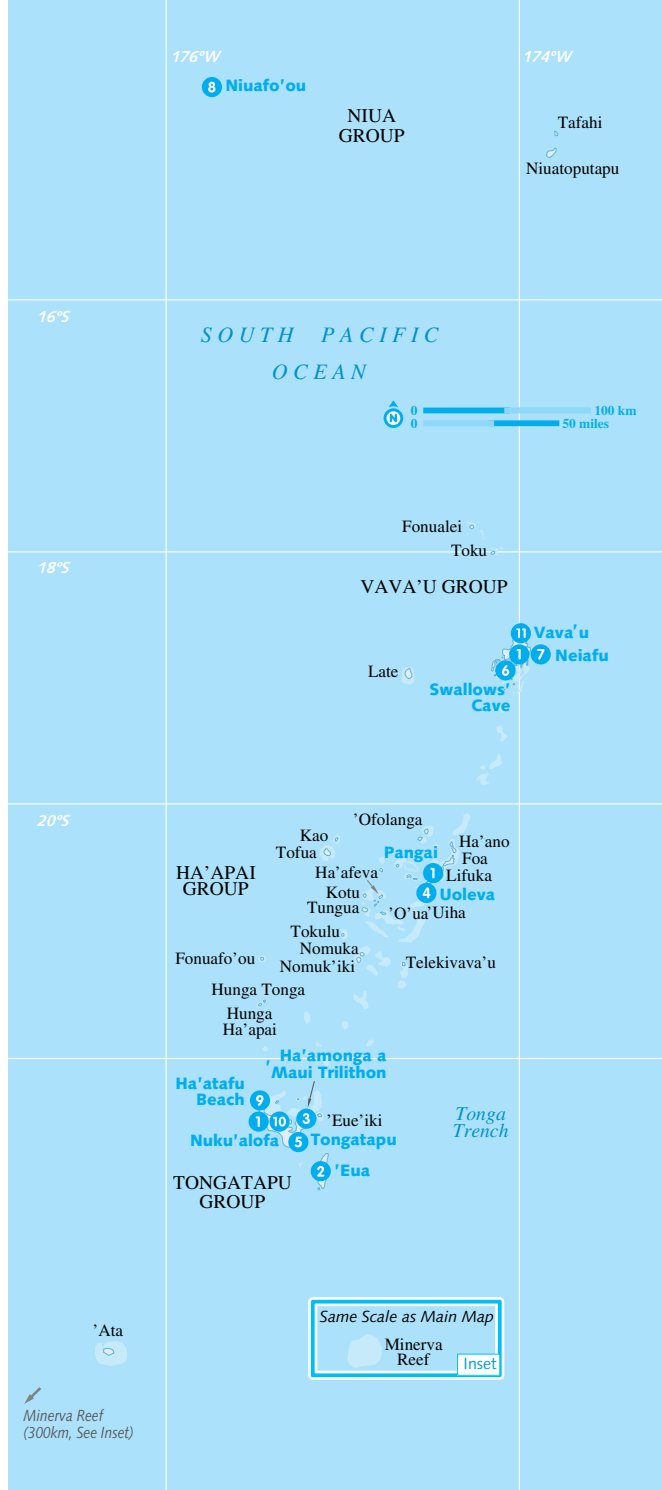
Peak season: stable weather, warm seas and buzzy waterside restaurants.

Apr–Aug

Cool, dry and less humid (winter) – when yachties turn up to play.

Nov–Mar

Warm and wet in the South Seas summer, but fine for water sports.



Tonga Highlights

- Kayaking** (p168) between the reefs and islands offshore from Nuku'alofa, Neiafu and Pangai.
- Hiking tropical rainforests and along sheer ocean cliff tops on **'Eua** (p178).
- Pondering Tongatapu's curious **Ha'amonga 'a Maui Trilithon** (p176), the 'Stonehenge of the South Pacific'.
- Beach-bumming on the photogenic sands of **Uoleva** (p184), and (if you're lucky) watching whales breaching offshore.
- Catching the cultural show at Tongatapu's **Oholei Beach & Hina Cave Feast & Show** (p444).
- Swimming into **Swallows' Cave** (p194) on Kapa island in Vava'u.
- Bouncing between bars and cafes in raffish **Neiafu** (p186).
- Exploring far-off, doughnut-shaped **Niuafu'ou**, also known as Tin Can Island (p196) in the Niu Group.
- Surfing the reef breaks at **Ha'atafu Beach** (p177) on Tongatapu.
- Wandering aisles of produce and crafts at Nuku'alofa's **Talamahu Market** (p167).
- Sailing** (p187) through Vava'u's psychedelic web of waterways, islands and deserted beaches.