

Transport

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The physical isolation of the Samoan islands and Tonga means you need to give careful consideration to the best way of getting out there. Flying direct to/from each island grouping, for instance, probably won't represent the greatest value for money. It might make more sense to engage in some careful route planning that may enable further exploration of the South Pacific or even Australasia.

For information on travelling within either Samoa or American Samoa, see p111. For information on travelling within Tonga, see p191.

Flights and tours can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Entering Samoa

To be issued a visa on arrival in Samoa, you must have an onward ticket, a passport valid for at least another six months, and a contact address within the country (have the name of a hotel handy). An international yellow fever vaccination certificate will also be required if you've visited a high-risk country in the six days prior to your arrival in Samoa (see p199).

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 to 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.

Entering American Samoa

A passport valid for at least six months beyond your arrival date and an onward ticket will allow nationals of 29 countries to obtain a visa on arrival. Nationals of other countries will need to apply for a visa in advance. For full details, see p110.

The yellow fever regulations that apply to Samoa also apply to American Samoa.

Entering Tonga

Citizens of most countries are granted a 31-day visitors visa on arrival in Tonga upon presentation of a passport with at least six months' validity and an onward ticket. An international yellow fever vaccination certificate will be necessary if you've been to a high-risk area in the past six days.

AIR

While the Samoan islands and Tonga aren't exactly as remote or obscure a destination as Tuvalu or Kiribati, they are not as popular as Fiji or Tahiti either (not yet anyway), and airfares often reflect this. Access to either island group is fairly straightforward from New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Hawai'i or Los Angeles. From anywhere else, however, travelling there will almost always entail reaching one of these connecting points first. Auckland and Nadi/Suva are the most convenient and best-served runs, and there are often some good discount fares on these routes. Tonga and the Samoas are also popular as a stop-over or cheap 'optional extra' on some tickets and round-the-world fares between Europe or North America and New Zealand.

Visitors to Samoa will arrive near Apia on 'Upolu, those visiting American Samoa will arrive near Pago Pago on Tutuila, and the majority of those visiting Tonga will arrive at Nuku'alofa.

Airlines

Airlines that service the region include the following (note all phone numbers mentioned here are for dialling from within Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga):

Air New Zealand (airline code NZ; ☎ Apia 20825, Nuku'alofa 23192; www.airnz.com; hub Auckland International Airport)

Air Pacific (airline code FJ; 📞 Apia 22172, Nuku'alofa 23422; www.airpacific.com; hub Nadi International Airport)

Hawaiian Airlines (airline code HA; 📞 Tafuna 699 1875; www.hawaiianair.com; hub Honolulu International Airport, Hawai'i)

Inter Island Airways (📞 Faleolo 42580, Tafuna 699 7100; www.interislandair.com; hub Tafuna International Airport, Tutuila)

Pacific Blue (airline code DJ; 📞 Nuku'alofa 24566; www.flypacificblue.com; hub Brisbane International Airport)

Polynesian Airlines (airline code PH; 📞 Apia 21261, Pago Pago 699 9126; www.polynesianairlines.com; hub Faleolo Airport, 'Upolu)

Polynesian Blue (airline code DJ; www.polynesianblue.com; hub Brisbane International Airport)

South Pacific Express (airline code SPEX; 📞 Tafuna 699 9900; rhuffla@southpacificexpress.as; hub Tafuna International Airport, Tutuila)

Tickets

Automated online ticket sales work well if you're doing a simple one-way or return trip on specified dates, but are no substitute for a travel agent with the low-down on special deals, strategies for avoiding stopovers, and other useful advice.

Paying by credit card offers some protection if you unwittingly end up dealing with a rogue fly-by-night agency, as most card issuers provide refunds if you can prove you didn't get what you paid for. Alternatively, buy a ticket from a bonded agent, such as one covered by the **Air Travel Organiser's Licence** (ATOL; www.atol.org.uk) scheme in the UK. If you have doubts about the service provider, at the very least call the airline and confirm that your booking has been made.

INTERCONTINENTAL (RTW) TICKETS

Round-the-world (RTW) tickets are generally put together by the three biggest airline alliances – **Star Alliance** (www.staralliance.com), **Oneworld** (www.oneworldalliance.com) and **Skyteam** (www.skyteam.com). They give you a limited time (usually a year) in which to circumnavigate the globe. You can go anywhere the participating airlines go, as long as you stay within the prescribed kilometre extents or number of stops and don't backtrack when flying between continents. Backtracking is generally permitted within a single continent, though with certain restrictions; see the relevant websites for details.

An alternative type of RTW ticket is one put together by a travel agent. These are usually more expensive than airline RTW fares but allow you to devise your own itinerary.

CIRCLE PACIFIC TICKETS

A Circle Pacific ticket is similar to a RTW ticket but covers a more limited region, using a combination of airlines to connect Australia, New Zealand, North America and Asia, with stopover options in the Pacific islands. As with RTW tickets, there are restrictions and limits as to how many stopovers you can take.

ONLINE TICKET SITES

For online ticket bookings, including RTW fares, start with the following websites:

Air Brokers (www.airbrokers.com) This US company specialises in cheap tickets.

Cheap Flights (www.cheapflight.com) Informative site with specials, airline information and flight searches from the USA, the UK and other regions.

Flight Centre International (www.flightcentre.com) Respected operator handling direct flights.

Flights.com (www.tiss.com) International site for flight tickets; offers cheap fares and an easy-to-search database.

Roundtheworld.com (www.roundtheworldflights.com) This excellent site allows you to build your own trips from the UK with up to six stops.

STA (www.statravel.com) Prominent in international student travel but you don't have to be a student; site linked to worldwide STA sites.

Travelocity (www.travelocity.com) US site that allows you to search fares (in US\$) from/to practically anywhere.

Travel Online (www.travelonline.co.nz) Good place to check worldwide flights from New Zealand.

Asia

Air Pacific has direct flights from Tokyo to Nadi, which connect with flights to Apia (Samoa) and Nuku'alofa (Tonga). Air New Zealand has a number of flights from Hong Kong, Tokyo and Osaka to Auckland, where there are many onward flights to Samoa and Tonga. Most flights from other parts of Asia are also routed through Auckland and Nadi.

Australia

From Australia, flights to Samoa are available from Sydney and Brisbane with Polynesian Blue. Pacific Blue has flights between Tonga and Sydney, with connections to other Australian cities. Air Pacific flights