

PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

Welcome to the South Pacific 2

Map 4

15 Top Experiences 6

Need to Know 14

If You Like 16

Month by Month 19

Itineraries 22

Which Island? 26

South Pacific Diving 31

Travel with Children 37

Countries at a Glance 39



countries at a glance

Easter Island
 History / Outdoor / Scenery

Open Air Museum
 Easter Island is a world-famous open-air museum, an extraordinary archaeological site, all surrounded with a superbly beautiful view.

Outdoor Adventures
 Outdoor adventures will be an overall success with the fun, hiking, climbing, scrambling and more exciting activities available.

Landscapes
 Easter Island is a beautiful and unique landscape with a variety of natural and cultural sites.

It would take a lifetime to visit all of the vast South Pacific, so chances are you'll have to pick and choose. Most countries have regions that are ideal for families, romance, diving and culture so the trick is to use what else speaks your fancy. Like history? By Easter Island or the Marquesas Islands of French Polynesia. Want to swim with whales? Head to Tonga or French Polynesia. Vegetarians and spicy food lovers will enjoy Fiji while meat eaters will revel in the South American beef on Easter.

Archaeology & History
 This book is a must-read for anyone interested in archaeological sites in the South Pacific. It covers a wide range of sites, from the ancient Easter Island to the more recent sites of the Marquesas Islands.

Hiking, Caves & Volcanoes
 Love and discover the best hiking, caves and volcanoes in the South Pacific. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in these activities.

Luxurious Retreats
 Discover the best luxury retreats in the South Pacific. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in these activities.

UNDERSTAND SOUTH PACIFIC

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

South Pacific Today 536

History 538

Environmental Issues 552

Culture, Lifestyle & Religion 556

Island Life 561

Art & Influence 567

Coconuts & Kava 571

South Pacific Today

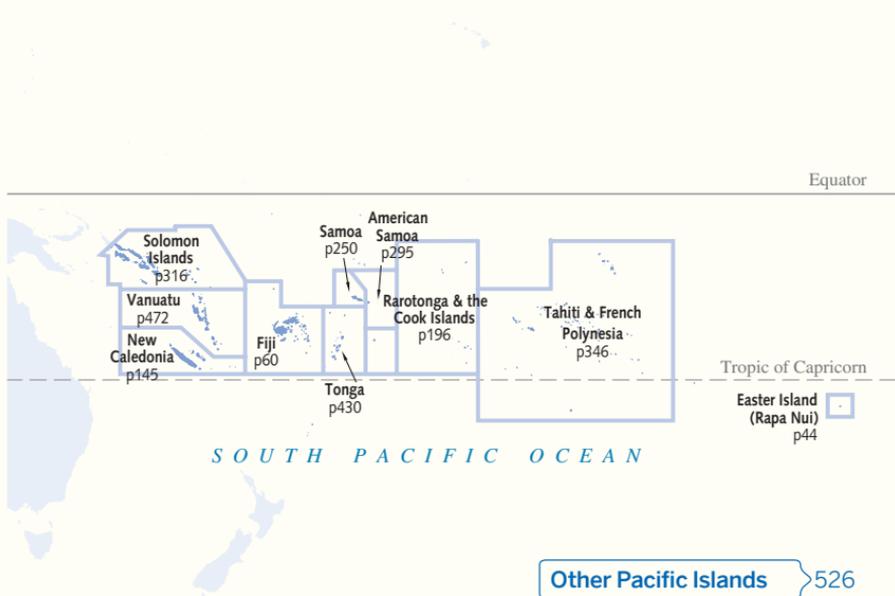
Mummings Around the Kava Bowl
 The Pacific Islands are a varied bunch and in the past have and cocktails. This region has a long history of strong, stubborn and ingenious. Despite the danger, corruption to life of the Pacific modernizing.

History

The Great Polynesian Migration is one of the world's yet mysterious historical events. Imagine families of chickens, dogs, pigs, and the like into canoe-like, flat navigation as well as new dangerous methods of navigation, wave formations and bird flight patterns.

More than 3000 years after the people we associate and Polynesians dominated the Pacific, Europe achieved the marine technology to 'discover' these late 1700s, explorer's tales of the sky, and the landscapes turned the region into a hotbed of European who res...





Other Pacific Islands 526

Directory A-Z	576
Transport	582
Health	589
Language	591
Index	602
Map Legend	614



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Celeste Brash,
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Virginia Jealous, Craig McLachlan

➤ **Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

EASTER ISLAND (RAPA NUI)44

HANGA ROA	46
PARQUE NACIONAL RAPA NUI.....	54

FIJI60

VITI LEVU	64
Nadi	64
Lautoka	77
Southern Viti Levu & the Coral Coast.....	79
Suva	88
Viti Levu's Kings Road....	96
MAMANUCA GROUP.....	99
South Sea Island	99
Bounty Island	99
Beachcomber Island	99
Treasure Island	100
Vomo	101
Navini	101
Malololailai	101
Malolo	102
Castaway Island	103
Mana	103
Matamanoa	104
Monuriki	104
Tokoriki	104
Namotu & Tavarua	104
YASAWA GROUP	105
Kuata	105
Wayasewa	105
Waya	106
Naviti & Around	107
Tavewa	108

Nacula	108
Nanuya Lailai	108
Matacawalevu & Yaqeta ..	110
Sawa-i-Lau.....	110
OVALAU & THE LOMAIVITI ISLANDS.....	111
Ovalau	111
Caqalai	114
Leleuvia	114
VANUA LEVU	115
Savusavu & Around	115
Namenalala	122
Labasa	122
TAVEUNI	124
Waiyevo, Somosomo & Around	125
Matei	128
KADAVU.....	132
LAU GROUP	135
Vanua Balavu	135
ROTUMA	135

NEW CALEDONIA...145

GRANDE TERRE.....	147
Noumea	148
Boulouparis	164
La Foà & Around.....	164
Bourail & Around	166
LOYALTY ISLANDS	172
Maré	173
Lifou	176
Ouvéa	178
ÎLE DES PINS	181
Vao	183

Kuto	184
Baie d'Oro & Around	185

RAROTONGA & THE COOK ISLANDS196

RAROTONGA	199
Avarua	203
AITUTAKI.....	221
PALMERSTON	227
'ATIU.....	228
MA'UKE	232
MITIARO	234
MANGAIA	237
NORTHERN GROUP	240
Manihiki	240
Rakahanga.....	240
Penrhyn	240
Pukapuka	241
Suvarrow.....	241

SAMOA..... 250

'UPOLU	252
Apia	253
Manono	273
Apolima	274
SAVAI'I.....	274
Salelologa & the East Coast	275

AMERICAN SAMOA.....295

TUTUILA	297
MANU'A ISLANDS	308
Ofu & Olosega.....	308
Ta'u	309

On the Road

SOLOMON

ISLANDS 316

GUADALCANAL 320

Honiara 320

CENTRAL PROVINCE 327

Florida (Nggela) Islands 327

Savo 328

WESTERN PROVINCE 328

Marovo Lagoon 328

Munda 332

Around West

New Georgia 333

Gizo 333

MALAITA 338

Auki & Around 338

Langa Langa Lagoon 340

TAHITI & FRENCH

POLYNESIA 346

TAHITI 350

Pape'ete 350

Tahiti Iti 360

MO'OREA 362

HUAHINE 371

RA'IA TEA & TAHA'A 376

BORA BORA 384

MAUPITI 392

TUAMOTU ISLANDS 395

Rangiroa 397

Fakarava 401

Tikehau 403

Manihi 405

MARQUESAS ISLANDS 406

Nuku Hiva 407

'Ua Huka 411

'Ua Pou 412

Hiva Oa 413

Fatu Hiva 417

THE AUSTRAL ISLANDS 417

Rurutu 418

Tubuai 418

Raivavae 418

THE GAMBIER

ARCHIPELAGO 418

TONGA 430

TONGATAPU 433

Nuku'alofa 434

'EUA 443

HA'APAI GROUP 445

Lifuka Group 447

VAVA'U GROUP 451

Neiafu 452

Southern Vava'u Islands 459

Eastern Vava'u Islands 460

NIUA GROUP 460

Niuatoputapu 461

Tafahi 461

Niuafou'u 461

VANUATU 472

EFATE 476

Port Vila & Around 476

White Sands Beach 486

Eton 486

Takara 487

Siviri 487

Havannah Harbour 487

Nguna & Pele 488

EPI 489

TANNA 490

Mt Yasur & East Tanna 492

MALEKULA 496

The Dog's Head 498

Lakatoro 499

Uripiv & Uri 499

Lamap 500

The Maskelynes 500

AMBRYM 501

SANTO 504

Luganville & Around 505

Ambae 513

REMOTE NORTHERN

ISLANDS 514

Maewo 514

Gaua (Santa Maria) 514

Vanua Lava 514

Motalava & Rah 514

Torres Islands 514

PENTECOST 515

OTHER PACIFIC

ISLANDS 526

Niue 526

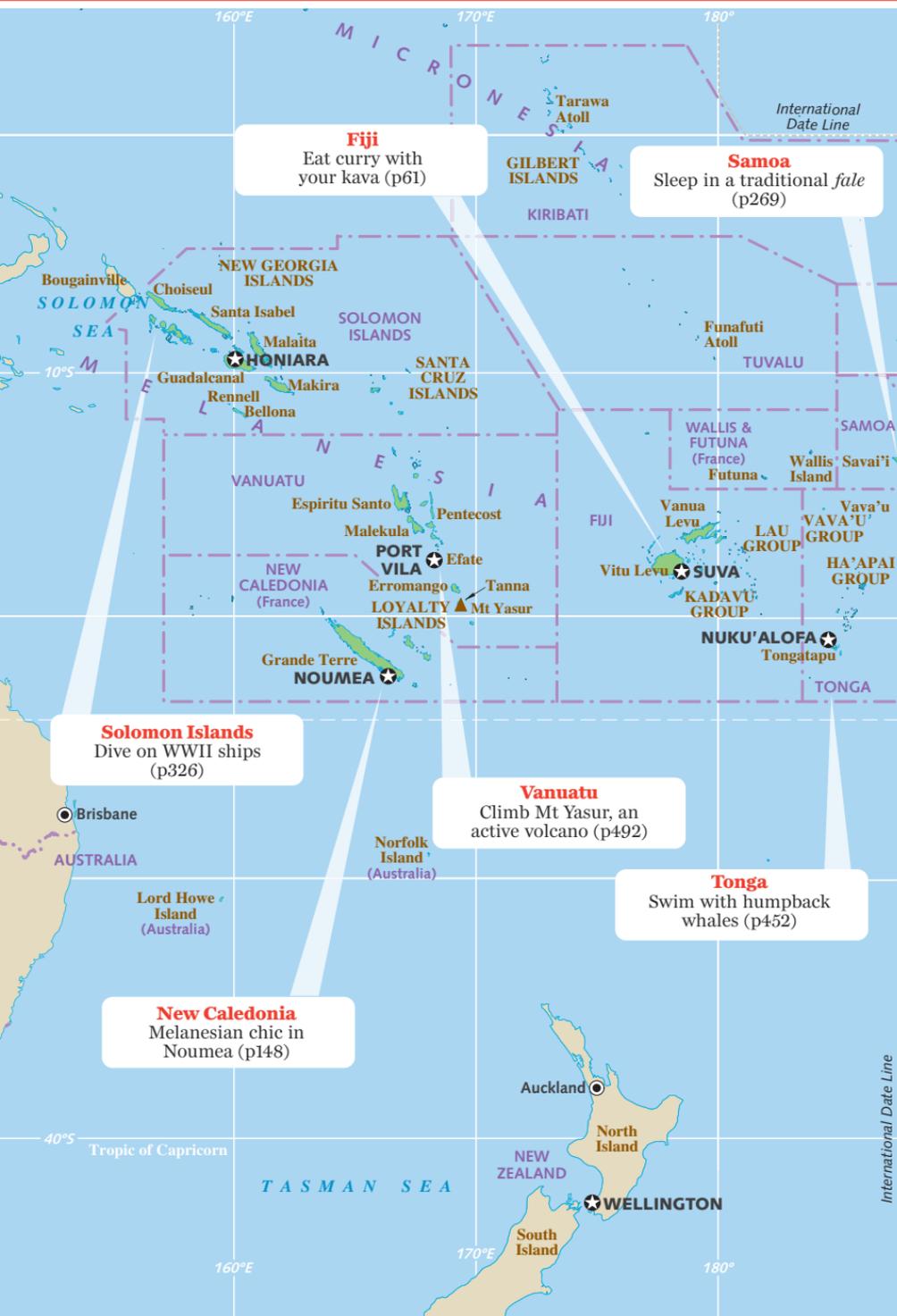
Pitcairn Island 527

Tokelau 529

Tuvalu 530

Wallis & Futuna 532

South Pacific



Fiji
Eat curry with your kava (p61)

Samoa
Sleep in a traditional *fale* (p269)

Solomon Islands
Dive on WWII ships (p326)

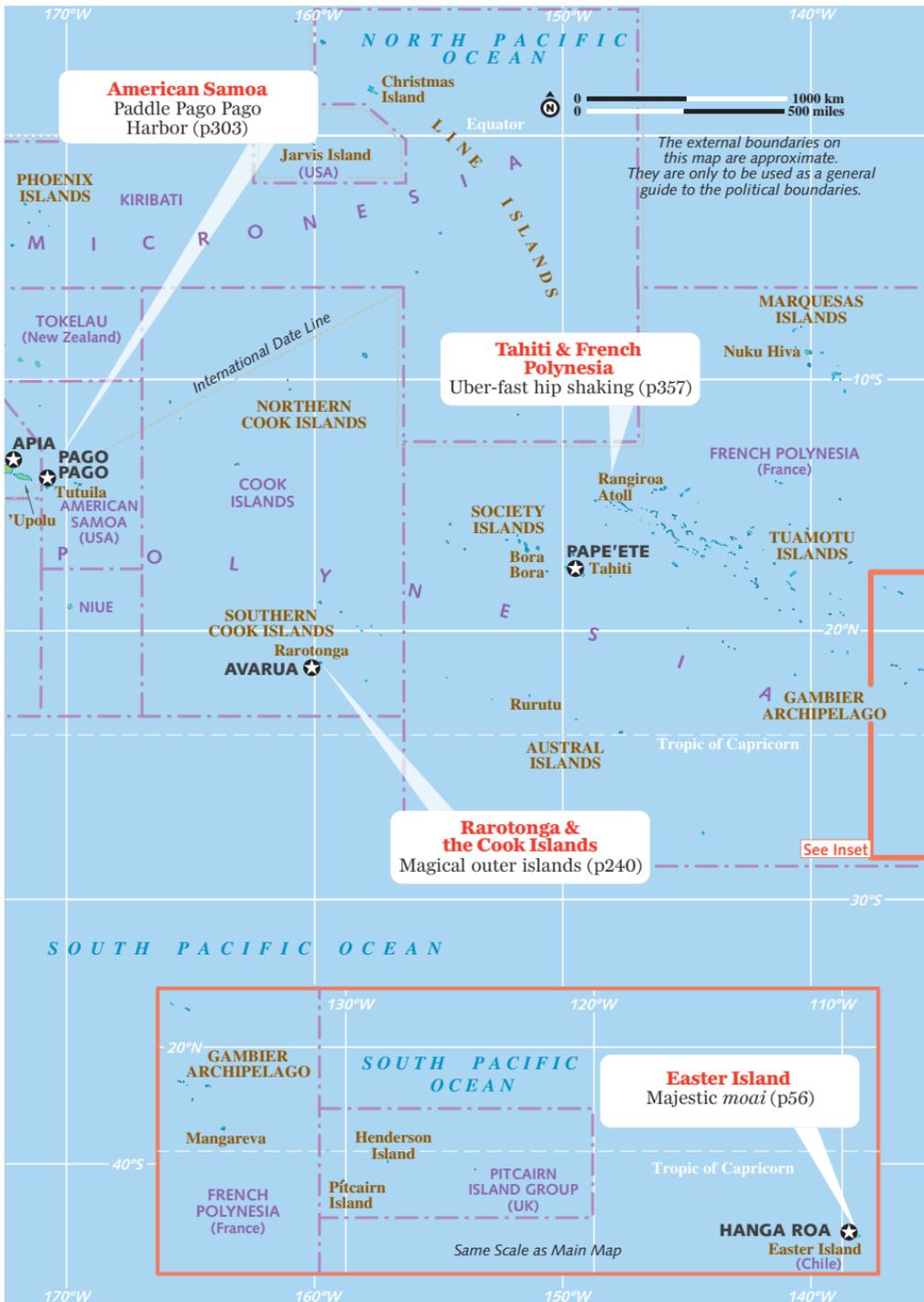
Vanuatu
Climb Mt Yasur, an active volcano (p492)

New Caledonia
Melanesian chic in Noumea (p148)

Tonga
Swim with humpback whales (p452)

International Date Line

Top Experiences >





OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Celeste Brash

Coordinating Author, Fiji, Samoa, American Samoa, Other Pacific Islands

Celeste first visited French Polynesia in 1991 and moved there in 1995. Her first five years were on a remote atoll and the next 10 on Tahiti. Throughout this time she's travelled as far as New Zealand to the west, Easter Island and Pitcairn Island to the east and many places in between. Her award-winning travel stories have appeared in *Travelers' Tales* books and her travel articles have appeared in publications including the *LA Times* and *Islands* magazine. She's written over 30 Lonely Planet guides but considers the South Pacific her speciality. She recently moved to Portland, Oregon, and often complains of the cold.



Brett Atkinson

Rarotonga & the Cook Islands From his home in Auckland, Brett's travelled to many of the island nations in his South Pacific backyard. For this extended research trip to the Cook Islands, he explored the underground caves of 'Atiu, scootered and snorkelled around Aitutaki, and uncovered local foodie treats at Rarotonga's weekly market. Venturing to far-flung and friendly Ma'uke and Mitiaro were other absolute highlights. See www.brett-atkinson.net for the

latest details of his travels and freelance writing.



Jean-Bernard Carillet

Diving, Easter Island, Solomon Islands, Tahiti & French Polynesia Paris-based journalist and photographer Jean-Bernard is a die-hard Polynesia lover and diving instructor. He has explored 28 islands in the five archipelagos. On this trip he searched for the most idyllic *motu*, the best manta ray encounters, the most thrilling lagoon tours, the tastiest *poisson cru*, the most romantic spots and the best-value accommodation. Jean-Bernard has contributed to many Lonely Planet titles and writes for travel and dive magazines.



Jayne D'Arcy

New Caledonia, Vanuatu Jayne started her travels with overland Asia trips, but has discovered that overland in the South Pacific can offer up similar diversity and excitement (with more French imports). Aside from the French influence, Jayne digs the coral reefs, astounding lagoons and serious *Survivor* opportunities that the area has in abundance. When she's not researching for Lonely Planet (this is her 17th guide), Jayne writes for the *Age* in Victoria, Australia.

OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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Virginia Jealous

Fiji Virginia lived, worked and travelled widely in the Pacific from 2004 to 2006, and contributed to Lonely Planet's previous *Fiji* and *South Pacific* guides. Since then she's been looking for a reason to go back, and was very happy to share a few kava sessions with old friends while shamelessly picking their brains about the current Fiji scene. She was also reassured to find that, despite the vagaries of politics and economics, Fiji welcomes travellers as warmly as ever.



Craig McLachlan

Tonga An island addict from way back, Craig has covered the islands of Greece to Okinawa to Tonga for Lonely Planet. His first foray to Tonga was as a teenager when his father, an architect, designed a resort island in the kingdom and Craig experienced his first kava session. He's never looked back. A Kiwi who markets himself as a 'freelance anything', Craig has an MBA from the University of Hawai'i, speaks Japanese and has written several books. Check out www.craigmclachlan.com.

itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



Two Months Le Grande Tour

Fly to Fiji, the South Pacific's biggest hub and catch a boat to the **Yasawas** or **Mamanucas** where countless islets offer fantastic digs and brilliant beaches. Back on Viti Levu, take a bus to the **Nausori Highlands** to experience traditional Fiji and then go onto **Suva**, where shopping malls and markets coexist in a distinctly Pacific style.

Fly to Vanuatu to join a kava session in a *nakamal* (men's clubhouse) around **Port Vila** and see **Mt Yasur** glow in the dark on a night visit to one of the world's most accessible volcanoes. Your next stop will be **Noumea**, fronting the world's second largest coral reef lagoon. Pacific cultures are showcased at the wonderful Tjibaou Cultural Centre and don't miss an outrigger canoe (*pirogue*) trip around Île des Pins.

Keep saying *bonjour* for French Polynesia. Start with some hip-shaking nightlife in **Pape'ete**. Take the ferry to **Mo'orea** for hiking, snorkelling with stingrays and dolphin watching or fly to **Bora Bora** to live it up with the jet-setters in an over-the-water bungalow.

Finish your trip with the fun nightlife and restaurants on **Rarotonga** and unwind by **Aitutaki's** idyllic lagoon.



Six Months Sailing The South Pacific

The southeast trade wind makes this trip fairly predictable if sailed westward outside the December-to-March cyclone season. In fact the route is considered so easy by cruising standards that it's been dubbed the 'coconut milk run'. The **Marquesas Islands** are the targets after a stop at the Galapagos Islands or Hawai'i.

After the majestic peaks of the Marquesas where you can hopefully fill the coffers with fruit, the barren but beautiful **Tuamotus**, the largest group of atolls in the world, are next. This is the time to put down your daiquiri and pay attention – this is known as the Dangerous Archipelago and it has wrecks on the reefs to prove it.

Pape'ete in Tahiti becomes the natural hub to switch crew, stock up on Hinano beer and get a fix of civilisation. Cruising the Society Islands from here to the lagoons of **Huahine, Raiatea** and **Bora Bora** is a highlight, but an expensive one. Leaving Bora Bora, drop in on **Suvarrow** before deciding on **Samoa, Rarotonga** or **Tonga**.

Rarotonga is the closest stop from French Polynesia and the sailors who do stop here often cite it as one of their favourite stops. **Pago Pago Harbor** in American Samoa is a good place to restock and run errands in scenic surrounds while **Apia** in nearby Samoa is less organised but has a bit more soul. The jewel-like islands of the **Vava'u Group** in Tonga are hard to pass up.

Depending on your choice of hiding place during the cyclone season (many yachts head to New Zealand), you could extend the trip by exploring **Fiji**, including the favourite yachty anchorages at **Savusavu**, or casting off for French Melanesia and the never-ending lagoon around **Grande Terre** in New Caledonia. **Vanuatu** gets you to wilder terrain, including volcanoes and the culture that invented bungee jumping, which is only mild preparation for the numerous adventurous islands of the **Solomon Islands**.



One Month Melanesian Meander

Start in **Nadi** and fly to **Taveuni** for Fiji's best hiking along the coast at Lavena then dive walls of willowing soft corals at the Rainbow Reef. Go back to Viti Levu via cosmopolitan **Suva** and chow down at an Indo-Fijian curry house.

Next fly to New Caledonia's capital **Noumea**, which blends Melanesia with French chic. Classy restaurants and boutique shopping aside, don't miss exploring the vast main island, **Grande Terre**, with its mangroves, silent forests and barren vistas.

Fly to Vanuatu's colourful **Port Vila** with its rich English and French colonial history. Swim in the pools of Mele-Maat Cascades and have a few shells of kava before trying some of Port Vila's restaurants and nightlife. Go to see the active **Mt Yasur** volcano and take the two-day trek across Malekula's Dog's Head, past the cannibal site, caves and traditional villages. On to Pentecost where yam farmers invented bungee jumping. Then Espiritu Santo for world-class diving.

Ride a boat through the Solomon Islands' stunning **Vonavona Lagoon**, snorkel or dive off **Uepi Island** and chill out in **Gizo**. Travel to **Malaita** where people summon sharks and live on artificial islands.

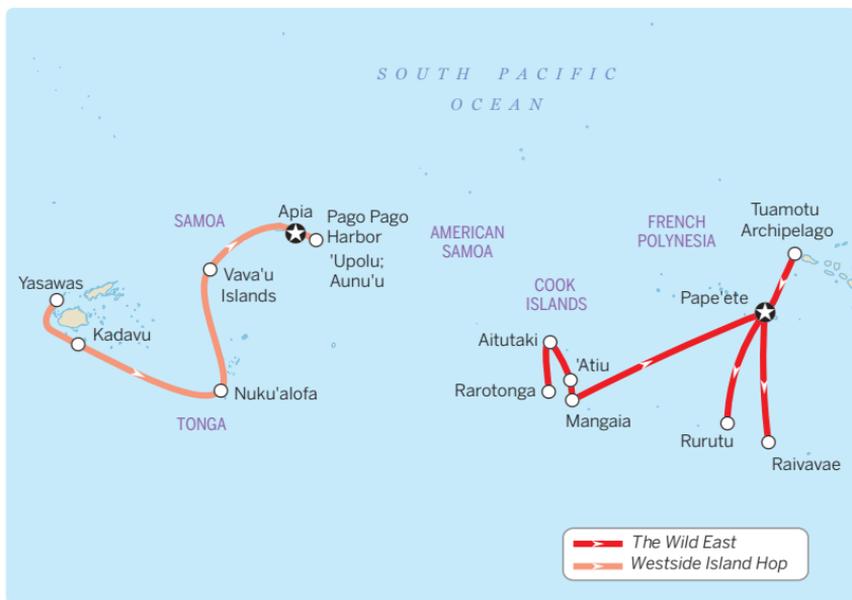
One Month Polynesian Odyssey

Start in **Apia, Samoa**, to visit the dreamy Robert Louis Stevenson Museum before taking the bus or a car around 'Upolu and spend at least one night on the beach in a traditional *fale*. Take the ferry to Savai'i to visit underground cave tunnels, lava fields and glowing white beaches before trying to find the forest-engulfed and forgotten Pulemelei Mound, Polynesia's largest ancient monument.

Fly to **Nuku'alofa** in the Kingdom of Tonga, via **Fiji**. See the Royal Palace (not open to commoners) on the way to lively Talamahu Market. Mu'a (Lapaha) is rich in archaeological ruins. Head to the Ha'apai Group for beachside living in a thatched *fale* or the **Vava'u Group** for active adventures like sea kayaking, surfing, caving and cycling.

You'll also have to reach the Cook Islands' capital **Rarotonga** via Fiji. Once in the Cooks, walk the cross-island track and snorkel at sublime Muri Beach. Catch a plane to **Aitutaki** to see its exquisite lagoon. Explore the caves of the *makatea* islands of **'Atiu**, **Mangaia** and **Ma'u'uke**.

Fly to **Pape'ete**, the chic capital of the French Pacific, and lastly squeeze in a visit to sleepy **Huahine** and the Polynesian spiritual capital of Raiatea.



Three weeks Westside Island Hop

It's ridiculously easy to island hop the western central region of the South Pacific from Australia or New Zealand. Start with a week to 10 days in Fiji exploring the blissful small islands and beaches of the **Yasawas** before heading off the beaten path a few days to dive, hike and relax in an eco-responsible resort on **Kadavu**.

Fly to Tonga for the next five days to a week, with a short stop in **Nuku'alofa** before heading for the **Vava'u Islands** for whale watching (between June and November) and kayaking to deserted beaches.

Spend the final week or more in the Samoas, driving around **'Upolu** for a few days to find empty white-sand beaches and enjoying the friendly bustle of **Apia**. Spend the last two to three days around the glorious **Pago Pago Harbor** in American Samoa, where tall mountains plunge to a mix of colonial architecture and fishing industry humbleness. While here, make sure to visit the spectacularly placed traditional villages of remote north bays of the island as well as walking around the relaxing and near car-free isle of **Aunu'u**.

Three weeks The Wild East

This is an island galaxy far, far away, even from the rest of the South Pacific so while you're here, make the most of it. First fly to **Rarotonga** to swim in the dreamy lagoon and hike the island's many inland trails. Take a side trip either to kayak the nooks and crannies of **Aitutaki's** turquoise lagoon, go birdwatching on **'Atiu** or visit the mysterious limestone burial caves on **Mangaia**.

Take the short Air Tahiti flight to **Pape'ete** and quickly fly out to either the **Tuamotu Archipelago** for diving, snorkelling and *la vida* coral atoll or to the Austral Islands: **Rurutu** for whale watching and cave exploration or **Raivavae** for traditional island culture, hiking and scenery to rival Bora Bora's.

If you're not ready for the adventure to end yet, continue your journey eastward with a long flight to **Easter Island**.

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