

American Samoa

1-684 / POP 55, 519

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Best Places to Stay

- Moana O Sina (p304)
- Vaoto Lodge (p310)
- Tisa's Barefoot Bar (p305)
- Le Falepule (p304)
- Homestays organised by the National Park Visitor Information Center (p308)

Best Beaches

- Ofu Beach (p309)
- Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary (p302)
- Alega Beach (p303)
- Two Dollar Beach (p303)

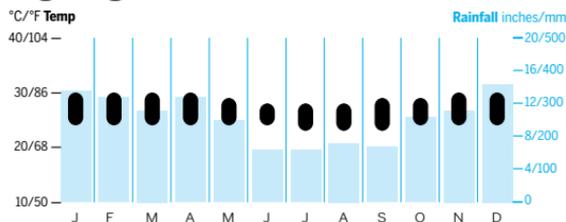
Why Go?

There but for a more exotic name goes American Samoa. Mention of this distant archipelago more often than not elicits a blank stare, but despite its mundane moniker and confusing status (it belongs to, but isn't a part of, the US), American Samoa is one of the most breathtakingly beautiful pockets of Polynesia.

A photogenic feast of green jagged peaks, electric blue depths and idyllic beaches, American Samoa's islands are the stuff South Pacific daydreams are made of. Tutuila is home to Pago Pago, a blue-collar fishing town nestled beside one of the world's most stunning natural harbours; outside city limits, flower-scented villages cling to deep-rooted traditions. For more extreme escapism, head to the remote Manu'a Islands, believed to be the birthplace of Polynesia, or hike the trails of the National Park of American Samoa. Whichever adventure you choose, this is one Pacific paradise you're likely to have all to yourself.

When to Go

Pago Pago



Dec-Jan

Peak holiday period when Samoans living abroad visit home.

May-Oct

Dry, cool season with minimal to no risk of cyclones.

Oct

Festival month and whale season.

TUTUILA

POP 54,145 / AREA 140 SQ KM

Tutuila is a dramatic mass of sharp edges and pointy peaks, softened by a heavy padding of rainforest. Its craggy green silhouettes loom over the island's blindingly white sands, turquoise shallows, inviting islets and the stunning Pago Pago Harbor, one of the best-protected natural harbours in the world.

While the airport road offers a disappointing first impression, rest assured that there's more to Tutuila than fast-food joints and shabby shacks: between the urban delights of Pago Pago, ancient sacred sites, secret swimming spots and scenic hiking trails, this is one of Polynesia's most eclectic – if little-known – destinations. The island's claims to fame don't stop there: the tiny village of Poloa, on Tutuila's west coast, is the last place on earth to see the sun set each day.

Sights

Pago Pago

While the urban environs of Pago Pago are as gritty as they come (two tuna canneries, a huge working seaport and potholed streets lined with ramshackle buildings), its evocative natural harbour, white-sand beaches and backdrop of magnificent geometric peaks give the city a dreamy, paradisaical feel. It's an incongruous combination, but somehow it works, lending Pago Pago a unique and explore-worthy charm.

Though pretty well stuck together, Pago Pago is technically a string of villages. Confusingly, 'Pago Pago' (pronounced pung-o pung-o) is used to describe the small village at the far end of the harbour, the harbour itself, the 'town', the whole island of Tutuila or even the whole of American Samoa.



American Samoa Highlights

- 1 Ogling rainforest-clad mountains and white sands while floating in the crystalline waters off **Ofu Beach** (p309).
- 2 Strolling the plantations and crater lakes on the diminutive island of **Aunu'u** (p309).
- 3 Hiking the jungle trails of the **National Park of American Samoa** (p301).
- 4 Snorkelling and whale watching in **Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary** (p302).
- 5 Paddling about calm **Pago Pago Harbor** (p297), fringed by magnificently jagged peaks.
- 6 Enjoying a traditional Samoan meal with a modern twist, beachside at Tutuila's **Tisa's Barefoot Bar** (p307).
- 7 Exploring the mysteries of ancient Polynesia on the isolated island of **Ta'u** (p311).