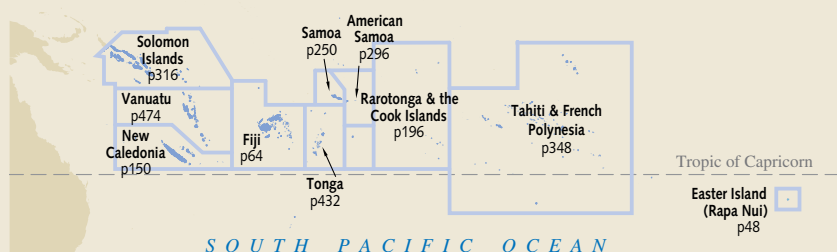




South Pacific

Equator



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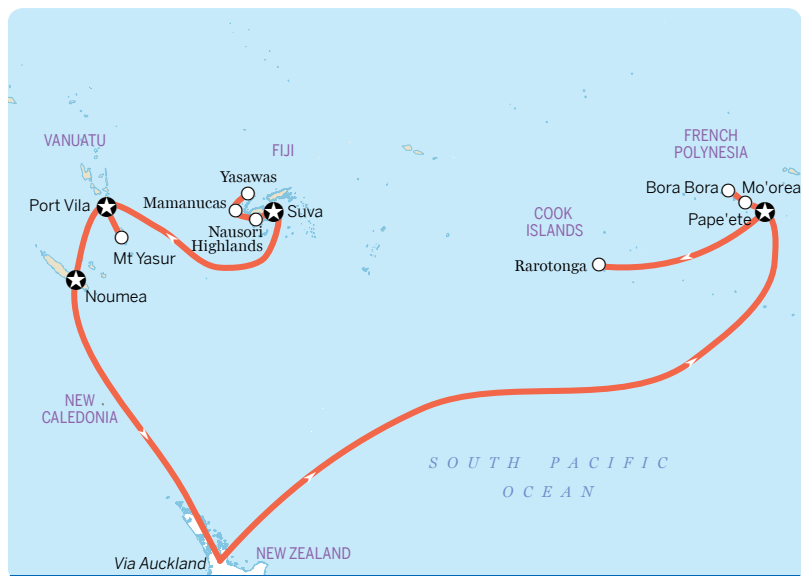
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Itineraries



2
MONTHS

The Grand Tour

Fly to Fiji, the South Pacific's happening-est hub, and boat out to the **Yasawas** or **Mamanucas** where countless islets offer fabulous accommodation and brilliant beaches. Back on Viti Levu, take a bus to the **Nausori Highlands** to experience traditional Fiji. In big-smoke **Suva**, shopping malls and markets coexist in distinctly South Seas style.

Fly to Vanuatu and join a kava session in a *nakamal* (men's clubhouse) around **Port Vila**, then check out **Mt Yasur** glowing after dark – one of the world's most accessible volcanoes.

Next stop, **Noumea** in New Caledonia, fronting the world's second-largest coral-reef lagoon. Don't miss the Pacific culture at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre and a *pirogue* (outrigger canoe) trip around Île des Pins.

Refine your *bonjour* on your flight to French Polynesia via Auckland. Start with a great Tahitian or French-influenced meal in **Pape'ete**, then take the ferry to **Mo'orea** for superb hiking and snorkelling. Alternatively, fly to **Bora Bora** and fool around with the jet set in an over-the-water bungalow.

Backtrack to Pape'ete, then wing it west for cold beers and hot restaurants on **Rarotonga** in the Cook Islands.


2
MONTHS

South Seas Secrets

Lost in the empty ocean way out east, the remote **Marquesas Islands** in French Polynesia are your launch pad, accessed through the Galapagos Islands, Hawai'i or Pape'ete in Tahiti. Expect amazing art, photogenic peaks, fab tropical fruit and not many tourists.

The barren but beautiful **Tuamotus**, the largest group of atolls in the world, are next. It's a good thing you're flying: known as the Dangerous Archipelago, the reefs around here are strewn with shipwrecks.

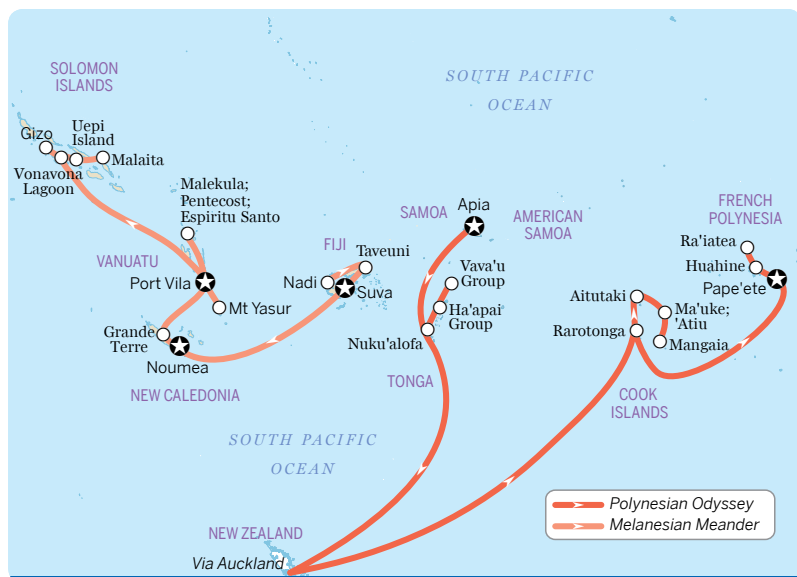
Reacquaint yourself with civilisation in **Pape'ete** in Tahiti (bars, shops, restaurants – take your pick), followed by some Society Islands lagoon time in laid-back **Huahine** and mysterious **Ra'iatea**. From Pape'ete, jet into Rarotonga in the Cook Islands and beat a hasty retreat to the idyllic beachscapes of **Aitutaki**, an internal flight away.

From Rarotonga, wing through Auckland to **Apia** in Samoa – disorganised and soulful in equal measure. For a weird west-meets-south experience, detour to **Pago Pago Harbour** in nearby American Samoa – greenbacks and gorgeous scenery. Paddle a kayak around the waterfront to take it all in.

Flying out of Apia, raffish **Nuku'alofa** in Tonga is next: check out the Royal Palace and see if you can spy King Tupou VI from the gates. There are few tourists hereabouts: the vibe is low-key, unhurried and unhurried. From Nuku'alofa, take an internal flight north to bend elbows with some ancient mariners in the **Neiafu** waterfront bars in Vava'u, fronting onto one of the world's most photogenic natural harbours.

Back in Nuku'alofa, jet out to **Vanuatu** (via Nadi in Fiji) – a nation still recovering from Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2015, and authentic to the core. There's some seriously wild terrain here (volcanoes!), plus this is the culture that invented bungee jumping (using vines, not giant rubber bands).

All this is only mild preparation for the numerous adventures ahead in the untrammelled wilds of the **Solomon Islands**. If you're interested in WWII history, don't miss diving on sunken wrecks or aircraft and warships, and peeling back the foliage from rusty tanks in the jungle.

1
MONTH

Melanesian Meander

Get started in **Nadi** in Fiji and fly to **Taveuni** to hike along the Lavena coast, then dive over soft corals at the Rainbow Reef. Head back to Viti Levu via cosmopolitan **Suva** and chow down on Indo-Fijian curries.

Next up, fly into New Caledonia's capital **Noumea**, blending Melanesian culture and French chic. Dip into classy restaurants and boutiques, then explore the mangroves, silent forests and barren vistas of the vast main island, **Grande Terre**.

Jet into Vanuatu's colourful **Port Vila** with its rich English and French colonial history. Take a dip at the Mele Cascades and sip some kava before swaying into the Port Vila nightlife. Active **Mt Yasur** volcano on Tanna island is a show-stopper, as is the two-day trek across the Dog's Head on **Malekula**, past cannibal sites, caves and traditional villages. Continue to **Pentecost**, where farmers invented bungee jumping, then **Espiritu Santo** for world-class diving.

Another flight delivers you to the Solomon Islands: boat around gorgeous **Vonavona Lagoon**, snorkel or dive off **Uepi island** and chill out in **Gizo**. Finish up in **Malaita**, where locals summon sharks and live on artificial islands.

1
MONTH

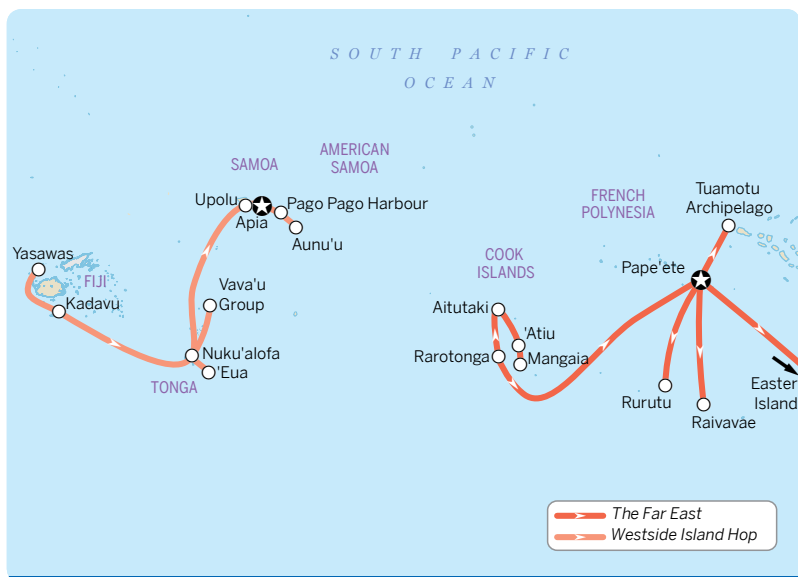
Polynesian Odyssey

Kick things off in **Apia**, Samoa's capital: check out the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum, explore Upolu and spend at least one night on the beach in a traditional *fale* (house). Take the ferry to Savai'i for cave tunnels, lava fields and white beaches, then visit the forest-engulfed Pulemelei Mound, Polynesia's largest ancient monument.

Fly to **Nuku'alofa** in the ancient Kingdom of Tonga: eyeball the Royal Palace en route to lively Talamahu Market. To the north, the **Ha'apai Group** offers beachy living in thatched *fale*, while the **Vava'u Group** delivers active adventures like sea kayaking, diving and sailing.

Jag through the duty-free shops at Auckland Airport en route to the Cook Islands' capital **Rarotonga**. Hike the cross-island track, snorkel at sublime Muri Beach, or catch a plane to exquisite **Aitutaki**. Explore the caves of the *makatea* (raised coral islands) of **'Atiu**, **Mangaia** and **Ma'u'uke**.

From Rarotonga, fly to **Pape'ete**, the chic capital of the French Pacific, and squeeze in a visit to sleepy **Huahine** and the Polynesian spiritual capital of **Ra'iatea**.



3 WEEKS

Westside Island-Hop

Island-hopping the western central region of the South Pacific from Australia or New Zealand is an easy South Seas jaunt.

Start with a week in Fiji exploring the blissful small islands and beaches of the **Yasawas** before heading off-grid for a few days to dive, hike and relax in an eco-attuned resort on **Kadavu**.

Fly into untouristy Tonga for a week, with a short stop in **Nuku'alofa** before taking the world's shortest commercial flight to little **Eua** for some hiking. Further north, the **Vava'u Group** offers brilliant sailing and snorkelling, some harbourside daiquiris or more resort time.

Spend your final week in the Samoas, driving around **Upolu** for a few days discovering empty white-sand beaches and enjoying the friendly chaos of **Apia**.

Spend your last few days around glorious **Pago Pago Harbour** in American Samoa, where sheer mountains plunge down to colonial architecture and fishing industry humbleness. Be sure to visit the trad villages spectacularly sited around the island's remote north bays, and also walk around the car-free, carefree isle of **Aunu'u**.

3 WEEKS

The Far East

This island galaxy is far, far away, even from the rest of the South Pacific. So while you're here, make the most of it!

First fly into **Rarotonga** in the Cook Islands to swim in the dreamy lagoon and hike the island's many inland trails. Take a side trip either to kayak around the turquoise lagoon nooks in **Aitutaki**, go bird-watching on **Atiu**, or visit the mysterious limestone burial caves on **Mangaia**.

Back on Rarotonga, take the short flight to **Pape'ete** in Tahiti then fly out to either the **Tuamotu archipelago** for diving, snorkelling and castaway coral atolls, or to the Austral Islands: **Rurutu** for some more 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**. There's nothing quite like the first time you see the island's iconic *moai* (statues), standing sentinel on grassy slopes, gazing out across the chilly spans of the South Pacific Ocean.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Body surfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



Craig McLachlan

New Caledonia An island enthusiast from way back, Craig has covered such varying spots as the Greek Islands, Okinawa, Tonga, New Caledonia and Oahu for Lonely Planet. A Kiwi with a passion for exploring, he loves New Caledonia, in particular the Loyalty Islands and Île des Pins. A 'freelance anything', Craig has an MBA from the University of Hawai'i and is also a pilot, karate instructor, tour leader, hiking guide, Japanese interpreter and budding novelist. See www.craigmclachlan.com.



Tamara Sheward

Fiji, Samoa, American Samoa Despite a hearty dislike of heat and humidity – not to mention that pesky mango allergy – Tamara not only lives in the tropics, but enjoys travelling them extensively. While researching the South Pacific, she rode in 50-plus boats, 14 aeroplanes, umpteen rattly open-air buses and one submarine; alas, no similar tally was kept on kava and coconut consumption. In addition to the islands in this book, Tamara has covered a incongruous miscellany of countries for

Lonely Planet, including Serbia, northern Australia, Bulgaria and Russia.



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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, 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



Charles Rawlings-Way

Coordinating Writer, Tonga, Other Islands As a likely lad, Charles suffered in school shorts through Tasmanian winters. Ice on the puddles, snow on Mt Wellington...he dreamed of one day exploring tropical isles in a more humane climate. After dropping a windsurfer mast on a Texan tourist's head in Fiji in 1985 and chasing rats around an Aitutatki guesthouse in 2005, a trip to see what Tonga had to offer was well overdue. Charles has penned 30-something

Lonely Planet guidebooks, and remains pathologically fixated on the virtues and vices of travel.



Brett Atkinson

Rarotonga & the Cook Islands From his home in Auckland, Brett Atkinson has travelled to many of the islands in his South Pacific backyard. For this extended research trip to the Cook Islands, he snorkelled and scootered around Aitutaki, drank bush beer and organic coffee on 'Atiu, and explored Rarotonga on two and four wheels with his wife Carol. Brett has covered more than 50 countries as a guidebook author and travel and food writer. See www.brett-atkinson.net

for his most recent work and upcoming travels.



Jean-Bernard Carillet

Easter Island, Solomon Islands, Tahiti & French Polynesia Paris-based journalist and photographer Jean-Bernard is a die-hard island lover and diving instructor. He has clocked up numerous trips to the South Pacific, including five assignments to the Solomon Islands. On this research gig, his favourite experiences included diving the WWII wrecks off Tulagi, spending a day in Saeraghi, exploring Marovo Lagoon on a dinghy, visiting Gwaunau'ru with a local chief. Jean-Bernard

has contributed to many Lonely Planet titles, in French and in English. He also writes for travel and dive magazines.



Paul Harding

Vanuatu As a writer and photographer Paul has been travelling around Asia, Australia and parts of the Pacific for nearly two decades, examining beaches and islands along the way. Vanuatu stands out though for its remote islands, pristine waters, friendly faces and ancient traditional culture. On this trip Paul climbed a volcano, drank too much kava and braved rough seas in very small boats. He has contributed to some 50 Lonely Planet guides.

OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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