

# Niue

Niue (*new-ay*) may be the world's smallest independent nation, but the Pacific island known as the 'Rock of Polynesia' packs in plenty of surprises for the intrepid traveller. Don't expect any palm-fringed beaches and languid lagoons, but look forward to a rugged landscape of limestone caverns, hidden sea caves, and a rocky, untamed coast. Ditch the deck chair and airport novel, and pack a pair of rugged walking shoes and a sense of adventure instead.

Once you've explored Niue's robust exterior, don mask and snorkel and investigate the coral communities and pools fringing Niue's reef. From June to September get face to face with humpback whales nursing their calves in the safe haven of Niue's warm waters. Descend further to the indigo depths for some of the best diving in the Pacific.

And after all this honest exercise, chill out with the friendly locals at cliff-top cafes and beach-front bars. The tiny population of Niueans and *palagi* (European) expats is very friendly, so be prepared to trade waves with *everyone* as you drive (slowly) around the island.

On 5 January 2004 Niue was devastated by Cyclone Heta, one of the biggest storms ever recorded in the Pacific. But now the tiny nation is bouncing back. Getting to Niue is more affordable and easier than ever, and there are several new eco-friendly and low-key ways to explore the island.

Alone in the planet's biggest ocean, Niue remains defiantly and dramatically different.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Dive with tangles of sea snakes at **Snake Gully** (p234) or negotiate twin underwater chimneys at **Ana Mahaga** (p234)
- Float calmly as a **humpback whale** (p234) and her calf swim beneath you
- Experience the Pacific Ocean's power at **Togo Chasm** (p233) and **Talava Arches** (p232)
- Explore the fish-laden **reef pools** (p232) near Matapa Chasm
- Get friendly with Niue's movers and shakers with an essential visit to the **Washaway Café** (p235), the Pacific's only self-service Bar

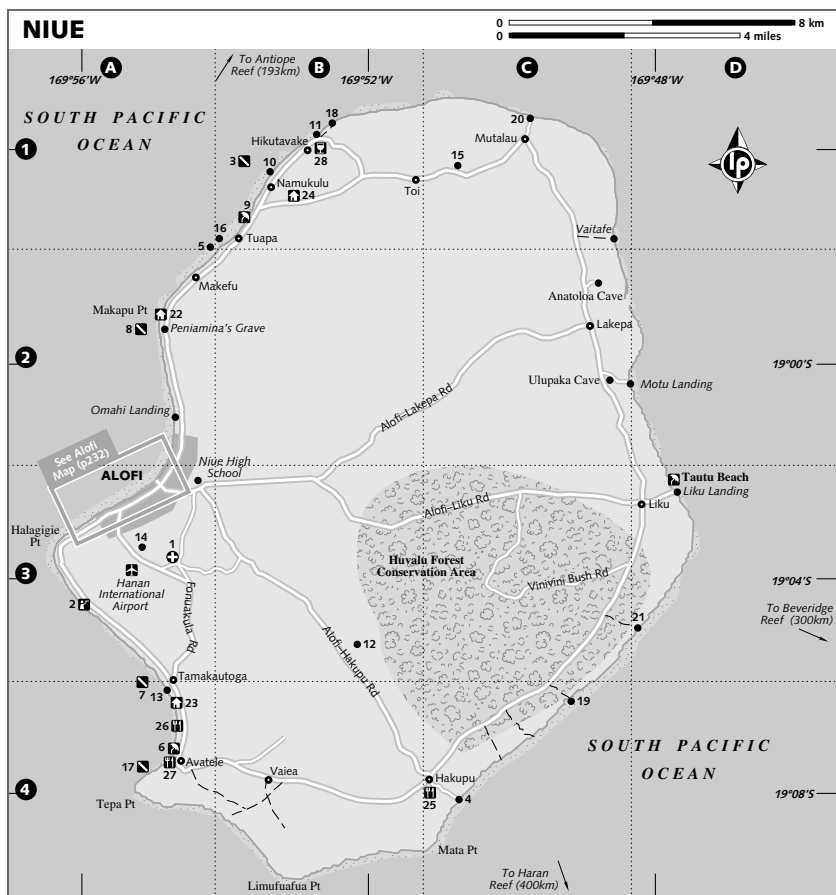


## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Niue is best from May to October, when temperatures are lower and there's less rain. The average daytime temperature is 27°C from May to October and 30°C from

November to April. December to March is the cyclone season.

November to June is the low season, when you'll find accommodation discounts. The Christmas–New Year period is very busy



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