Welcome to the South Pacific
South Pacific Map
South Pacific’s Top 15
Need to Know
If You Like
Month By Month
Itineraries
Which Island?
South Pacific Diving
Travel with Children
Countries at a Glance

EASTER ISLAND
(RAPA NUI)
Hanga Roa
Parque Nacional Rapa Nui

FIJI
Viti Levu
Suva
Nadi
Lautoka
Mamanuca Group
 Yasawa Group
Ovalau & the Lomaiviti Islands
Vanua Levu
Taveuni
Kadavu Group
Lau Group
Rotuma

NEW CALEDONIA
Grande Terre
Noumea
Loyalty Islands
Maré
Lifou
Ouvéa
Île Des Pins

RAROTONGA & THE COOK ISLANDS
Rarotonga
Avarua & Around
Aitutaki

Palmerston
‘Atiu
Ma’uke
Mitiaro
Mangaia
Northern Group

SAMOA
Upolu
Apia
Manu’a Islands
Apolima
Savai’i

AMERICAN SAMOA
Tutuila
Manu’a Islands
Ofu & Olosega
Ta’u

SOLOMON ISLANDS
Guadalcanal
Honiara
Western Province
Marovo Lagoon
West New Georgia
Ghizo
Islands Around Ghizo
Malaita
Auki & Around
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAHITI &amp; FRENCH POLYNESIA</th>
<th>348</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tahiti</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pape'ete</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahiti Iti</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mo'orea</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huahine</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ra'iatea &amp; Taha'a</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bora Bora</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maupiti</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuamotu Islands</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangiroa</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fakarava</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikehau</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquesas Islands</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuku Hiva</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ua Huka</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ua Pou</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiva Oa</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatu Hiva</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Austral Islands</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TONGA</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongatapu</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuku'alofa</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Eua</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha'apai Group</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifuka Group</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vava'u Group</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neiafu</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niua Group</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VANUATU</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efate</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Vila &amp; Around</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efate Ring Road</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savannah Harbour</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguna &amp; Pele</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epi</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanna</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malekula</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakatoro &amp; Around</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamap</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Maskelynes</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrym</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espiritu Santo</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luganville &amp; Around</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecost, Ambae &amp; Maewo</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks &amp; Torres Islands</td>
<td>519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDS</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niue</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitcairn Islands</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokelau</td>
<td>532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuvalu</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallis &amp; Futuna</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

South Pacific
- Today                    540
- History                  542
- Environmental Issues     555
- Culture, Lifestyle & Religion 559
- Island Life              563
- Art & Influence          569
- Food & Drink             573

Directory A–Z                578
- Transport                584
- Health                   589
- Language                 592
- Index                    599
- Map Legend               610

SOUTH PACIFIC DIVER'S GUIDE
- South Pacific Diving      35
- Travel with Children      41
- Environmental Issues     555
- Island Life              563

SPECIAL FEATURES
- Travel with Children      41
- Environmental Issues     555
- Island Life
- image gallery            563
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 (out-rigger 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.
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 unharried. 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’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.
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.

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
- Bodysurfing
- 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 Aitutaki 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.

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