

# Tongatapu Group



On Tongatapu (meaning 'Sacred South'), old and new Tonga collide. Nuku'alofa (Abode of Love) will challenge your vision of a South Pacific idyll. The main island constitutes one third of the kingdom's land mass and a third of the island's population lives in Nuku'alofa, Tonga's 'big smoke'.

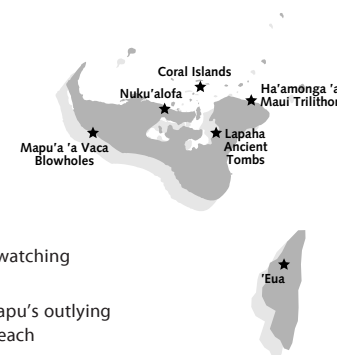
Outside Nuku'alofa most of the flat island's land is covered in a patchwork of plantations (coconuts, pumpkins, root crops), studded with sleepy villages that are home to roaming pigs and seemingly more churches than houses, and fringed with long stretches of white-sand beaches.

The first port of call for most visitors, due to its position at the hub of all activity within the kingdom of Tonga, it's hard to escape spending some time on Tongatapu. There's something to be seen and experienced here at every point of the compass. Head east and you'll stumble onto one of the densest concentrations of ancient structures in the Pacific, where you'll find the mysterious Ha'amonga 'a Maui trilithon, a sort of Stonehenge of the South Pacific. Explore the Lapaha area, riddled with *langi* (tiered tombs) and ringed with moats. Drop down south for the symphonic spurts at the blowholes, and wade in protected rock pools in sandy coves. Venture westward to the island's accessible surf breaks and beach resorts.

Still not enough for you? Then board a boat bound for the reefs and *motu* (coral islet) just north of the main island, where fine diving and snorkelling await and island resorts on Pangaimotu, 'Atata and Fafá will melt away your stress. An ecotourist's dream lies just a boat-ride south of Tongatapu on low-key 'Eua, with some of the best hiking in the Pacific.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Combining holiday with adventure by exploring 'Eua's trails, limestone caves and **natural wonders** (p215)
- Marvelling at the **ancient tombs** (p199) of Lapaha and the Ha'amonga 'a Maui **trilithon** (p209)
- Applauding the spectacle of the Mapu'a 'a Vaca **blowholes** (p211)
- Tucking into a sumptuous Tongan feast while watching a **traditional dance performance** (p196)
- Spending a Sunday snorkelling among Tongatapu's outlying **coral islands** (p213) and stretching out on a beach



■ POPULATION: 66,979

■ AREA: 261 SQ KM

## HISTORY

The known history of Tongatapu is the result of oral tradition, dating from the middle of the 10th century when the first Tu'i Tonga, the son of the god Tangaloa and a beautiful Tongan maiden, came to power.

Around the year 1200, Tu'i Tonga Tu'itatui set about building the only trilithic gate in Oceania, the Ha'amonga 'a Maui (Maui's Burden), near the village of Niutoua. Legend has it that the Tu'i Tonga constructed the gate to remind two quarrelling sons that unity was better than division. After creating a wonderful future tourist attraction for Tonga, he moved his capital to Lapaha, on the calm lagoon near present-day Mu'a.

Over the following 100 years or so, war canoes full of Tongan raiding parties regularly set off for neighbouring islands. They created an empire ranging from the Lau Group in Fiji to the west, across to Niue in the east and northward to Futuna and Samoa, all of it ruled by the Tu'i Tonga from his capital on Tongatapu.

Tongatapu's first European visitor was Dutchman Abel Tasman, who spent a few

days trading with islanders, and named the island Amsterdam. The next European contact came with Captain James Cook, who developed a close friendship with the 30th Tu'i Tonga, Fatafehi Paulaho, and presented him with Tu'i Malila, the tortoise that was treated as a chief and given the run of the palace for nearly 200 years (see p199).

## ACTIVITIES

You'll find plenty of water-based action on Tongatapu and its nearby islands. Resort islands maintain water toys such as kayaks, boats and catamarans for their guests.

### Diving & Snorkelling

Around the Tongatapu Group, subaquatic adventures range from snorkelling the wreck off Pangaimotu and the excellent Makaha'a Reef, to diving 'Eua's unique sea caves.

Water temperatures north of Nuku'alofa reach a comfortable 29°C in November and don't fall below 21°C in midwinter. Underwater visibility near the main island averages 15m but closer to the barrier reefs it increases to between 30m and 50m.

## TONGATAPU IN...

### Two Days

Spend day one getting your bearings on a circumnavigational island tour, exploring archaeological marvels, caves and seaside cemeteries; witness the blowholes in action and get acquainted with Tongatapu's western beaches. Alight in Nuku'alofa to soak up the sunset tones over the waterfront and dine on the best seafood around at the **Pearl Inn** (p195). On day two, join the bustle and explore the wares at **Talamahu Market** (p188), take our **walking tour** (p189) of the capital's sights and get acquainted with traditional culture at the **Tongan National Centre** (p189).

### Four Days

Follow the two-day itinerary and then catch a ferry to 'Eua (p215) to bushwalk in its dramatic landscape and soak up impressive ocean views, particularly during whale season. Or head for Tongatapu's outer islands (p213) for beachside frolics and navel gazing. Join a **culture show** (p196) and do what the Tongans do so well – feast!

Save yourself potential grief by carefully inspecting all rental gear before heading out in a boat.

**Deep Blue Diving Centre** (Map pp184-5; ☎/fax 23379; www.deep-blue-diving.to; Vuna Rd, Nuku'alofa) One-/two-tank dives cost T\$120 (including lunch and all gear), five-/10-day dive packages cost T\$540/1060. Snorkellers can join trips for T\$35; at least three people are required for most trips/dives. The major diving draws around Tongatapu are 'Eua's enormous sea caves (minimum of four people) and the beautiful, uninhabited island north of Tongatapu (T\$100 for one dive, T\$65 for nondivers, beach barbecue included).

**Divers Lodge** (Map pp184-5; ☎/fax 23379; fax 23576; www.deep-blue-diving.to; Funa Rd, Nuku'alofa) Extended dive charters and accommodation packages are available from Divers Lodge (p192) A two-tank dive with full equipment costs from US\$98, and US\$87 with tank, weights and a light lunch. Five-/10-day packages are available from US\$400/755.

**Royal Sunset Island Resort** (Map p183; ☎/fax 21254; www.royalsunset.to; 'Atata) The 'Atata island resort (p214) is close to a host of dive sites, though you have to pay to get out there. One-/two-tank dives cost T\$77/127, which includes a tank, weights, boat and guide. Full gear hire can mount up to an extra T\$69/110. Divers need to show qualifications equivalent to the PADI open-water certification.

### Fishing

Game fishing is excellent in Tonga (see p275) due to the incredible depth of the Tonga Trench, east of Tongatapu. Fish Ag-

gregating Devices, located around the island, attract big game.

**Precision Charters** (☎ 24700; fax 24669; skipcust@kalianet.to) has a fully game-rigged 7m Buccaneer Billfisher, *Lady Di*, available for T\$600/1000 per half/full day (including lunch) for a maximum of four people.

**Royal Sunset Island Resort** (Map p183; ☎/fax 21254; www.royalsunset.to; 'Atata) offers half-/full-day game fishing for T\$550/850, including gear, with a maximum of four anglers.

**Sea-Taxi** (☎ 22797, 15723; http://kalianet.to/seataxi) has a fast 31ft fibreglass cruiser with many national records to its name, and offers full-day game fishing with full gear for T\$1200.

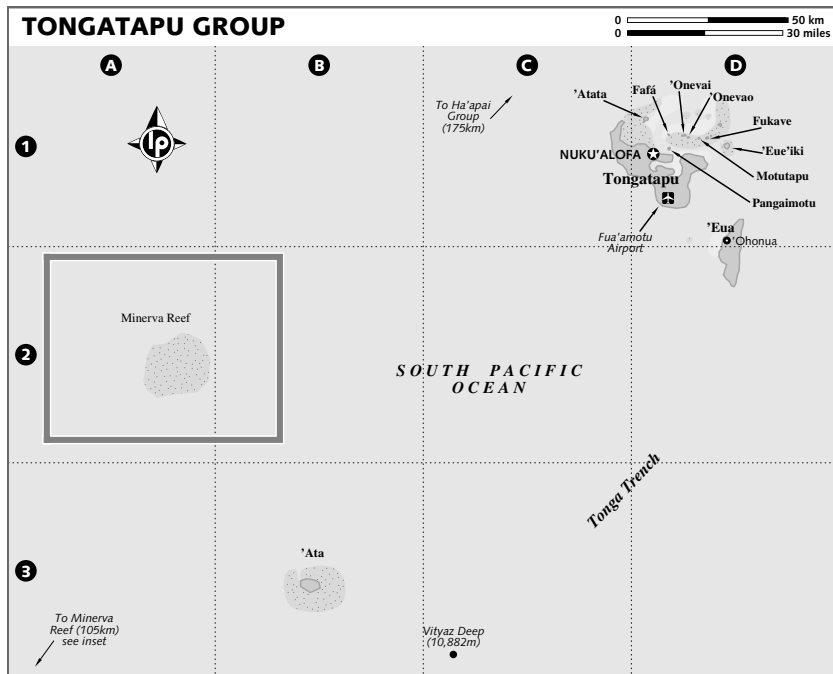
### Surfing

Tongatapu's northwest coast, off Ha'atafu Beach, is renowned for its surf. There's also a series of interesting-looking reef breaks between Fukave and 'Onevao.

The **Happy Hopa Surf School** (Map p183; ☎ 41088; fax 22970; www.surfingtonga.com; Ha'atafu Beach Resort, Ha'atafu) runs one-on-one surfing lessons (A\$25 per hour) for beginners and reef novices.

### Whale-Watching

Other than patiently scanning Tongatapu's watery horizons, the best bet for whale-watching in the Tongatapu Group is to ferry across to 'Eua. Whales are frequently seen en route. They can also be spotted cruising past Hideaway's whale-watching platform (p223) and boat trips can be organised from this resort for sole viewers and small groups.



**LONELY PLANET INDEX**

- **1L of unleaded petrol** T\$1.80-2.30
- **1.5L of bottled water** T\$1
- **355mL bottle of Ikaale beer** T\$3.50
- **Souvenir T-shirt** T\$17-22
- **Street treat of sipi (mutton) curry** T\$3.50

Game-fishing boats run whale-watching trips between June and December. **Deep Blue Diving** (Map pp184-5; ☎ /fax 23379; www.deep-blue-diving.to; Vuna Rd; Nuku'alofa) runs trips around 'Eua from July to November. **Royal Sunset Island Resort** (Map p183; ☎ /fax 21254; www.royalsunset.to; 'Atata) offers whale-watching boat trips to resort guests at a nominal fee depending on distance travelled. Charges on charter boats are also up for negotiation depending on how far from Nuku'alofa the charter boat travels.

You can charter **Sea-Taxi** (☎ 22797, 15723; http://kalianet.to/seataxi) for a full day of whale-watching for T\$1000.

# TONGATAPU ISLAND

## NUKU'ALOFA

area 9.25 sq km / pop 22,162 (est)  
Tonga's 'big smoke', Nuku'alofa, is the kingdom's seat of government and home of the royal family. While it may not fulfil a vision of Pacific paradise, Nuku'alofa still has a charm and a little promise when you blow the dust from its surface. Its broad waterfront strip provides magnificent views of the smaller islands in the Tongatapu Group, there's a thriving, friendly market, an enticing range of cuisines and quality dining options for a place this size, and you'll still find the odd chicken roaming the main street.

Nuku'alofa also has its issues to solve. Population migration from outer islands has caused the seams to burst on the outskirts of town; traffic clogs up the main street at peak hour and the market on bustling Saturday mornings. Blaring 'gangsta' rap and complex handshakes show the influence of American culture (especially on young people). But for the traveller, Nuku'alofa's few sights can be covered on foot and once the town has been explored, beautiful coral islands are just a pleasant boat ride across the bay.

## History

Nuku'alofa began as a fortress for the western district of Tongatapu. Attacks on this fort appear to have been an annual jolly for Ha'apai raiders, who faithfully returned over at least an 11-year period. Will Mariner (see p236) recounted the sacking of the fort of 'Niocalofa' in 1807 by Finau, the chief of Ha'apai. Finau and his men fired on the fort with cannons from the *Port-au-Prince* (the British privateer that had brought Mariner to Tonga and was subsequently destroyed), and then burnt it to the ground.

Following the destruction of the fort, the priests advised Finau that it would be necessary to reconstruct the fort in order to appease the gods, so the fortress was rebuilt and provided the Ha'apai warriors the opportunity to embark on their annual holiday of destruction the following year! However, Tarki, a rival chief, set fire to the fortress shortly afterwards, leaving Finau unable to stop it. Finau later learned that Tarki had destroyed the building just to irritate him.

## Orientation MAPS

The Tonga Visitors Bureau (p187) hands out simple hand-drawn maps of Tonga's major islands and island groups. For information on sea charts, see p280.

## Information

**Foto-Fix** (☎ 23466; Taufā'ahau Rd) Stocks Fuji film, batteries and digital media cards, has digital photo-printing machines, processes film (not slides); takes passport photos and burns CDs (T\$16).

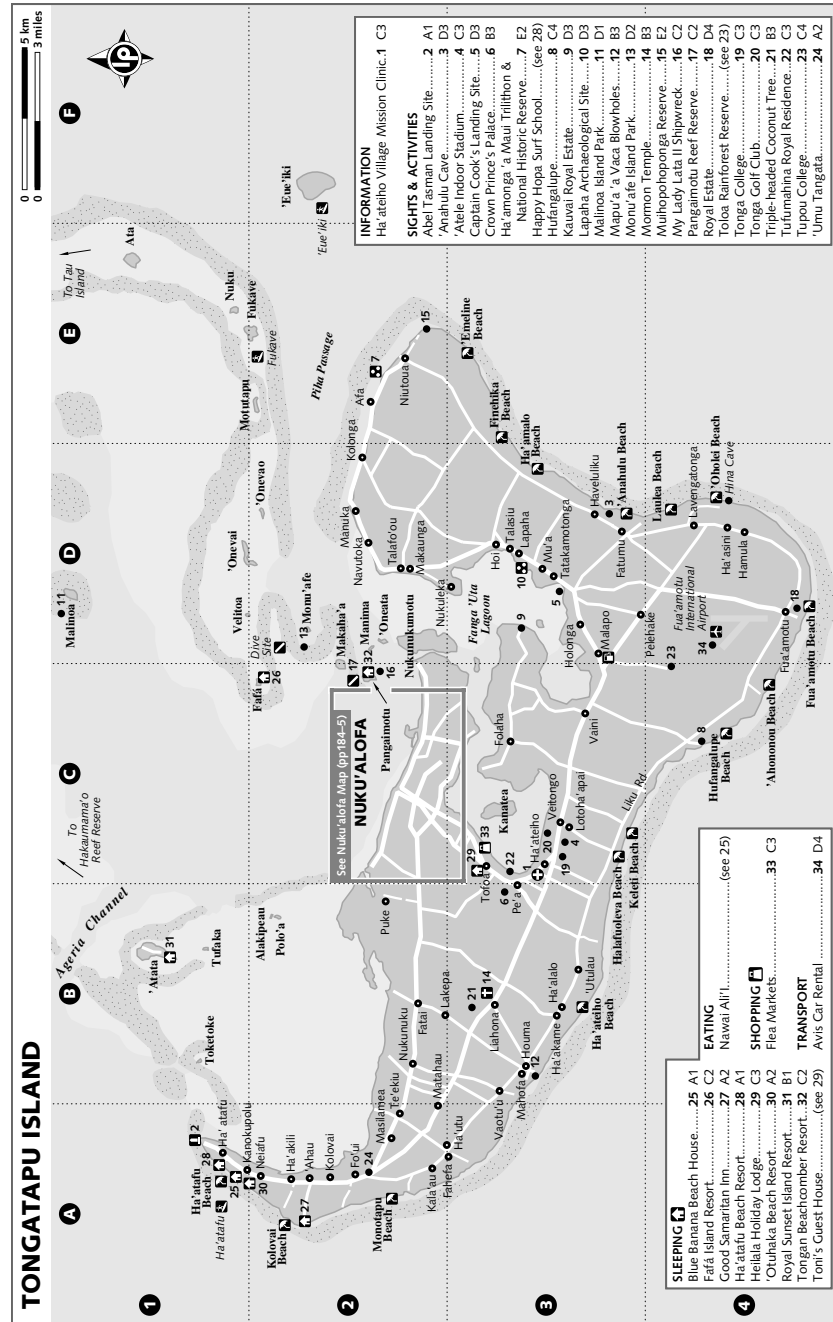
**Fung Shing Fast Photo** (☎ 24787; Railway Rd) Sells batteries, Kodak and Fuji film, disposable cameras, and offers one-hour print processing. Also takes passport photos.

**Tonga Meteorological Service** (☎ 35123, satellite phone 00872 7629 41139; fax 311994; www.mca.gov.to/met/) Contact this service for tide times, marine and general weather forecasts, and satellite imagery of the region.

## BOOKSHOPS

Most guesthouses have shelves of preloved paperbacks from which guests can borrow or exchange books.

**Friendly Islands Bookshop** (☎ 23787; Taufā'ahau Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon, Tue & Fri, 8.45am-5pm Wed,



**INFORMATION**  
 Ha'ateho Village Mission Clinic...1 C3  
 Abel Tasman Landing Site...2 A1  
 Ananulu Cave...3 D3  
 Apple Cider...4 D3  
 Captain Prince's Landing Site...5 D3  
 Captain Prince's Palace...6 B3  
 Ha'amonga 'a Maui Trilithon &...6 B3  
 National Historic Reserve...7 E2  
 Happy Hopa Surf School...7 E2  
 Hufangalupu...8 C4  
 Kavaui Royal Estate...10 D3  
 Lapaha Archaeological Site...10 D3  
 Malinoa Island Park...11 D1  
 Mapu 'a Vaca Blowholes...12 B3  
 Monu 'a Island Park...13 D2  
 Mormon Temple...14 B3  
 Muhothoponga Reserve...15 E2  
 My Lady Lata II Shipwreck...16 C2  
 Pangaimotu Reef Reserve...17 C2  
 Royal Estate...18 D4  
 Toloa Rainforest Reserve...18 D4  
 Tonga College...19 C3  
 Triple-headed Coconut Tree...21 B3  
 Tutumahiina Royal Residence...22 C3  
 Tupou College...23 C4  
 'Umu Tangata...24 A2

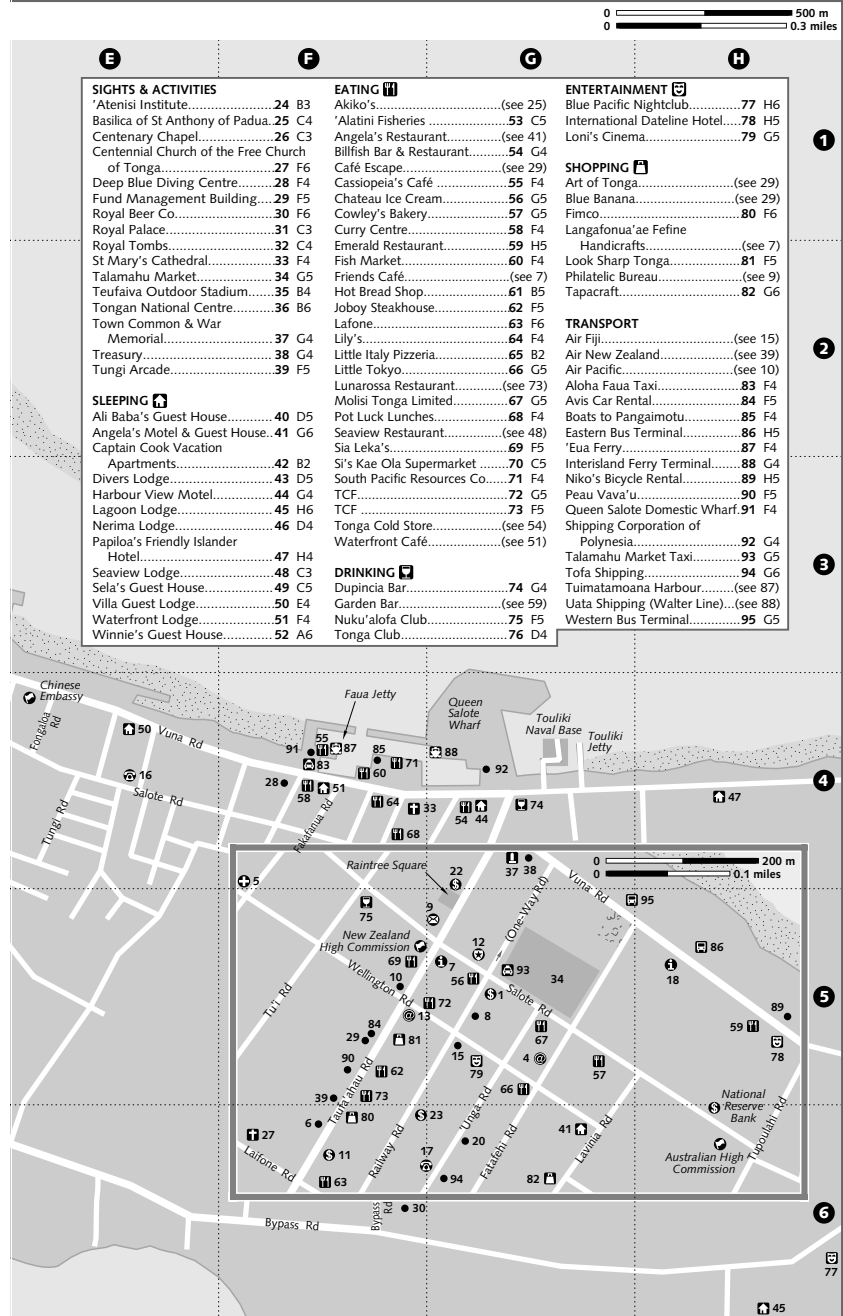
**SLEEPING**  
 Blue Banana Beach House...25 A1  
 Fatā Island Resort...26 C2  
 Good Samaritan Inn...27 A2  
 Ha'atafu Beach Resort...28 A1  
 Heleia Holiday Lodge...29 C3  
 'Otuhaka Beach Resort...30 A2  
 Royal Sunset Island Resort...31 B1  
 Tongan Beachcomber Resort...32 C2  
 Toni's Guest House...32 E2  
 (see 29)

**EATING**  
 Nawai Alii...33 C3  
 (see 25)

**SHOPPING**  
 Flea Markets...33 C3

**TRANSPORT**  
 Avis Car Rental...34 D4

**NUKU'ALOFA**



8.30am-12.30pm Sat) The only bookshop of any consequence in Tonga, with the best range of island-related titles anywhere, travel titles, novels, magazines and newspapers.

## EMERGENCY

**Fire** (☎ 999)

**Hospital** (☎ 933, 23200)

**National emergency number** (☎ 911)

**Police** (☎ 922; cnr Railway & Salote Rds) Drivers licences are available from the OIC Traffic Office (open from 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday) situated within the Police Office. Enter on Railway Rd.

## INTERNET ACCESS

**DataLine Internet Cafe** (☎ 27773; Royco Bldg, Fatafehi Rd; per hr T\$2; ☎ 8.30am-11pm Mon-Sat) Plenty of terminals, and blank CDs/DVDs available for T\$1.30/5.

**Friends Tourist Centre** (☎ 26323; friends@tonfon.to; Taufa'ahau Rd; per 15min T\$2; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-7.30pm Sat) Printing per page \$1.

**Game Stop** (Tungi Arcade, Taufa'ahau Rd; per 12min/hr T\$1/5; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat) In the arcade behind Friendly Islands Bookshop.

**Relax Café** (☎ 24444; cnr Taufa'ahau & Wellington Rds; per 20min/hr T\$1/2; ☎ 9am-2am Mon-Fri, 9am-late Sat) Blank CDs T\$1.50, CD burning T\$2.

## LAUNDRY

Virtually every hotel and guesthouse makes some arrangement for its guests' laundry needs.

**Savoy Dry Cleaner** (☎ 23314; Fatafehi Rd) Nuku'alofa's only commercial laundry will wash and dry your laundry for T\$2.50 per kg. It's a good idea to hand over a list of your clothes with your washing.

## MEDIA

Tongatapu has two TV stations: a religious channel and TV Tonga, airing BBC News 24 at 8pm, weekdays. Sky Pacific TV satellite beams in 12 pay-to-view channels; Shoreline is a cable network with five channels including BBC World, children's programming, movies, sport and ABC (Australia).

Radio Tonga (90FM) and A3Z (1017AM) broadcast a mix of traditional Tongan and international rock music and worldwide news. Radio Nuku'alofa (88.6FM) is not bad, and Radio Australia's 103FM broadcasts Radio National programs 24 hours a day.

## MEDICAL SERVICES

**Chinese Traditional Medicine Centre** (☎ 25178; Vaiola Rd) Just west of Vaiola Hospital. Chinese medicine and acupuncture treatments are available.

## Friendly Island Medical Clinic & International Pharmacy

(☎ 22736; after office hr 27021; jacks@kalianet.to; Wellington Rd; ☎ 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Dr 'Ana 'Akau'ola charges T\$20 for consultations; book for home visits while the clinic is open. There's a pharmacy and vaccinations are available by appointment.

**German Dental Clinic** (☎ 26797; Vuna Rd, Sopu; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 3.30-8pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-2pm Fri) Dental treatment available by appointment.

**Ha'ateiho Village Mission Clinic** (☎ 29052; off Taufa'ahau Rd, Ha'ateiho; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm Mon & Fri) In a village 5km south of Nuku'alofa. Appointments are essential.

**Vaiola Hospital** (☎ 23200; Vaiola Rd) Recommended only for emergencies as no appointments are accepted. The dispensary is open 8.30am to 11pm weekdays and there's an on-site dentist. It's about 2km south of Nuku'alofa; take the Vaiola bus from the eastern bus terminal on Vuna Rd.

**Village Mission Pharmacy** (☎ 27522; 'Unga Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat; medical clinic 2.30-5pm Tue, Thu & Fri) A medical clinic operates from this pharmacy, which is well stocked with sun screen, insect repellent, contact-lens solution, baby formula, oral rehydration salts, earplugs and the like. Fa's Beauty Spa offers waxing and beauty treatments here.

## MONEY

Currency-exchange counters are open at Fua'amotu International Airport for all international flights. See p281 for further information about changing and transferring money.

**ANZ** (☎ 24944; www.anz.com/tonga; cnr Salote & Railway Rds; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Thu, 9am-5pm Fri) ATM inside bank. There is another ATM situated outside the Fund Management Building on Taufa'ahau Rd.

**MBF** (☎ 24600; Taufa'ahau Rd; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Near Hotel Nuku'alofa.

**Western Union** (☎ 24345; Fund Management Bldg, Taufa'ahau Rd; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat) International money transfers. Often has the shortest queues for currency exchange.

**Westpac Bank of Tonga** (☎ 23933; Taufa'ahau Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) Two branches on Taufa'ahau Rd, with ATMs. The handiest is near the general post office, and also has a MoneyGram office.

## POST

**DHL** (☎ 23617; Wellington Rd) Worldwide distributor of packages and documents, situated next to Loni's Cinema.

**FedEx** (☎ 28628; Fund Management Bldg, Taufa'ahau Rd) Packages and documents sent via airmail worldwide. Head to the back of the car park.

**GPO** (☎ 21700; cnr Taufa'ahau & Salote Rds; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-4pm Mon-Fri) Poste restante (addressed

to: Poste Restante, GPO, Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga) is collected from the window just outside the main entrance. Letters are filed alphabetically by surname or yacht name but you may need to check under Christian names to locate items. Ask specifically for any larger parcels you might be expecting. International post is cleared at 2pm on Monday and Friday. You'll also find the Philatelic Bureau here (p197).

## TELEPHONE & FAX

Phonecards can be bought at Friends Tourist Centre on Taufa'ahau Rd, which has a blue TCC phone out the front (there are more outside the post office). Local calls are easily made from the place at which you are staying, though they may cost a little more than those from a public phone.

**TCC Shop** (☎ 080 0222; Tungi Arcade, Taufa'ahau Rd) Handy shop for mobile-phone and mobile-account needs.

**Tonga Communications Corporation** (TCC; ☎ 26700; www.tcc.to; Salote Rd; ☎ 24hr) Offers international telephone and fax services. There's another office on 'Unga Rd.

## TOILETS

Your best bet is to make use of café and restaurant toilet facilities when dining. Friends Tourist Centre has facilities for Internet users while the pool-side Splash Bar at the International Dateline Hotel also has facilities (including for nonguests who use the pool).

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**Friends Tourist Centre** (☎ 26323; friends@tonfon.to; Taufa'ahau Rd; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-7.30pm Sat) This switched-on tour-booking office can tell you what you want to know about what's happening, and when, around the island.

**Tonga Visitors Bureau** (TVB; ☎ 25334; fax 23507; www.tongaholiday.com; Vuna Rd; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat & public holidays) TVB produces and stocks leaflets (which you can also pick up around town) on culture, language and historical sights. Inside the locally designed building are a couple of interesting display boards on marine ecology, while you can browse the board outside for lists of church services and 'island nights'. Staff can book accommodation for you if you can't manage it yourself, and will follow up on emailed queries.

## TRAVEL AGENCIES

The following agencies make bookings for local tours in addition to selling international flights:

**Jetsave** (☎ 23052; www.taufonua.com; Fund Management Bldg, Taufa'ahau Rd) Books day tours and domestic package holidays to all island groups.

**Jones Travel & Tours** (☎ 23422/3; jonestr@kalianet.to; cnr Taufa'ahau & Wellington Rds)

**Teta Tours** (☎ 23690; fax 23238; tetatour@kalianet.to; cnr Wellington & Railway Rds)

## Dangers & Annoyances

As well as avoiding cranky dogs, you might want to steer clear of the boozed-up scuffles that tend to occur regularly in the waterfront car parks outside bars on Vuna Rd.

## Sights

### ROYAL PALACE

Amid sprawling lawns, behind a perimeter of Norfolk Island pines and barbed wire-topped cyclone mesh, sits the waterfront **Royal Palace**. The weathered, white Victorian timber, with its red corrugated-iron roof, has become a symbol of Tonga to the world. It was prefabricated in New Zealand in 1867. An upstairs veranda and the Royal Chapel, behind the palace, were built in 1882. The coronations of King George II, Queen Salote and King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV took place in the chapel in 1893, 1918 and 1967, respectively, and Sunday services were held there until the chapel was damaged in a hurricane. The coronation chair in the chapel is partially constructed from the wood of the *koka* tree from Lifuka (Ha'apai), under which King George I was invested with the title Tu'i Kanokupolu. The small octagonal gazebo in the gardens is called the Palesi and was used as a rest house for visiting chiefs.

The palace grounds are closed to visitors but you can get a good view of the palace from the waterfront on the west side.

The **Mala'e Pangai** area of the waterfront, beside the Royal Palace, is a public ground used for royal *kava* ceremonies, feasts, and football and cricket matches.

### ROYAL TOMBS

The **Mala'ekula**, the spacious parklike area opposite the basilica, which serves as the royal tomb, was named after the Katoanga Kula festival, held here in the days of King George Tupou I (the *mala'e* part of the name refers to a sacred area). Since 1893 the graves of all the Tongan sovereigns as well as those of their husbands, wives and other close relatives, have been situated here. The large green is off limits to the public, though peering through the crested perimeter gates allows a fairly good view.

### 'ATENISI INSTITUTE

The **'Atenisi Institute** (☎ 24819; PO Box 90 or 200, Nuku'alofa) is a unique institution that operates without subsidy from either church or state and therefore without obligation to further the views of either. Classes in Tongan language and culture are taught, as well as philosophy, sciences and other disciplines. The institute was founded in 1967 by an extraordinary individual, 'I Futa Helu, to operate under a classic Western format in the tradition of the University of Oxford. He writes in the university syllabus:

...concern with the classical tradition means the keeping of a traditional core of studies. This is the academic equivalent of the English attitude that a university which does not teach philosophy as a discipline is a 'Mickey Mouse' university...all South Sea island communities have created beautiful cultures, but it must be pointed out that in all these cultures criticism as an institution is discouraged, and criticism is the very heart of education.

'Atenisi's graduation ceremony in November features dancing, entertainment, royal gifting and feasting, and a unique tradition called 'presentation of the *vala*' (traditional tunic); during this ceremony, the villages of 'Atenisi graduates present the university with gifts of elaborate mats and immense pieces of *tapa* (mulberry bark cloth). Visitors are welcome. Those spending some time in Tonga may want to check out the classes.

*Polynesian Paradox*, edited by Ian Campbell and Eve Coxon, is an insightful collection of essays in honour of 'I Futa Helu, written by distinguished scholars in commemoration of his 70th year.

### TALAMAHU MARKET

A trip to Tongatapu would not be complete without immersing yourself in two-storey **Talamahu** (Salote Rd; ☎ early morning-4.30pm), the country's biggest market. Downstairs you'll find mostly root-crop produce in handmade woven-front baskets, branches of bananas, colourful pyramids of weighed-out food stuffs, a few food stands, and second-hand clothing stalls surrounding the periphery.

The raw materials for Tonga's handicrafts are sold here, such as pandanus strips, white (unpainted) *tapa* (mulberry bark cloth) and *tapa* hammers, while excellent Tongan arts and crafts – including *tapa*, pandanus mats and weavings – are found on both floors. Upstairs, small stalls sell Polynesian-style wood carvings (from around T\$20), wood-carved fishing lures, and jewellery and pendants carved from black oyster shell and ox bone (some in New Zealand Maori designs). You'll spot stylised fish hooks, infinity symbols, flowers, mermaids and geckos.

### CHURCHES

Royal watchers and rubberneckers of all denominations head to the 1952 **Centenary Chapel** (Wellington Rd), behind Mt Zion, to catch a glimpse of members of the royal family at a Sunday service and to hear the magnificent, booming singing of the congregation. The

hymns may sound familiar – British hymns are sung in Tongan to the accompaniment of a brass band. Constructed mostly by volunteer labour, the chapel accommodates over 2000 people.

Nuku'alofa's most distinctive structure is the 1980 **Basilica of St Anthony of Padua** (nr Taufa'ahau & Laifone Rds), opposite the Royal Tombs. The conical roof, draped like a circus tent over large ceiling beams, is quite something, especially during evening services when light pours through the stained glass. The sweeping staircase draws you into the beautiful interior, which features a handcrafted altar, lectern, baptistry, pews and tables, beam joints covered with *sennit* (coconut-husk string) mats, and Stations of the Cross made of coconut wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl. At Station XI, a tiny gold coconut tree that belonged to Queen Salote Tupou III is fitted into the hair of Christ.

Rose gardens surround **St Mary's Cathedral** (Vuna Rd), Nuku'alofa's other Catholic church. It's an odd mix of old and new styling and worth a look for its beautiful vaulted ceiling, stained glass and giant *kava*-bowl altar.

The imposing stone structure to the north of the Royal Tombs is the **Centennial Church of the Free Church of Tonga**. Built in 1983, it looks much older than its years.

For tips on church etiquette and choosing your Sabbath venue, see the boxed text, p164.

### TONGAN NATIONAL CENTRE

It would be a major feat to spend any time in Tonga without having some kind of cultural experience, but a visit to the **Tongan National Centre** (☎ 23022; Taufa'ahau Rd, Vaiola; museum admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) is a good way to start. The museum contains historical artefacts – Lapita pottery, war clubs, headrests – and items still very much in use today, such as bark cloth and *kava* bowls.

Good-value **cultural tours** (adult/child T\$15/8; ☎ 2pm Mon-Fri) take you through the phases of *tapa* (p167), weaving and basketry, traditional dancing, and carving, for which Tongans enjoy a fine reputation throughout the Pacific.

Tongans are as renowned for their feasting as for their monarch's former girth (the King has famously shed 75kg). The **dinner show** (adult/child T\$25/13, show only T\$5; ☎ 7.30pm Tue & Thu) starts with a *kava* ceremony, features traditional dishes cooked in an *'umu* (underground oven), and has one of Tonga's best traditional dance and music shows. While the term **fashion show** (adult/child T\$20/12; ☎ 12.30-1.45pm) might seem an odd one for a show featuring traditional costumes, you can view them all over a traditional lunch with music and dance performances.

A ride in a local bus to the Tongan National Centre offers an experience of Nuku'alofa's contemporary culture, so take the Vaiola bus (50 *seniti*) from the eastern

bus terminal on Vuna Rd for 2km to the centre. A taxi from town will cost about T\$4. A shuttle bus (T\$1) to and from town is available for the dinner show.

### ROYAL BREWERY

The **Royal Beer Co** (☎ 25554; www.royalbeer.to; Small Industries Centre, Ma'ufanga; ☎ Mon-Sat), producer of Royal All Malt Premium Beer, Royal All Malt Draft Beer and the much-drunk Ikale, is quite small but tours can be arranged in advance.

### Activities

Nuku'alofa provides easy access to activities such as diving, surfing, fishing and whale-watching; for details see p180.

You can tee off on the green of the nine-hole **Tonga Golf Club** (Map p183; Main Rd, Vietong; green fees T\$8), opposite 'Atele Indoor Stadium. The not-so-challenging course is open to visitors, and clubs can sometimes be hired.

Yoga and massage are both available in Nuku'alofa – check notice boards at Molisi Tonga Limited supermarket (p195) and Friends Tourist Centre (p187) for locations.

Local kids catapult themselves off the town's wharves on hot afternoons. A **swimming pool** was being constructed on the east side of Touliki Jetty in 2006, while the International Dateline Hotel lets nonguests use its pool (T\$3) and the pool-side **Splash Bar** (☎ 23411; Vuna Rd).

### Walking Tour

See the map on p190. Once you've completed a lap of **Talamahu Market** (1; opposite) and

### IT'S SUNDAY IN NUKU'ALOFA

What to do, when nothing stirs on a Sunday and even mangy dogs have deserted the streets?

- Go to church – the magnificent singing lifts the soul and almost the roof. A favourite activity with visitors is to attend Centenary Chapel (opposite) to worship with the king and royal family, but there are rules of social etiquette to be followed (see p164).
- Take a round-the-island tour (p191) and explore Tongatapu's attractions: the Mapu'a 'a Vaca blowholes, the Ha'amonga 'a Maui trilithon, Mu'a's archaeological site and the beaches.
- Hire a bicycle (p198) and explore the island at your own pace.
- Visit your pick of the three offshore island resorts (p213) and enjoy the stunning white-sand beaches and good snorkelling, or join a boat trip to the more remote outer islands.
- Head for Ha'atafu Beach (p212).
- Lounge around the pool (above) at the International Dateline Hotel all day long for T\$3.
- Sleep and eat – that's what most of the locals will be doing.

checked out its wares, watch the deft work of a *niu* (green drinking coconut) seller slicing the top off a husked coconut with a machete. Dunk a straw in one and take it with you on your way for a tour of the town.

On the market's west side, cross over **Railway Rd (2)**, along which a railway used to transport copra to Vuna Wharf, where it was loaded onto steamers for export. Continue west along Salote Rd and cross Taufa'ahau Rd to the GPO, where you'll find the **Philatelic Bureau (3)**; p197) display of colourful first-day covers of stamps from Tonga and Nioafo'ou featuring historic moments, flora and fauna, and world monarchs.

Continue along Salote Rd, where towering Norfolk Island pines obscure the back

and sides of the **Royal Palace (4)**; p187). Turn right onto Vaha'akolo Rd and head for the waterfront for the best palace views.

Head northwest along the grassy waterfront of Vuna Rd for around 100m until you come to the manicured grounds of the **British High Commissioner's Office and Residence (5)**. This beautiful building is the epitome of Pacific colonial architecture. The four cannons surrounding the flagpole on the front lawn are from the British privateer *Port-au-Prince* (p182).

Double back to the palace. Just beyond it, on the slopes of **Mt Zion (6)**, is the Sia Ko Veiongo, the 'royal estate'. The fortress of Nuku'alofa, with its ludicrous history of attacks and conflagrations, once stood here. The site is now occupied by a radio tower and the grave of Captain Croker of the HMS *Favourite*, who was killed attacking the fortress on 24 June 1840.

Continue back along Salote Rd and take the first right turn into Tu'i Rd, passing neat homes and the massive, stone **Centennial Church of the Free Church of Tonga (7)**; p188) until you come to the end of Tu'i Rd. Here you can spy through the red metal fence with white crests into the **Royal Tombs (8)**; p187), but entry is forbidden. Turn left onto Laifone Rd, following it for 50m to the distinctive **Basilica of St Anthony of Padua (9)**; p188), perhaps stopping off for lunch at **Akiko's (p194)** in its basement.

Wander back towards the waterfront along Taufa'ahau Rd, checking out a few Tongan handicraft shops along the way (see p197). On the right-hand side, alongside Friend's Café, near the corner of Salote Rd, is the gingerbread-style **Langafonou Building (10)**, which houses Langafonua'ae Fefine Handicrafts (p197). It was originally built by a British expat for his five daughters who lived in New Zealand and spent winters in Tonga.

Across Salote Rd, you'll find the **Prime Minister's Office (11)**, containing numerous government offices said to be the source of much of the hot air blowing around Tonga. The tower was damaged in the 1977 earthquake but was rebuilt shortly afterwards. Opposite is a beautiful tree spanning Raintree Square.

The large lawn behind the **Treasury (12)** is the town common, which was the base for striking public servants during 2005. It has a small bandstand and the **Tongan War Memorial (13)**, which honours Tongans

who served in the two world wars. On the waterfront opposite the treasury are a few monuments looking the worse for lack of upkeep, including a line-up of big guns and a flagpole used on ceremonial occasions. The (nonfunctioning) dolphin fountain was presented by the British government to commemorate the HMS *Dolphin*, the first British warship to land in Tonga. The floating soft-drink bottles were not part of the original monument.

Crumbling **Vuna Wharf (14)**, at the end of Taufa'ahau Rd, is a popular launching pad for overheated students looking for a refreshing dip. Local boats load and unload here and fresh fish is sold in the afternoon.

From here you can head back to inspect the market handicrafts again – and duck into Chateau Ice Creamery (p194) for a 'royal' scoop on the way – or continue along the waterfront.

### Nuku'alofa for Children

There are no sights specifically for children but there are a few that they will particularly enjoy. The Tongan Cultural Centre offers engaging entertainment, and there are plenty of activities to wear out kids' limbs on outer-islands trips or on round-island tours, which allow them to climb, run, delve into caves and paddle in rock pools.

A park on Vuna Rd, opposite the waterfront, has playground equipment and plenty of grass. Some family accommodation has swimming pools; otherwise pay to use the pool at the International Dateline Hotel. A new outdoor pool was being constructed on the east side of the wharf in 2006.

Your accommodation may be able to arrange baby-sitting.

### Tours

Boat tours can often be arranged through the place at which you are staying. Also try any of the game-fishing operators (p181) for fishing trips.

### ISLAND TOURS

Tongatapu's main sights can be comfortably covered in a day tour of the island. Most tour operators require a minimum of four people per tour.

**Toni's Tours** (☎ 21049, 27068; tonigh@kalianet.to) Tongatapu's most popular full-day whole-island tours (T\$30) offer exceptional value and run daily (minimum

three people), including on Sunday. Toni usually winds up at Good Samaritan Inn (p212) for lunch – check first or bring your own, along with swimming gear, a torch and drinks. Other trips are negotiable.

**Friendly Island Experience** (☎ 29910; www.tongaexperience.com) These tours (six to seven hours, T\$45) cover the eastern half of the island and its archaeological sites, blowholes and flying foxes, and include fresh fruit. German and English are spoken.

**Jones Travel & Tours** (☎ 23422, 23423; jonestr@kalianet.to; cnr Taufa'ahau & Wellington Rds) The Whole Island Tour (T\$70) visits all major sites and has an optional lunch stop at Good Samaritan Inn (p212) on the west coast. The half-day Historic East Side and Scenic West Side tours cost T\$63 each.

**Teta Tours** (☎ 23690; fax 23238; tetatour@kalianet.to; cnr Wellington & Railway Rds) Half-island tours (T\$55) cover Nuku'alofa's major sights and a little of eastern or western Tongatapu. Whole-island tours (T\$70) include all of Tongatapu's major sights.

### Festivals & Events

Nuku'alofa's biggest festival is the week-long **Heilala Festival**, which culminates in the King's Birthday on 4 July. Celebrations include a street parade with decorated floats, workshops, fashion shows, a beauty pageant, all manner of music, arts and sports competitions, feasting and general merriment.

### Sleeping

If you're visiting Nuku'alofa during the Heilala Festival, be sure to book accommodation well in advance. All accommodation offers hot showers unless stated.

### BUDGET

Refer to the Midrange section for excellent budget options in midrange establishments, specifically groovy Ali Baba's Guesthouse, Heilala Holiday Lodge and Papiloa's Friendly Islander Hotel. There are camping sites in Nuku'alofa and camping is possible at the Good Samaritan Inn (p212), on the Ha'atafu Beach and on Pangaimotu (p213), offshore from Nuku'alofa.

**Toni's Guest House** (Map p183; ☎ /fax 21049, ☎ 27 068; www.geocities.com/tmatthais2000; Tofoa; r per person T\$10.75) Toni's is the ultrabudget favourite. It's renowned for regular all-inclusive *kava* sessions and the island's most popular tours (both peppered with the owner's dry English humour) as much as for its vivid green walls. The simple, laid-back place has basic, communal kitchen and bathroom facilities,

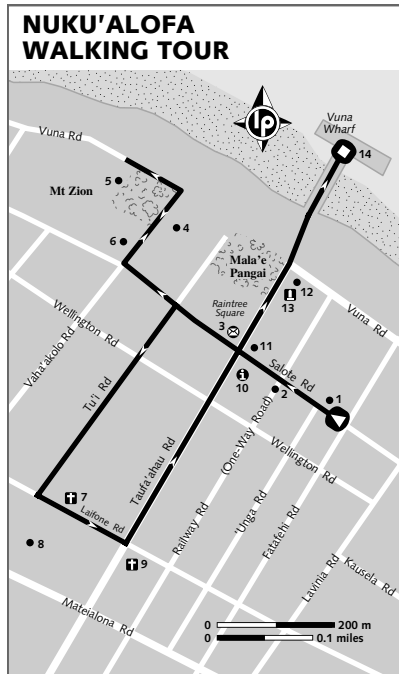
### WALK FACTS

**Start** Talamahu Market

**Finish** Vuna Wharf

**Distance** 1.8km

**Duration** Allow two hours, which gives time for browsing and grazing



and a small sitting area. The owners offer a shuttle service to and from town (which may incur a small fee); transfers to/from the airport cost T\$10/6.

**Sela's Guest House** (☎ 25040; mettonga@kalianet.to; off Fatafehi Rd; dm/s/d/tr with shared facilities T\$15/20/30/40, s/d with private bathroom T\$50/60; breakfast T\$8) In this lagoon-side place, stablelike rooms open off a central courtyard filled with tables. Guests have use of the kitchen and lavish cooked breakfasts with fruit are available. It's a 15-minute walk from town.

**Divers Lodge** (☎ 23379; fax 23576; www.deep-blue-diving.to; Funa Rd; s/d US\$29/40) The local dive outfit has three clean and simple rooms on the 1st floor of a light and airy building, with a pleasant garden outlook from the balcony. It's mainly for organised dive groups, but individuals are welcome. There's a well-equipped kitchen and shared facilities. It's close to the lagoon and a T\$3 taxi ride from Nuku'alofa town centre.

**Winnie's Guest House** (☎ 25215; winnies@kalianet.to; Vaha'akolo Rd; r per person incl breakfast T\$40; 📺) This cosy, spacious house with homely décor has five fan-cooled rooms, a well-equipped guests' kitchen and a lounge with board games, a large DVD collection and a massive TV. It's very friendly and popular with international medical students, so book in advance. It's about 2km from town but you can take the Vaiola bus (50 *seniti*) from the eastern bus terminal on Vuna Rd. Lunch/dinner costs T\$10/15.

**Angela's Motel & Guest House** (☎ 23930; fax 22149; cnr Wellington & Lavinia Rds; s/d with bathroom from T\$25/35) The rooms are clean, though a bit grim and stuffy in summer, but Angela's is very conveniently located.

#### MIDRANGE

Nuku'alofa's hotels proper are in a shabby state and therefore cannot be recommended for any kind of value, so we have not listed them here.

**Ali Baba's Guest House** (☎ /fax 25154; www.ali-babaguesthouse.com; off Tupoulahi Rd, Ngele'ia; s/d incl breakfast T\$40/60, d & f incl bathroom & breakfast from T\$80, extra person T\$10; 📺) Funky floors in chequered gold and blue or green decorate the rooms, each with its own colour scheme and theme. Choose from four-poster beds with red candy-striped or blue-floral covers; the master suite has a zebra-print couch and a gilt-trimmed en suite with bath.

The facilities are ultraclean and festive; a friendly ambience prevails from the communal lounge to the pretty gardens. Meals (dinner T\$15) here are plentiful and get rave reviews from guests. It's about a 15-minute walk from the GPO.

**Heilala Holiday Lodge** (Map p183; ☎ 29910; fax 29410; www.heilala-holiday-lodge.com; Tofoa; s/d T\$40/60, s/d fale with bathroom T\$60/80, s/d superior fale with bathroom T\$90/115, extra bed T\$25; 📺 📺) A path winds through lovingly tended tropical gardens with labelled local plants, connecting very cute, *fale* (traditional thatched house) in this unlikely suburban location 3km south of Nuku'alofa. The spacious 'superior' *fale* have refrigerators. Request a *fale* with a hammock strung between its balcony beams. Sparse budget rooms in the house are clean but lack adequate ventilation and share one small bathroom. The above-ground, shaded pool is a lovely spot for an afternoon chill-out. Rates include breakfast of toast and tropical trims, and kitchen facilities are available. Dinner is available from T\$17. Air-con is T\$25. Catch a bus to Nuku'alofa (50 *seniti*, every few minutes) from Taufua'ahau Rd, a five-minute walk away.

**Nukuma'anu Motel** (☎ 22186; fax 24217; fml@tonfon.to; Vuna Rd, Sopu; d T\$104; 📺) Readers have found these detached, solid Tongan *fale* amid palm trees and tropical blooms, opposite the waterfront, the perfect spot to retreat to. The airy, self-contained *fale* have queen-sized beds, cushioned cane furniture to sink into, solar hot water and plenty of comforts. Some of the capital's best restaurants are nearby and it's a short drive or good stroll from the GPO.

**Harbour View Motel** (☎ 25488; fax 25490; harbvmtl@kalianet.to; Vuna Rd; s/d T\$58/81, deluxe s/d/f with private bathroom T\$87/110/156, spa ste d/f T\$196/207; 📺 📺) Handily located near to Queen Salote Wharf, the Billfish and surrounding bars, this motel has comfortable beds and some of the best-pressure showers in Tonga. The tidy rooms have fans, telephones and tea/coffee facilities; deluxe rooms also offer air-conditioning, a fridge, TV and video. The continental breakfast (T\$8) is ample.

**Papiloo's Friendly Islander Hotel** (☎ 23810; fax 24199; papiloo@tongatapu.to; Vuna Rd; dm T\$20, d unit/fale with bathroom T\$60/95, self-contained bungalow T\$110; 📺 📺) Like an uncle who found his look a couple of decades back – and stuck with it – this place is showing its age.

The multipastel-coloured *fale*, with chintzy bed covers, are pleasantly spread throughout the gardens, the lounge/bar is verging on retro. Budget accommodation is in drab units. A good spot for families, there's kids' play equipment (over concrete) next to the swimming pool. Continental/cooked breakfast costs T\$7.50/12.

**Nerima Lodge** (☎ 25533; fax 25577; naoko@maca.to; 'Amaile Rd, off Fatafehi Rd; s/d/tr incl breakfast T\$43/68/96; dinner by arrangement) There are no frills or blooms around the cyclone-fenced gardens, but the rooms (upstairs) in this large and secure lodge are comfortable enough, with duvet-covered futons and fans. You get a choice of cooked egg-and-bacon or Japanese breakfasts, and authentic Japanese banquets can be arranged with advance booking.

#### TOP END

Establishments in this category have some of Nuku'alofa's best restaurants attached to them; see right. While all of these options are on the waterfront, there is no real beach here.

**Villa Guest Lodge** (☎ /fax 24998; www.tongavilla.com; Vuna Rd; s/d/tr with bathroom & breakfast T\$125/145/180; 📺) For fans of an elegant and breezy, unfussed colonial style. Centrally located and nearby good restaurants (you can also eat in), this is one of the most attractive places to stay in Nuku'alofa. There's a huge lounge with cable TV and a broad balcony facing the waterfront – perfect for polishing off a novel or two.

**Seaview Lodge** (☎ 23709; fax 26906; seaview@kalianet.to; Vuna Rd; standard/garden/sea-view d with bathroom T\$145/175/185; 📺) Large balconied rooms are decorated with local crafts and offer phone, TV/video, refrigerator and tea and coffee facilities, as well as great showers. The lodge sits in immaculate gardens behind rave-worthy Seaview restaurant and is 10 minutes' walk west of the GPO. A reliable favourite.

**Waterfront Lodge** (☎ 25260; fax 24977; waterfro@kalianet.to; Vuna Rd; garden/sea-view d incl breakfast T\$175/185, extra bed T\$41; 📺) The Waterfront's boutique-style elegance flows through its eight spacious rooms featuring Gauguin prints on antique-white walls, marine-blue bed covers and furniture in teak and cane. Luxurious trimmings include bathrobes, quality shampoos and complimentary toothbrushes, international direct dial (IDD) telephones and satellite TV. French

doors open onto the broad balcony with deck chairs; there are harbour views from 'sea-view' rooms. Children under 12 are not catered for. Airport transfers cost T\$20.

**Black Pearl Suites** (☎ 28393; fax 28432; thepearl@kalianet.to; Vuna Rd, Sopu; ste T\$180, executive ste T\$345; 📺) Friendly staff have their fingers on the pulse regarding guest comfort in this luxurious, quiet waterfront spot on the outskirts of town. The ski chalet-like interior is not necessarily what you'd expect of a Pacific destination – nor, perhaps, are the four-poster or sleigh beds with Versailles-style covers in burgundy and emerald. Each room has a balcony, TV/DVD and telephone, while executive suites have azure tiled spa baths and fully equipped kitchens (with dishwashers). Baby-sitting can be arranged. Its restaurant, the Pearl Inn (p195), serves the best food in Nuku'alofa.

#### RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

Houses and flats for rent are listed at the Tonga Visitors Bureau and on the bulletin boards at Moliši Tonga Limited supermarket and Friends Tourist Centre. Prices for a furnished apartment/house start at around T\$400/500 per month; elegance will set you back upwards of T\$850 per month.

**Marketonga** (☎ 75623; www.marketonga.com; Taufua'ahau Rd) This place deals in furnished rental properties.

**Captain Cook Vacation Apartments** (☎ /fax 25600; info@captaincook.to; Vuna Rd, PO Box 1959, Nuku'alofa; d apt T\$144, over 5 nights T\$133, extra person T\$29; 📺) West of the Royal Palace, these six self-contained, two-bed apartments with waterfront balconies have comfortable, if slightly grandma-esque, interiors. Two children under 12 stay free of charge. Long-term discounts are available.

**Lagoon Lodge** (☎ 26515; fax 24069; lagoon.lodge@kalianet.to; PO Box 51, 'Umusi; 1-2-bed apt from T\$170/195) Balconied, lagoon-side apartments with bright, white-tiled interiors are well decked out to suit daily living needs (particularly for those on longer stays). It's clean and tidy, with International Subscriber Dialling (ISD) telephone and laundry facilities on-site. You'll need to take a taxi or hire a car.

#### Eating

Nuku'alofa has surprising diversity and quality of food for a town centre its size. The decent spread of cafés and restaurants



are stretched mostly along waterfront Vuna Rd and on, or nearby, Taufa'ahau Rd. Other options include resort restaurants around Tongatapu and its offshore islands, as well as island-style buffets or feasts (p196), where you can sample traditional Tongan cuisine.

### CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

**Aliko's** (☎ 25339; Taufa'ahau Rd; snacks & meals T\$1.80-6.60; ☎ 11am-3pm Mon-Fri) Duck under the basilica for excellent-value Chinese and curry dishes, mixed Tongan plates, 'ota ika (a Tongan raw fish dish) and mixed sandwiches in a clean and cool environment. The fruit juices and smoothies are excellent.

**Friends Café** (☎ 22390; Taufa'ahau Rd; breakfast T\$4.50-13, mains T\$9.50-20; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat) With a breezy charm and dependably good food, Friends Café, at the centre of town, is deservedly popular. There's a dedicated breakfast menu, popular thick-cut *panini*, and a daily menu that may feature seafood chowder with garlic toast or lamb shanks in herbed tomato over *kumala* mash. Or choose the ever-popular stacked burgers or chunks of battered game fish, both served with chips and a crisp salad garnish. The impressive line-up of cakes and slices will give you a choice dilemma and there's dependably good Royal Coffee.

**Café Escape** (☎ 21212; Taufa'ahau Rd; breakfast T\$3.50-16, mains T\$8-16; ☎ 7.30am-9.30pm Mon-Thu, to 10.30pm Fri, to 4pm Sat) Slick little Café Escape could be anywhere but provides a refined, air-con oasis and infuses the tropics into its mixed menu of ample and tasty dishes. Choose from all-day breakfasts, including coconut bread (T\$4) and baked egg with salmon, spinach and cream cheese (T\$9); toasted sandwiches, *panini* and pies; Asian-style main dishes and sweet-tooth tempters. There are plenty of recent magazines to help you zone out, Internet access (T\$2 for 15 minutes), good service and great coffee.

**Cassiopeia's Café** (☎ 11699; Queen Salote Domestic Wharf; takeaway T\$1.20-7.50; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Negotiate the 'witches hats' at Tonga's only drive-thru, or order Tongan takeaway (hamburgers or meal plates) from the window near the outdoor seating.

**Chateau Ice Cream** (cnr Salote & Railway Rds; cones T\$1.50-4; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Sat) Creamy, delicious ice creams come in plain or 'royal' flavours, with the option of a waffle cone. Opposite Talamahu Market.

You'll find a few small stands selling drinking coconuts, peanuts, hot dogs (T\$1.50) and seasonal snacks along Vuna Rd. Eating *bain-marie* chicken dishes in a tropical climate could be considered an extreme sport, but if you're game you can pick up a local chicken or *sipi* (mutton) curry at **Sia Leka's** (Taufa'ahau Rd; dishes T\$4-6), or try **Lafone** (☎ 24744; Laifone Rd; curries T\$3.50; ☎ 24hr Mon-Sat), opposite the Basilica, or **Curry Centre** (curry T\$3.50-4; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat), opposite Queen Salote Domestic Wharf.

### RESTAURANTS

#### Budget

**Pot Luck Lunches** (☎ 25091; off Salote Rd; lunch T\$4-6; ☎ noon-1.30pm Mon-Fri, 6-9.30pm 2nd Mon of month during school terms) Become a guinea pig of the best kind, indulging in fine food and good service at the training restaurant of 'Ahopanilolo Technical College, behind St Mary's Cathedral. You take 'pot luck' on the one set meal prepared! BYO alcohol.

**Lily's** (☎ 24226; Vuna Rd; mains T\$6.50-15.50; ☎ 10am-2pm Mon-Sat, 6-10pm daily) Opposite the wharf, Lily's has a stark and kitschy interior but clean food on its 101-item menu.

**Angela's Restaurant** (☎ 23930; cnr Wellington & Lavinia Rds; mains T\$5.50-18; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, 8.30am-2pm Sun; ☎) Here you'll find yum cha breakfast and lunch on Sunday.

**Emerald Restaurant** (☎ 24619; Vuna Rd; mains T\$5-18; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-10.30pm) Mish-mash of (slightly grotty) Tongan and Chinese décor may make you feel a bit iffy, but the locals (including the adventurous local-airline pilots) assure that the generously proportioned dishes are reliably good.

#### Midrange

**Billfish Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 24084; Vuna Rd; lunch & dinner T\$10-32; ☎ meals Mon-Sat) These are the closest you'll get to pub-style meals – and they're great. Beautifully presented and generous, the tasty meals include burgers, a mountainous chicken stir-fry, ultrafresh fish served as Thai fish curry or fish and chips, New Zealand steaks and garlic prawns. This is also a good place for a drink; see p196.

**Joboy Steakhouse** (☎ 27920; Taufa'ahau Rd; mains T\$10-30; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) Popular with locals and visitors alike, Joboy's is named after rugby-playing son and sibling Joe Naufahu and this rugby-mad family tune into every international game on the big screen. Feast on seafood, top your prime

(New Zealand) beef with a choice of sauces or tuck into an all-homemade Joboy burger. Ikaile beer flows on tap.

**Little Tokyo** (☎ 22474; Wellington Rd; mains T\$7-17; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) This authentic Japanese *izakaya* (drinking restaurant) is consistently good and a local favourite. Wash down your sushi, sashimi or *don* (meat/fish on rice) dishes with some sake. Takeaway is also available.

**Little Italy Pizzeria** (☎ 25053; Vuna Rd; pizza & pasta T\$14-20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The Alps meet the Pacific in this Tongafied trattoria. Hit-and-miss pizzas feature smoked salmon or blue cheese and cream, and occasional oddities such as mushrooms in gravy or baked beans. Fish and steak dishes and homemade Italian desserts plump up the menu. The play equipment in the garden makes it a good family spot. Takeaway is available.

#### Top End

**Lunarossa Restaurant** (☎ 26324; Taufa'ahau Rd; mains T\$18-36; ☎ from 7pm Mon-Sat; ☎) Sophisticates enjoy the intimate fine dining here, and the authentic Italian cuisine, with the added attraction of ultrafresh seafood. Italian staples are joined on the menu by dishes such as ravioli with lobster mornay or fresh salmon and tarragon sauce, and lobster Catalan (olive oil,

garlic and chilli), which follow a cleansing, complimentary soup. The service is excellent and there's a good wine selection.

**Seaview Restaurant** (☎ 23709; Vuna Rd; starters T\$12-23, mains T\$31-43; ☎ dinner) With simple style and excellent service, and overlooking the waterfront just west of the Royal Palace, Seaview has long been on the lips of seafood-loving locals and expats. Order your lobster in the following permutations: natural, 'Seaview', *Thermidor*, Provençale, Polynesian or saffron, or try noncrustaceans such as red snapper and fillet steak. Bookings are recommended.

**Waterfront Café** (☎ 21004; Vuna Rd; breakfast T\$11-18, snacks T\$16, mains T\$20-40; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Opposite the waterfront, this relaxed wood and emerald green-trimmed place verges on the sophisticated; its glass louvre windows open onto the gardens and catch the breeze. Dine on reasonable dishes of pasta with truffle sauce, fish parcels, scotch-fillet steak, lobster and seafood among monochrome sailing prints and colourful Gauguin copies.

### SELF-CATERING

**Talamahu Market** (Salote Rd; ☎ early morning-4.30pm) Here's the deal: fruit and vegetables are sold by the pyramid (around T\$2 to T\$3), or woven-front basket (for root crops and coconuts) with prices generally marked. You may be able to negotiate a smaller portion.

**Cowley's Bakery** (Bread Bin; ☎ 26019; Salote Rd; baked goods 30 seniti-T\$2; ☎ 6am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-midnight Sun) This Sunday-afternoon social Mecca does a brisk trade in meat pies, sausage rolls, pull-apart savoury breads, muffins, doughnuts, lurid pineapple-iced cupcakes, half-metre Swiss rolls and birthday cakes, in addition to its breads.

**Hot Bread Shop** (☎ 21440; Taufa'ahau Rd; baked goods 30 seniti-T\$2; ☎ 6am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Here you can pick up grainy bread to get over the bleached-white blues; be tempted by choc-iced doughnuts, fruit pancakes, cakes and meat pies. It's 1km south of town.

Nuku'alofa has a number of supermarkets, that include the competitively priced branches of the **Tonga Cooperative Federation** (TCF; cnr Wellington & Taufa'ahau Rds; Taufa'ahau Rd) and the well-stocked **Molisi Tonga Limited** (Salote Rd), opposite Talamahu Market, which sells wine. **Si's Kae Ola Supermarket** (Taufa'ahau Rd) is by far the best-stocked supermarket, with a

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Pearl Inn** (☎ 28393; thepearl@kalianet.to; Vuna Rd, Sopo; entrée salads T\$16-21, mains T\$25-40, desserts T\$10-12; ☎ dinner Mon-Sun; ☎) This is where the foodies head for a fine-dining splurge (judged as 'five star by New Zealand standards' by an avid fan). Though the name may be reminiscent of a pirate's lair, the dining room resembles a ski chalet. Meals are cooked right in view. Prime rib, scotch- and eye-fillet steaks (sourced from Australia and New Zealand, along with the wines) are smothered in blue-cheese or avocado sauce, and accompanied by roast potatoes and fresh, lightly marinated vegetables. The best seafood, from 'Uiha in Ha'apai, includes huge grilled lobsters with mornay, avocado or whiskey sauce. Sunday's prime-rib-roast night is a regular favourite (bookings essential). Any room for a dessert of hot bananas in cinnamon coconut sauce?

butcher and Eftpos facilities. You can find packaged meats, mince, beer and spirits at **Tonga Cold Store** (☎ 24084; Vuna Rd; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat), next to Billfish Bar.

The fish market on Tuimatamoana Harbour starts when boats come in around 5am from Monday to Saturday. It's an interesting sight to see baskets of cockles, fresh and dried clams and dried octopus even if you're not buying. **South Pacific Resources Co** (☎ 26296; Tuimatamoana Harbour; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat), nearby, sells local fish and big game. Good-quality fish can also be bought at **'Alatini Fisheries** (☎ 24759; Small Industries Centre, Taufa'ahau Rd), along with imported meats, wine and gourmet goods, 2km southeast of central Nuku'alofa.

## Drinking

Enquire locally about recommended *kava* circles (note that you'll need an invitation to join). Ordinarily a male-only affair, both men and women are welcome around the *kava* bowl at Toni's Guest House (p191).

**Billfish Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 24084; Vuna Rd; ☎ 9am-2am Mon-Thu, 9am-4am Fri, 5pm-12am Sat) Easily the most popular bar in town, this relaxed open-air place draped in flags and fishing trophies has a gravel floor and a great vibe. Ikale and Steinlager are on tap and there are plenty of other imported drinks in which to indulge, as well as good pub food (p194). Live music of varying quality is played for the dance floor on Wednesday and Friday night and karaoke is also popular.

**Waterfront Café** (☎ 21004; Vuna Rd) Sip on sun-downers of champagne cocktails, margaritas and daiquiris, banana colada or a cool beer and sink into the Raffles-esque rattan chairs at this colonial-style bar/restaurant (see p195). It's one of the most popular waterfront bars and a good place for socialising.

**Dupincia Bar** (☎ 23598; Vuna Rd; ☎ 6pm-late Mon-Sat) Another waterfront nightspot, playing predominantly Tongan and Samoan love songs.

**Tonga Club** (☎ 22710; Tupoulahi Rd) For a cheap beer, head to this dingy, historic pub.

**Garden Bar** (☎ 22101; Vuna Rd) This lively place is behind the Emerald Restaurant.

**Nuku'alofa Club** (☎ 25160; cnr Salote & Tu'i Rds; ☎ 8am-close) Founded in 1914, this all-male, members-only relic is the oldest (and possibly last) club of its kind in the South Pacific. 'Old boys' (expats, Tongan nobles, yuppie politicians and businessmen) bond over bil-

liards and beers. Technically, you must be the guest of a member. Tally-ho.

## Entertainment

**TONGAN FEASTS & TRADITIONAL DANCE Feast** – it's a cultural experience! At these showcases of traditional Tongan music and dance, including *kava* ceremonies and the accompanying island-style buffets, you'll often see just as many locals out for a good time as tourists. Bring along plenty of T\$1 notes to stick onto the oiled skin of the dancers to show your appreciation – that's what the Tongans will be doing. The following cost T\$25 (children generally half-price): **Tongan National Centre** (☎ 23022; Taufa'ahau Rd, Vaiola; ☎ 7.30pm Tue & Thu) Indoor buffet and show featuring some of Tongatapu's best dancers.

**International Dateline Hotel** (☎ 23411; www.datelinehotel.com; Vuna Rd) Wednesday-night buffet and show from 7.30pm (show up around 8.30pm to drink at the bar and watch the show).

**Good Samaritan Inn** (Map p183; ☎ 41022; Kolovai; T\$25, with Nuku'alofa transfer T\$30) Buffet and show at 7.30pm on Friday, outdoors by the beach. Also has entertainment on Sunday with a barbecue and live music.

**Kahana Lagoon Resort** (☎ 24165; Bypass Rd) Polynesian floorshow and buffet at 8pm on Friday.

## NIGHTCLUBS

Friday night is the big night for going out in Tonga but the pubs and clubs, mainly along Vuna Rd, swell with revellers from Thursday to Saturday. (On Saturday night, the partying is stifled at midnight to avoid revelry on Sunday.) Bars (left) in Nuku'alofa have dance floors and weekly live music. You'll need to be reasonably well dressed to get in; thongs (flip-flops) may be frowned on.

**Blue Pacific Nightclub** (☎ 25994; Bypass Rd; Fri/Sat T\$6/3; ☎ 10pm-4am Tue-Fri, to midnight Sat) When other bars call for last drinks, night owls and those who 'just want to dance' head 3km southeast of central Nuku'alofa to Tonga's only real nightclub. It is packed on Friday night with people dancing, or swaying, to a mix of hip-hop, rap and reggae. It's quite likely someone else will commandeer your drink and that women – even those accompanied by husbands or male friends – will feel put upon to dance with local men.

## CINEMA

**Loni's Cinema** (☎ 23617; Wellington Rd; admission T\$5; ☎ Thu-Sat, from midnight Sun) Nuku'alofa's only

cinema is a very basic affair screening recent Hollywood staples.

**'Atenisi Institute** (☎ 24819; www.atenisi.edu.to) Call or check notice boards around town for details on the International Film Society's open-air film screenings here. Beer, wine and popcorn are available.

## SPORT

Tonga's favourite sport, rugby, is played at Teufaiva Outdoor Stadium off Taufa'ahau Rd, southwest of the city centre, from March to August. Games are played on Wednesday and back-to-back all day Saturday. Entry fees vary depending on which teams are playing; contact **Tonga Rugby Union** (☎ 26045) for match details and tickets.

Cricket (March to July) and football (soccer; March to November) are played at Mala'e Pangai, the lawn beside the Royal Palace, and at **Tonga College** (Map p183; Main Rd, Vietongo). There is rarely a charge.

**'Atele Indoor Stadium** (Main Rd, Vietongo) is the venue for tennis, as well as volleyball, badminton, table tennis, basketball, netball and boxing.

## Shopping

While you won't find anything approaching high-end fashion (what a relief!), numerous variety shops along Taufa'ahau Rd sell sarongs and Polynesian-print clothing and fabrics.

Tongan arts, crafts and carvings are sold on both floors of the Talamahu Market (p188) and in various shops in town. Blow off the road dust in some Taufa'ahau Rd shops, and you'll find a vast range of Tongan handicrafts at very reasonable prices.

**Art of Tonga** (☎ 27667; Taufa'ahau Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1.30pm Sat) Master carvings in wood, bone and shell make up the centre-piece here. While you may find a better bargain searching through masses of carvings, jewellery and the like elsewhere, the refined collection of quality, well-displayed Tongan arts and crafts makes it easier to picture how they will look back home.

**Langafonua'ae Fefine Handicrafts** (☎ 21014; Taufa'ahau Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) Founded by Queen Salote in 1953 to promote women's development and a continued interest in indigenous arts.

**Friendly Islands Marketing Co-operative** (Fimco; ☎ 23155; Taufa'ahau Rd; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-

noon Sat) This is worth a browse. The Fimco fishing store, behind the craft shop, sells fishing gear.

**Philatelic Bureau** (☎ 21700; cnr Taufa'ahau & Salote Rds; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-4pm Mon-Fri) The displays of the beautiful coloured stamps of Tonga and Niuafo'ou (marking various moments in history) are interesting just to look at and also make good souvenirs.

**Tapacraft** (☎ 26760; Lavinia Rd; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sat) Worth perusing here are the detailed and purportedly original engravings from Captain Cook's three voyages, printed in England in 1777 and 1800.

**Blue Banana** (☎ 22662; Fund Management Bldg, Taufa'ahau Rd) Blue Banana prints bright, resort-style T-shirts and handmade sarongs with logos such as 'Kava-Cola'.

**Look Sharp Tonga** (☎ 26056; Taufa'ahau Rd) Sells souvenir T-shirts that are printed on quality cotton and feature plenty of hibiscus and Tongan *tapa* designs alongside obscure slogans. The signature range is dyed with *kava*. If you can't find your preferred style and design in a colour to suit, see if you can have one printed on-site.

**Flea markets** (Taufa'ahau & Vuna Rds; ☎ Sat morning) Join the locals and riffle through the piles and racks at the flea market stalls to find bargains and something different from the traveller's wardrobe – second-hand clothes, presofoened Hawaiian shirts or a nice hot-pink latex animal-print miniskirt, perhaps? Among these items you'll find shoes, drinking coconuts and some old weavings and mats. Arrive early for the best selection.

**Jones Travel & Tours** (☎ 23422/3; cnr Taufa'ahau & Wellington Rds) Sells sports equipment, possibly including some snorkelling gear, though don't count on it.

## Getting There & Away

See p290 for details of international flights, p294 for information on cargo-ship and yacht travel options to Tonga, and p285 for information on flights between Tongatapu and other parts of Tonga.

## AIR

Fua'amotu International Airport is near the village of Fua'amotu, a 30-minute drive from Nuku'alofa. **Airlines Tonga Air Fiji** (Airlines Tonga; ☎ 23690; fax 23238; www.airlinestonga.com; Teta Tours cnr Railway & Wellington Sts) services 'Eua, Ha'apai, Vava'u and the Niuas from the domestic

terminal. **Peau Vava'u** (☎ 28326; Pacific Royal Hotel, Taufa'ahau Rd) services Ha'apai and Vava'u, also from the domestic terminal. Transfers between the terminals cost T\$2.

Airline offices in Nuku'alofa connecting Tongatapu with other Pacific destinations include the following:

**Air Fiji** (☎ 23690; fax 23238; tetatour@kalianet.to; cnr Wellington & Railway Rds) Contact Teta Tours.

**Air New Zealand** (☎ 23192; fax 23447; www.airnz.com.nz; Tungi Arcade, Taufa'ahau Rd)

**Air Pacific** (☎ 23422/3; jonestr@kalianet.to; cnr Taufa'ahau & Wellington Rds) Contact Jones Travel & Tours.

**Pacific Blue** (www.virginblue.com.au)

**Polynesian Airlines** (☎ 24566; fax 24225; www.polynesianairlines.com; cnr Salote & Fatafehi Rds)

## BOAT

The MV *'Olovaha*, and the MV *Pulupaki* connect Tongatapu with Ha'apai and Vava'u; the former also services the Niuas. Other vessels provide frequent services between Tongatapu and 'Eua. See p286 for details of schedules and fares.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Taxis meet all incoming domestic and international flights. The standard fare for up to four passengers between the airport and Nuku'alofa is T\$20 to T\$25. Many hotels and guesthouses offer airport transport for guests if you let them know in advance.

**Teta Tours** (☎ 23690; tetatour@kalianet.to; cnr Wellington & Railway Rds) offers a shuttle bus service between Nuku'alofa and the airport (T\$12 per person). It's **Toni's Tours** (☎ 21049; tonigh@kalianet.to) that provides the cheapest shuttle, charging T\$10/6 to/from the airport, while **Friendly Island Experience** (☎ 29910; www.tongaexperience.com) offers transfers to/from the airport for T\$8/9.50 per person.

## BICYCLE

Tongatapu is flat and perfect for cycling. The island's major sites can be visited in three or four days, though Nuku'alofa's traffic is not exactly 'bike friendly' so take care. A couple of guesthouses hire bikes to guests.

**Niko's Bicycle Rental** (Vuna Rd; half-/full-day bicycle hire T\$5/8; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat) is run from a trailer roughly opposite the International Dateline Hotel. Test out a few. A special rate (and tool kit) can be negotiated for long-term rentals.

## BOAT

The three offshore island resorts (p213) all provide boat transport and scheduled ferries connect Tongatapu to 'Eua (p286).

You can charter with **Sea-Taxi** (☎ 22795, 15723; http://kalianet.to/seataxi) for fishing, whale-watching and island trips around Tongatapu and as far afield as Tofua in Ha'apai.

## BUS

Vuna Rd has two bus terminals. Buses to outlying areas of Tongatapu depart from the western terminal (close to Vuna Wharf), while buses to Nuku'alofa leave from the eastern terminal (opposite the TVB). One-way fares range from 50 *seniti* to T\$1.

Bus services start around 6am, with the last departing about 4.30pm. There's no bus service on Sunday. Don't set off anywhere after noon unless you're planning to stay the night or are willing to take your chances hitching back.

In urban areas, bus stops are marked with a small sign reading *'Pasi'*. Elsewhere, flag down a bus by waving your outstretched arm. Passengers normally pay as they get off.

## CAR & MINIBUS

Some hotels and guesthouses hire out vehicles to guests. Car and minibus rental companies include unlimited kilometres in rates and some offer special rates for weekends or long-term rental. Most companies offer seven days' rental for the price of six. Companies in Nuku'alofa include the following: **Avis** Nuku'alofa (☎ 21179; Fund Management Bldg, Taufa'ahau Rd); **Airport** (☎ 35324) Cars from T\$80 per day, less for multiple days; T\$10 per day excess reduction. Chauffeurs can be arranged.

**Fab Rentals** (☎ 23077; fabsigns@kalianet.to; Salote Rd, Ma'ufanga) Automatic and manual cars and vans for T\$50 to T\$60 per day, including insurance. While there is no office as such, they do provide a door-to-door service.

**Jones Rental Vehicles** (☎ 23423; emjaut@kalianet.to; Taufa'ahau & Wellington Rds) Located at Jones Travel & Tours.

**Marketonga Rental Cars** (☎ 75623, 72623; www.marketonga.to; Taufa'ahau Rd, Havelu) Good cars for T\$75 per day.

**Sunshine Rental Cars** (☎ /fax 23848; srental@yahoo.co.nz; Lopaukamea, Nuku'alofa) Cars from T\$50.

## TAXI

Within Nuku'alofa, taxis charge a standard T\$3 fare; it's T\$5 to T\$6 to the outskirts

of town. Check current taxi fares with the TVB and be sure to negotiate a price before setting off. Taxis do not run on Sunday; guesthouses may be able to help you with transport. Taxis are a good way to see the island quickly – all-day taxi tours of Tongatapu, including the traditional 'tourist' sites, are T\$75 to T\$100 for up to four people.

Taxi companies are numerous, and include the following:

**Aloha Fuaa Taxi** (☎ 22505) On the waterfront near the wharf.

**Ngele'ia Taxi** (☎ 24112)

**Nuku'alofa Taxi** (☎ 22910)

**Talamahu Market Taxi** (☎ 22713)

**Wellington Taxi** (☎ 24744)

## AROUND THE ISLAND

Around Tongatapu's flat landscape are notable natural caves, blowholes, a natural limestone archway and impressive coral reefs, as well as some of the most extensive and well-excavated archaeological sites in the Pacific. Much of the island's interior is composed of agricultural land and rural villages, with a high church-to-home ratio.

The entire east coast, from the southern tip of the island right up to Niutoua, is fringed with lovely white-sand beaches; the west also has its share of white sandy beaches, as well as rock pools, spurting blowholes, sacred bats, a triple-headed mutant and the island's surf beach.

Sights are listed clockwise from Nuku'alofa around the island.

## Royal Estates

As you round the lagoon between Tofua and Pe'a, soon after leaving Nuku'alofa, you'll pass the Princess' **Tufumahina Royal Residence** (Map p183), with what appear to be white Bengal tigers guarding the entrance, and cannons pointed towards the Crown Prince's austere European-style hill-top **palace** opposite.

On the shore of picturesque Fanga 'Uta Lagoon, the **Kauvai Royal Estate** (Map p183) features lush vegetation, bizarre banyan trees and a secluded palace. It's reached via a long road through neatly ordered royal plantations and rows of coconut trees; the access road is open to the public during daytime. To get there without your own vehicle, take a bus to Vaini or Folaha, then walk 4km or 5km to the estate.

## THE TU'I & THE TORTOISE

While visiting Tongatapu on his third Pacific voyage in 1777, Captain James Cook befriended Fatafehi Paulaho, the 30th Tu'i Tonga. Cook was amazed at the reverence and ceremony that surrounded this person: 'I was quite charmed at the decorum...had nowhere seen the like...not even amongst more civilised nations'.

Out of respect and affection, Cook presented the Tu'i Tonga with a fully grown tortoise. Later receiving the noble title Tu'i Malila, the creature lived nearly another 200 years. At the time of its death in 1966, Tu'i Malila enjoyed a seat at the royal *kava* circle and the run of the palace gardens.

When the beloved tortoise died – no one knows at what age – its remains were sent to Auckland Museum to be studied and possibly preserved. It was determined that the noble tortoise was of a species originally found in the Seychelles, an island group in the Indian Ocean.

Tu'i Malila was so sorely missed at the palace that another tortoise was brought from Madagascar and named Tu'i Malila II.

## Captain Cook's Landing Site

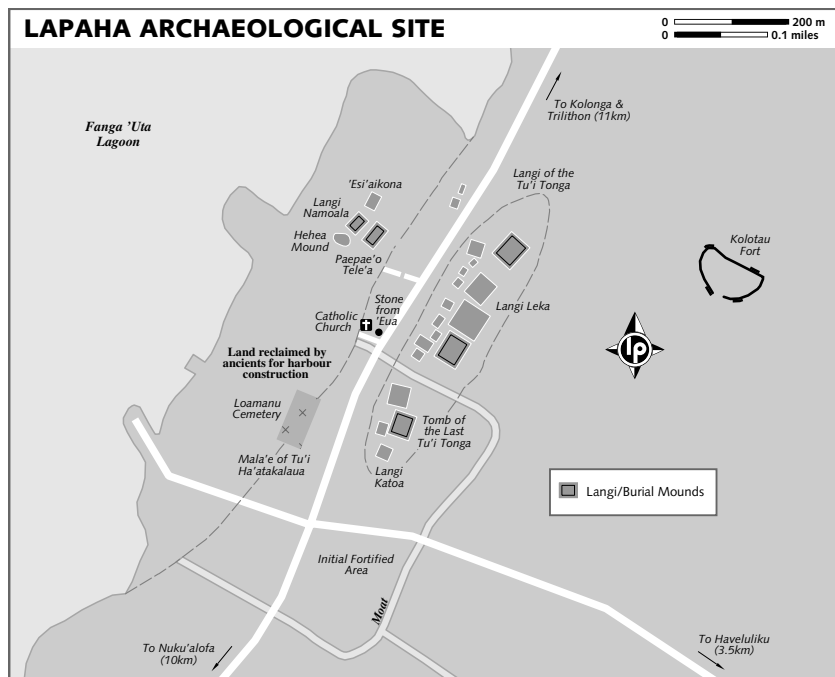
A **cairn** (Map p183) above a mangrove inlet near Holonga village marks the site where Captain Cook landed on Tongatapu on his final Pacific voyage in 1777. He took a nap under a banyan tree before moving on to Mu'a to visit his friend 'Pau', the reigning Tu'i Tonga.

## Mu'a & the Lapaha Archaeological Site

The Mu'a area contains the richest concentration of archaeological remnants in Tonga. Sometime around 1200, the 11th Tu'i Tonga, Tu'itatui, moved the royal capital from Heketa (near present-day Niutoua) to Lapaha (p200), now known as Mu'a.

The *langi* (pyramidal stone tombs), constructed in ancient Tonga were traditionally used for royal burials. Commoners were buried in simpler heaps of sand lined with volcanic stones, much as they are today. There are 28 royal stone tombs at Mu'a, 15 of which are monumental. Most of the others are little more than conical mounds of stone.

A **moat** once surrounded the *kolo* (royal capital), just outside the site and is still



visible near Mu'a's southern edge – look for a prominent ditch a few metres deep bisecting the road.

All guided island tours stop briefly at Mu'a's principal archaeological sites, Paepae'o Tele'a and Langi Namoala, but you could easily spend a whole day here exploring the impressive excavated **pyramid tombs** and the host of smaller pyramids scattered through the village and bush across the road in **Langi Leka**. To explore the area independent of a tour, take the Mu'a bus (80 *seniti* one way) from the eastern bus terminal on Vuna Rd in Nuku'alofa and head back to Nuku'alofa by about 3.30pm to avoid getting stuck.

#### PAEPAE 'O TELE'A

Tonga's most imposing ancient burial site is the Paepae 'o Tele'a (Platform of Tele'a, Map p200), a pyramidlike stone structure north of the moat. It was long thought to have housed the remains of Tele'a, or 'Ulukimata I, a Tu'i Tonga who reigned during the 16th century. But his body may not be inside the tomb at all, since legend has it that he was drowned and his body lost. Tra-

ditional burial sites were topped by a vault (*fonualoto*), which was dug into the sand on top of the platform and lined with stones in preparation for the body. This platform, however, has no such vault, which supports the theory that the Paepae 'o Tele'a is not a tomb at all but, in fact, a memorial.

With the exception of the vault, this structure contains the best and most massive examples of all the early Tongan burial-tomb construction styles. The corner stones of the bottom tier on the eastern side of the monument are L-shaped. The upper surfaces of all the stones are bevelled, their bases firmly embedded in the earth and stabilised by the use of stone protrusions jutting out under the surface.

These and all the Lapaha construction stones are quarried limestone from dead coral reefs probably on Tongatapu and nearby Motutapu and Pangaimotu. They were transported using cradles slung between two *kalia* (seafaring canoes). (Some maintain that the stones were carried from

(Continued on page 209)

(Continued from page 200)

the Ha'apai Group, or from Futuna or 'Uvea Island in the now-French territory of Wallis and Futuna, far to the northwest.) Oral history has handed down tales of the wooden rollers, *seniti* ropes and incredible leverage (and, of course, slave labour) required to move the enormous blocks – some weighing up to 12 tonnes – to the construction sites.

These days, the Paepae 'o Tele'a is suffering from age, weathering and other indignities, with houses almost at its base and pigs rooting on its mound, but the sheer bulk of it still conveys a sense of the mighty importance of the individual whose death prompted its construction.

#### LANGI NAMOALA

While the *fonualoto* is missing from the Paepae 'o Tele'a, the Langi Namoala tomb (Map p200), also at the Lapaha site, has a fine example of a *fonualoto* – but it's empty. Typical of such structures, it is covered with a stone slab and topped with *kilikili* (pumice-like volcanic gravel) that was collected from Kao and Tofua in the Ha'apai Group. *Kilikili* is still valuable as a decoration for graves.

If the Namoala tomb is indeed typical, a shelter of *tapa*, coconut fronds and fine mats to house the *matapule* (talking chief) would have rested on top of it. He would have lived on the *langi* and attended to the extensive funeral arrangements and ceremonies that followed a burial.

The Namoala *langi* is thought to have been the burial site of a female chief, but history supplies no further details. The stones used in this construction are much narrower than those in the adjacent pyramids. On the north side a stairway leads to the top.

To the north of the principal mounds rises the 'Esi'aikona, an elevated platform used as a rest area for the chief and his family. Near the Namoala tomb is the **Hehea Mound**, which was originally believed to be a rubbish tip created during the construction of the *langi*. Two *fonualoto* were revealed amid haphazardly placed earth and rock when it was cleared of vegetation. Unlike the other structures, the Hehea was built on landfill. It's not known who engineered this incredible reclamation project or when it was done.

The large *langi* that now bears a cross on its top, across the road from the others

in the modern cemetery, is the grave of **Lau-filitonga**, the last Tu'i Tonga, who was deposed by King George Tupou I in 1826.

#### CATHOLIC CHURCH

The large, weathered stone **Catholic Church** (Map p200) here looks like it was shipped directly from the UK. There's an impressive traditional Polynesian podium, a few statues and some lovely stained-glass work inside. Near the main road is a statue of a particularly Anglo-looking slayer of the particularly islander-looking *tevolo* (devil).

Beside the main road, outside the gate of the church, is a rather ordinary 50cm-high boulder. Tradition has it that this stone was hurled by the demigod Maui from the island of 'Eua at a noisy rooster that had been keeping him awake at night. Visitors to Tonga will be particularly sympathetic to his reaction to such a situation.

#### The Fishing Pigs of Talafo'ou

While Talafo'ou (Map p183), north of the Mu'a area, is not the only place you'll find smart pigs in Tonga, here their low-tide ventures out on the tidal flat for shellfish are impressive.

#### Ha'amonga 'a Maui Trilithon

The South Pacific's Stonehenge, the Ha'amonga 'a Maui ('Maui's Burden') **trilithon** (Map p183), is one of ancient Polynesia's most intriguing monuments. According to legend this trilithon was carried by Maui from distant 'Uvea on a carrying yoke, but archaeologists and oral history credit its construction to the 11th Tu'i Tonga, Tu'itatui, who reigned at the turn of the 13th century. It's preserved in a National Historic Reserve (which unfortunately doesn't protect the site from graffiti and rooting pigs) at the north-eastern end of Tongatapu, near Niutoua.

The structure consists of three large coral-line stones, each weighing about 40 tonnes, arranged into a trilithic gate. The two uprights are about 5m high and just over 4m wide at their bases. The lintel, which rests in notched grooves in the uprights, is nearly 6m long, 1.5m wide and just over 50cm thick.

There was a theory that either the uprights represented the Tu'i's two competing sons or were the entrance to a royal compound when Heketa was Tonga's royal capital. It is now widely accepted that the structure had

a similar function to Britain's Stonehenge: to determine the seasons. King 'Taufa'ahau Tupou IV theorised that an odd design on the lintel may have had something to do with determining seasons. He had the vegetation cleared in line with the arms of the double-V design between the trilithon and the sea, and on 21 June 1967 – the winter solstice – the sun was observed to rise and set in perfect alignment with the clearings. It was also noted that it rose and set in line with the other two arms on the longest day of the year.

For the ancient Tongans, the significance of the summer solstice probably related to the beginning of the *kahokaho* (yam) harvest, which was kicked off by the biggest annual festival held in ancient Tonga, the *Katoanga 'Inasi*. During this celebration, the year's finest yams were donated to the royal storehouses of the Tu'i Tonga.

A walking track winds north through the reserve, where fading interpretative signs make some sense of the remaining mounds of stones, which include 'Esi **Makafakinanga**, supposedly used by Tu'itatui as a back rest to shield his back from surprise attack while he directed the construction work. It seems that Tu'itatui was more than a little paranoid. His name means 'leader who hits the knees', suggesting that he wielded a large stick at knee level to ward off potential aggressors.

The track passes several *langi* (known as the **Langi Heketa**), then enters the forest and continues for several hundred metres along a fence line to the shore.

Good-quality handicrafts, made by local artisans, are sold at the trilithon site.

To get to the Ha'amonga 'a Maui trilithon, hop off the (infrequent) Niutoua bus 1km short of Niutoua (T\$1 one way); the driver can indicate the spot. Head out early and return in the early afternoon, or you may get stuck.

### Muihohoponga Reserve

The Muihohoponga Reserve (Map p183) was set up in an effort to protect several species of native trees and some of the natural bush land that once covered the entire island. It incorporates a 2km stretch of white-sand beach at the easternmost extreme of Tongatapu and can be reached by a 2km walking track leading southeast from Niutoua.

### 'Anahulu Cave & Haveluliku

Tonga's most famous cave, 'Anahulu Cave (Map p183), is looking overloved, its stalactites and stalagmites blackened from the soot of flaming frond torches and too much foot traffic. In the first cavern is a freshwater pool, a popular swimming spot. It's unknown how far the caves go, but deeper caverns are more magical. The cave still retains an otherworldly, even eerie, atmosphere, in which the constant dripping of water combines with the screeching echolocation of white-rumped *pekepekatae* (swiftlets), which build nests on the cave's ceiling. You might notice a slightly musty smell caused by their deposits.

Solid walking shoes (or reef sandals) and a torch (flashlight) are essential for visiting 'Anahulu Cave – there's plenty of rubbish, including cans and the occasional bit of broken glass on the path. For serious exploration you'll need an underwater torch.

Opposite the cave's entrance, a path leads down to a beautiful sandy cove via a small cemetery.

Buses run to tidy Haveluliku, or to at least Fatumu just to the southwest, once or twice a day. Take the dirt road that runs to the ocean between the main part of Haveluliku village and the cream-and-blue Episcopalian Church to the south. From the grassy parking area, a set of steps leads to the cave and gives access to the beach. If you're already exploring Mu'a, you could walk from there (around 3km).

### 'Oholei Beach

The coastline around lovely and often deserted 'Oholei Beach is riddled with limestone caves. At the waterfront, turn right and wander past the eerily deserted remnants of a beach-resort venture, featuring a sweeping rock staircase to nowhere. Keep going until you reach **Hina Cave**. Soft light (and tree roots) filter through the open roof here. On the left, as you walk in, look for the rock resembling a 'sleeping goddess'.

The cave is about 4km south of Haveluliku; take the turn-off that's just north of Lavengatonga.

### Fua'amotu Beach

Fua'amotu Beach is reached via the gates of the king's preferred **royal estate** (Map p183). A roller-coaster road dips towards a sandy

beach and rock pools, protected from the surge. Behind the beach is an elaborate cemetery of sand-mound graves, elaborately decorated with rings of brown and green beer bottles, clam shells, stag-horn coral and lurid plastic flowers, and topped with *kilikili*.

### Hufangalupe

On Tongatapu's south coast, plantations surround a large coralline limestone **archway** known as Hufangalupe (Pigeon's Gate; Map p183). The sea pounds through the opening and tears at the 30m walls of the bridge and adjacent pit. There's a good view into the pit from the bridge itself and it's possible to climb all the way down to the sea in the gully, but it's very steep and the coral rocks are razor sharp.

The sea churns at the base of the dramatic nearby cliffs, which make a good sea bird-watching spot. White-tailed tropical birds swoop past, trailing their long, graceful tail feathers, and lay their eggs on rocky ledges or even in the arch itself. You may also see sharks and turtles, and humpback whales between July and October, in the water below the cliffs.

It's a hard slog to get here by public transport. Catch a bus to Vaini, then follow the road opposite Vaini police station and walk south for almost 5km until you reach the coast. When you reach the cliffs you'll be on top of the bridge. Turn around and go back about 50m until you see a very faint track leading away to the east; follow it for a few metres and you'll soon see the archway.

### Keleti Beach & Halafuoleva Beach

A series of coves divided by rocky outcrops slope gently into clear pools on the southern coast (Map p183), providing excellent spots for a swim at high tide and for observing the variety of marine life trapped at low tide. Plastic refuse mars the entrance to the beaches, which are otherwise clean, lovely and low in traffic. The reef consists of a line of terraces and **blowholes** that shoot like Yellowstone geysers when the waves hit them at high tide. Be cautious if you are swimming here and don't get too close to the blowholes or you may be dragged under by a powerful vortex and cut to shreds.

From Nuku'alofa, you can cycle, catch a taxi (around T\$10), or take the Vaini or Mu'a bus to Veitongo village (T\$1) and

then walk south for just over 2km to Liku Rd; then from there continue south for about 1km until you find a rough vehicle track that leads down to the sea.

### Mapu'a 'a Vaca Blowholes

On an especially good day at Mapu'a 'a Vaca (Chief's Whistles; Map p183), hundreds of blowholes spurt at once. They are best viewed on a windy day with a strong swell, when the water, forced up through natural vents in the coralline limestone, can shoot up to 30m into the air. If the tide is too high, it will wash over the terraces containing the vents, 'extinguishing' the fountains. The blowholes stretch 5km along the southwest shore of Tongatapu, and are some of the most impressive in the South Pacific.

For an interesting sea-level view of the blowholes, turn westward just south of the church and school in Houma and follow the road to the shore. There's a wonderful snorkelling beach here at the right tide.

From Nuku'alofa catch the bus southwest to Houma (60 *seniti* one way) and then walk 1km south to the parking area above the blowholes. The *fale koloa* (grocery kiosk) at the turn-off on the main road sells delicious ice-cream cones.

### Liahona

Yes, you are still in the Pacific, though you may be wondering whether you somehow stumbled into Midwestern USA. Amid uniform lawns that rival any pro-am golf course, stands Tongatapu's **Mormon temple** (Map p183), crowned with a golden angel. Other buildings in the 'English-speaking only' compound include the large Mormon high school. (Beulah College, which is the Seventh-Day Adventist counterpart to Liahona, is near the village of Vaini.)

Immediately west of Liahona, on the north side of the road, is a fascinating mutant – a **triple-headed coconut tree!** (Map p183).

### Monotapu Beach

Beautiful Monotapu Beach (Map p183) nestles in a 1km-wide cove on the northwestern coast of Tongatapu. If you're marvelling that no savvy developers have nabbed this site, pay a few respects to Mother Nature – in 2003 Cyclone Eseta wreaked havoc on the western side of the island and destroyed the Princess Resort.

### Fo'ui to Kolovai

A legend surrounds the site where the north-coast, south-coast and central roads converge just south of Fo'ui – that of the 'Umū Tangata (Man Oven; Map p183). There's no oven to be seen today, but the story goes that long ago a cannibal chef was preparing a feast here when he became distracted by an invasion. He left the meal unattended for so long that a tree grew out of each person. It's believed that descendants of these original trees remain to this day.

Most of the flying foxes that lived in a sanctuary at Kolovai, just north of Fo'ui, have left, but a number of these large, noisy, fruit-eating bats still roost in the odd tree in the village, dangling from branches like oversized tea bags.

Flying foxes have wing spans of up to 1m and are found all over the South Pacific (hunted for the pot in most places). In Tonga they are considered *tapu* (taboo/sacred), and officially only members of the royal family are permitted to hunt them for sport. In practice, well...

Taxis from Nuku'alofa (20 minutes) cost T\$20, or take the Kolovai or Hihifo bus from the eastern bus terminal on Nuku'alofa's Vuna Rd (80 *seniti* one way).

### Ha'atafu Beach Reserve

On the sunset side of the island, just 3km up the coast from Kolovai, the Ha'atafu Beach Reserve encompasses Ha'atafu's clean, white beach and the surrounding reef. There's safe swimming and reasonable snorkelling at high tide in the broad lagoon, but when the tide is low most of the reef lies just below the surface. Strong currents, extensive coral beds and breaking surf make it dangerous beyond the barrier reef. Due to the reserve's position at the juncture of both reef and deep-sea habitats, more than 100 species of fish can be observed here. It's regarded as Tongatapu's best surfing spot, but the all-reef breaks are suitable only for experienced surfers.

The **Happy Hopa Surf School** (at Ha'atafu Beach Resort, right), runs one-on-one surfing lessons (A\$25 per hour) for beginners and reef novices.

### Christian Missionary & Abel Tasman Landing Sites

At Tongatapu's extreme northwest, a dirt road leads north of Ha'atafu village to the

Abel Tasman Landing Site monument (Map p183), where the Dutch explorer allegedly landed on 21 January 1643 (there's some controversy regarding the actual site). There's a fabulous **viewpoint** over fishing traps towards 'Atata and Hakaumama'o Reef. You'll pass the site where Christian missionaries first set foot on Tongatapu, and the site of Tonga's first Holy Communion.

### Sleeping & Eating

The Hihifo bus passes the entrances to all the accommodations listed here other than the Good Samaritan Inn; one-way fares from Nuku'alofa cost T\$1. A taxi costs T\$20 to T\$25.

**Good Samaritan Inn** (Map p183; ☎ 41022; fax 24102; fale with shared bathroom T\$23, s/d/fale with private bathroom & breakfast from T\$69/92/115, extra person T\$23, camping per person T\$10) Situated on Kolovai Beach amid a tropical assortment of crimson poinsettias, bougainvillea, palm trees and frangipani, you'll find a number of *fale* behind the ocean-view restaurant. Containing an islander-style mishmash of furniture and bright prints, the *fale* are clean and the mattresses firm. Each has a fan and small fridge. The family *fale* has million-*pa'anga* surf views from its balcony. Meals such as fish or teriyaki chicken and chips can be ordered throughout the week. Friday night's all-you-can-eat traditional Tongan meal, string band and rousing Tongan culture show (T\$25), and Sunday's 'umu (T\$15), are popular with locals and visitors alike. Sandwiches cost T\$6.50 to T\$7.50 and meals T\$12 to T\$14.50. The restaurant/bar is open 7am to 10pm. There's a small *fale koloa* nearby for supplies. The Inn is a good 2km walk (or hitch) from the bus stop on the main road. The resort runs airport/city transfers for T\$40/10 for house and buffet guests.

**Blue Banana Beach House** (Map p183; ☎ 41575; bluebanana@kalianet.to; d & tw per night/week T\$90/580, minimum 3 nights) If what you're looking for is a secluded, self-contained studio cabin nestled amongst trees on a beach you'll have all to yourself, you've found it. It's beautifully decorated in a beach-house style and has an outdoor shower. The toilet is a walk away at the main house. Surfers with their own gear will relish the position. You can dine at nearby Nawai Ali'i.

**Ha'atafu Beach Resort** (Map p183; ☎ 41088; fax 22970; www.surftongatonga.com; dm with half-board A\$58,

garden/beach-front fale per person with half-board A\$64/75, child 2-12 A\$40) Predominantly catering to all-inclusive surfing holidays, this family-run setup is as laid-back and peaceful as you'd expect. Paths of dark sand wind through foreshore growth, connecting comfortable thatched-roof bungalows to clean, shared facilities and the dining room (great reports on the meals, by the way!). Sandwiches cost A\$2.50 to A\$6. Good breaks are just a paddle across the lagoon, or Steve Burling (the Aussie surfer proprietor) can locate the best surf around by boat. Guests meet and mingle with local surfers here as it's the headquarters for the Tongan Surfriders' Association. Facilities including snorkelling gear and paddle skis are for guest use only.

**'Otuhaka Beach Resort** (Map p183; ☎ 41599; fax 24782; d fale T\$50, d bungalow with bathroom T\$85, ste T\$250-270) The open-sided Tongan *fale* restaurant embraces an enviable slice of the beach front. Breakfast and lunch cost T\$3.50 to T\$12, mains T\$15. It's very laid-back and rooms (with fans) are OK, but you wouldn't want to be stuck in one for consecutive rainy days. Choose a room with an updated bathroom – some are 'shower with thongs (flip-flops)' jobs.

**Nawai Ali'i** (Map p183; ☎ 41588; lunch & dinner T\$12-18) You'll get the best traditional food in Tonga from the semiretired chef here – the buffet particularly is a Tongan-style gourmet gorge fest. The accommodation here isn't be recommended, but check for any sprucing up as the location is beautiful.

## ISLANDS NORTH OF NUKU'ALOFA

You might almost hear a siren's call willing you across the water from Nuku'alofa's beach-front strip – particularly when yachts glide by under sail.

Four of Tonga's five marine reserves protect reefs immediately north of Tongatapu, including Hakaumama'o Reef Reserve, Monu'afe Island Park, the Pangaimotu Reef Reserve and the Malinoa Island Park, which features octopuses, gropers, damselfish and clown fish, amongst others, a nonfunctioning lighthouse, and the graves of six would-be assassins who attempted to kill Prime Minister Shirley Baker.

There are some great little dive sites in the shallows north of Tongatapu, while the reefs and shoals surrounding the maze of islands brim with all sorts of colourful marine life and coral.

Three island resorts lie within a boat ride north of Tongatapu, and a host of beautiful deserted islands await exploration.

### PANGAIMOTU

Nuku'alofa's closest island resort makes for a popular day trip for locals and tourists alike, particularly on a Sunday. The resort's restaurant/bar is a great place to chill before a circumnavigational adventure (allow 30 minutes – longer if you want to claim one of the swinging chairs suspended from a tree branch). There's good snorkelling in the marine reserve off the island's northwest shore and around the half-submerged wreck of *My Lady Lata II* (Map p183) near the landing site (note: serious spinal injuries have befallen people diving from its bow). Another excellent spot is Makaha'a Reef, between Pangaimotu and Makaha'a, whose large coral heads serve as a breeding ground for an explosion of colourful fish.

With a slight castaway or pirates-lair feel, **Tongan Beachcomber Resort** (Map p183; ☎ 15762, 17257; www.pangaimotu.to; tent site/hire T\$12/6, dm T\$29, s/d with bath first night T\$69/104, subsequent nights T\$58/92) is an excellent spot overlooking the water and Nuku'alofa. It serves a range of tasty meals (snacks T\$6 to T\$8.50, mains T\$11 to T\$20) and the five rustic *fale* offer island charm with gas-lamp lighting and net-enclosed beds (yet no mozzies). Showers are served cold at this low-key resort and there's a 10-berth dorm. Snorkelling gear and fins (T\$5 each) are available. No food or drink should be brought to the island.

From Monday to Saturday a boat leaves for Pangaimotu from Tuimatamoana Harbour in Nuku'alofa at 10am and 11am and returns from Pangaimotu at 4pm and 5pm. On Sunday the boat leaves Nuku'alofa at 10am, 11am, noon and 1pm and returns at 3pm, 4pm, 5pm and 6pm. Adult/child transfers cost T\$15/7.50 return and take 10 minutes each way.

### FAFÁ

From above, if you squint, Fafá Island (7km from Nuku'alofa) appears almost heart shaped, and Fafá Island Resort is its sole

development. A leisurely loop of the island takes 30 minutes, though you'll want to dawdle on the signposted bushwalk through its lush centre, home to ground-dwelling *veka* (banded rails), purple *kalae* (swamp hens), a flutter of butterflies and the captive-bred *koki* (red shining parrot).

It is a tough life at **Fafá Island Resort** (Map p183; ☎ 22800; fax 23592; www.fafa.to; d & tw superior fale US\$165, deluxe fale US\$220, extra person US\$44-55; half/full board US\$51/60) – you can snorkel in tropical waters, beachcomb on a magnificent beach, read a book in a hammock, take a deserted-island trip or get an all-over tan in your private courtyard...choices present such a dilemma! This is the most elegant of Tongatapu's northern island resorts and one of the best places to stay in Tonga. Spaced through palm groves, the traditional-style *fale* are perfect in their simplicity, with tall wood-shingle roofs and walls of woven palm leaves, wooden floors, white mosquito-net canopies strung over beds and private garden bathrooms with solar hot water.

The restaurant, perched behind the beach on the sunny side of the island, serves beautiful Eurasian-Tongan dishes featuring plenty of local seafood, and hosts a weekly culture show and feast.

Water toys such as kayaks and boats are available free to guests, as is snorkelling gear (T\$5.75 per day for day-trippers). On calm days snorkelling trips are run to Makaha'a Reef and Malinoa Island, and deserted-island picnics are also an option.

### CALLING SHARKS

'Eue'iki (Little 'Eua) is the place where *kava* was famously given to Tonga and is also legendary for a long tradition of shark calling, an art practised on a few South Pacific islands for centuries. On 'Eue'iki a handful of shark callers remain, men who can summon these fearsome fish up from the depths by reciting ancient chants while shaking a giant necklace of coconut shells over and under the water. Once the shark is drawn close to the boat a rope is looped over its head and it is killed with a war club.

The origins of, and scientific basis for, shark calling are not easily explained. In local folklore, shark calling stems from a centuries-old tragedy when a young girl fell from a canoe and disappeared. The girl turned into a shark named Hina, and islanders have been calling her back home since. To aid in this quest the shark caller takes on the role of Hina's mythical lover, Sinilau.

During the week of the Tongan king's birthday, Sinilau will kill all the sharks he calls up from the deep and present them to the king. Although the sharks are the embodiment of the girl lost at sea, it doesn't matter that they are killed. Hina is reborn over and over again. In 1965, according to locals, 40 sharks were called and killed for the king.

'Eue'iki lies northeast of Tongatapu, just outside the barrier reef sheltering Tongatapu's lagoon.

Nuku'alofo's dive operators (p180) will pick up divers here.

Day trips to Fafá (30 minutes; T\$57.50) depart Fava Jetty, Nuku'alofo, at 11am and return at 4.30pm daily. Lunch is included, though readers have suggested it is not the best day-trip option.

One-way transfers from the airport and Nuku'alofo cost US\$21 and US\$10 respectively. Guests have access to complimentary twice-daily trips to Nuku'alofo.

### 'ATATA

'Atata has some spectacular beaches, and a small fishing village at its northern end, which can be visited on an organised tour. At 10km from the mainland, it's the most remote of the three island resorts.

At **Royal Sunset Island Resort** (☎/fax 21254; www.royalsunset.to; PO Box 668, Nuku'alofo; s/d bungalow east side T\$115/160, west side T\$167/210, superior d T\$250; half/full board T\$75/86; 🍷) you can choose from the island's west-side (sheltered) beachfront bungalows with sunset views and the run-down east-side bungalows, which catch a few breezes. Bungalows feature hot-water bathrooms, ceiling fans, a fridge and tea- and coffee-making facilities. The resort's Polynesian-style restaurant/bar is an incredible structure supported by immense wooden beams. Snorkelling, diving (p180), kite-surfing and fishing are all possible from the resort. Standards have slipped a little at this once bright star and recent guests have been disappointed by tired facilities.

Sunday day-trips to 'Atata including lunch and boat transfers (45 minutes) cost T\$57.50. The boat departs from Tuimata-moana Harbour, Nuku'alofo, at 10am and returns at 4pm. Return boat transfers for guests cost T\$34, or T\$70 from the airport.

## 'EUA

area 87 sq km / pop 4934

You won't find many beaches to swim at that don't present the prospect of being cut to ribbons, but rugged 'Eua is a slice of paradise of its own, with a growing awareness of itself as an ecotourism destination.

It's no wonder travellers are inking it into their itinerary as an alternative to a simple sand-and-sea holiday. Adventures include hiking through the diverse plantation forest or rugged tropical rainforest, spotting soaring birds from sheer limestone cliffs, sating the thrill-seeker in you by delving into caves and massive sinkholes and climbing the Big 'Ovava, spotting whales and dolphins from the shore with an *Ikale* in hand, and seeing the light streaming in on a cathedral dive. It's all just a stone's throw southeast of Tongatapu (well, legend has it that Maui flung a stone from 'Eua to Tongatapu to quieten a rowdy rooster, but short of a demigod catapulting you, you'll probably have to catch the ferry).

### History

When Abel Tasman, the first European to land on 'Eua, arrived in 1643 and named the island Middelburgh, little did he know that the demigod Maui had beaten him here and had stood on 'Eua to fish the islands of Tongatapu, Vava'u and Ha'apai out of the sea. In October 1773, Captain James Cook also stopped by, followed by several deserters from the US ship *Otter* who came ashore in 1796 and became the first 'European' residents of the Tongan islands.

In September 1946, the island of Niufo'ou (in the Niuas) erupted for the 10th time in 100 years. Although no-one was killed, the Tongan government's concern about the potential danger saw the islanders evacuated and eventually resettled on 'Eua. The villages of central 'Eua are all named after the home villages of their inhabitants on far-away Niufo'ou. Many people have now re-

turned to Niufo'ou, but a good proportion of 'Eua's population remains composed of evacuees and their descendants, amid 'Eua's original inhabitants and the descendants of those evacuated from 'Ata to protect them from slave traders (p222).

### Climate

The combination of 'Eua's geography and a prevailing easterly trade wind means that despite 'Eua's close proximity to Tongatapu (you can see it clearly from Tongatapu's southeast shore), while the main island swelters in humid summer heat, 'Eua is perfectly pleasant, and even chilly in winter. 'Eua is long north-to-south and thin east-to-west, with a high volcanic ridge stretching north-to-south along the entire east side of the island. The ridge rises 312m above sea level at its highest point. The easterly wind hits the cliffs rising up out of the ocean on the east side, then the ridge, and is cooled as it's blown upwards. The cooled air then blows down from the ridge, across to the west side of the island and the villages.

### Orientation

The western third of the island is a low coastal plain that merges into an area of forested hills, with north-south ridges forming the spine. The island's eastern edge consists of one- and two-tier cliffs up to 120m high. A road extends the length of 'Eua's western side, joining the villages in which most of the population lives. The island's services, including Nafanua Wharf (for the ferry) and a couple of supermarkets, are in 'Ohoenua.

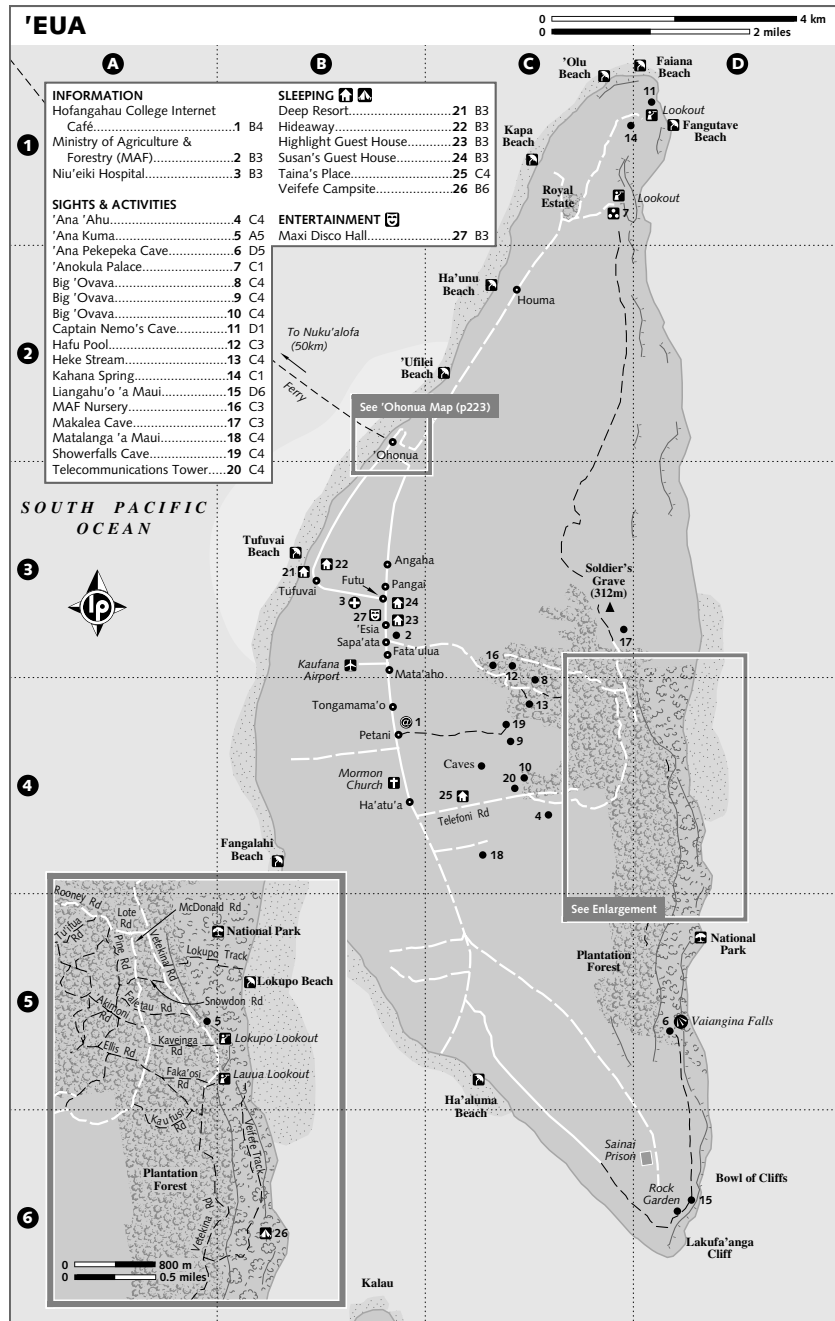
Basic maps of 'Eua are available from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) office in Sapa'ata. If you can't rouse anyone here, the Hideaway (p223) usually has a good supply. You'll probably find the map in this book more detailed, but it's handy to mark up your intended trail on it before setting out.

### Information

**Niu'eiki Hospital** (Map p216; Main Rd, Pangai) Very basic facilities.

**Hofangahau College Internet Café** (Map p216; Petania; access per hr T\$6; ☎ 6-9pm) CD burning, colour printing and Skype are also available. Enter the college and follow the signs upstairs.

**Westpac Bank of Tonga** (Map p223; ☎ 50145; 'Ohoenua; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-3.30pm Mon-Fri)



Changes all major currencies (travellers cheques or cash), offers cash advances on credit cards and handles Money-Gram cash transfers.

**Friendly Islands Bookshop** (Map p216; ☎ 50167; 'Ohonua; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat) The limited book selection includes a few paperbacks, titles on Tonga and fairly recent gossip magazines (ask at the counter). Camera film and maps of 'Eua are sometimes available depending on stock.

**Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)** (Map p216; ☎ 50116; Sapa'ata; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) A good source of information about the 'Eua Plantation Forest, 'Eua National Park and the island's trails and attractions. Bushwalkers should discuss their routes with the staff here before setting out.

**Post office** (Map p223; ☎ 50066; 'Ohonua; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Fax facilities available.

**Tonga Communications Corporation (TCC)** (Map p223; ☎ 50777; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Fri, 7am-2pm Sat) Has telephone cabins, sells phonecards and offers fax services.

## Dangers & Annoyances

Normal hiking rules apply – take plenty of water, sunscreen, some food and warm clothing in case of changing weather. When heading out, always let someone know the vicinity to which you're heading and when you expect to be back. Due to the sinkholes and high cliffs, if you lose your way and it starts to get dark, it's advisable to stop for the night and carry on in the morning.

## NORTHERN 'EUA

Some sights in 'Eua's northern half are accessible by taxi but the more remote can only be reached on foot. Guided day bushwalks (p273) and longer circuit expeditions are possible. If you're going without a guide, allow yourself lots of time to explore, wear sturdy shoes, carry plenty of water and take a map and compass.

Unfortunately, the beautiful beaches situated north of 'Ohonua are not suitable for swimming, though locals make good use of 'Ufilei Beach, a popular spot for picnics and afternoon lazing just a 20-minute walk north of Nafanua Wharf.

The northern end of the island can be reached from 'Ohonua by walking along the coastline for five or six hours, but it requires scrambling over high rocky outcrops.

## Northern End

There are some magnificent coastal viewpoints over cliffs peppered with caves at the

northern end of 'Eua, but the tracks can be difficult to find. Ask locals for directions before setting out and be very careful when walking off-track as the area is pockmarked with sinkholes.

From 'Ohonua, go over the bridge and continue 3km north to the small village of Houma. About 2km north of the village, the track forks (the left fork leads down to Kapa Beach) – continue to the right up the hill then, just after the sign to the Royal Estate, turn left down a rough 4WD track. This may be as far as a taxi will go.

This track rambles north through scrubby bush land and forest and past a couple of marginal plantations until, after about an hour, you'll enter a broad, open pasture with magnificent views across lower tiers of rainforest and a 270-degree view of the sea off the east coast.

To reach **Kahana Spring** (Map p216), follow the track all the way to the end, then it's a steep 150m descent northeast to the spring. Once an open pool, the spring now feeds from its source inside a cave into a white plastic pipe funnelling the water into huge, covered concrete water tanks.

From Kahana Spring you can bush walk about 200m north to an overgrown track heading through forest. This will bring you to a viewpoint above some dramatically high, sheer limestone cliffs. In the side of the cliff is the large limestone cave known as **Captain Nemo's Cave** (Map p216), one of around seven found in this rarely visited area. The secluded Fangutave Beach lies far below and it's perfectly possible (but very steep) to climb down to the beach at the northern end of the cove, though bear in mind the remoteness of this spot if you're going to attempt it. A whale-tailed tree trunk marks the track.

## 'Anokula Palace

Not much is left of the building that, if completed, would have been a royal palace atop 120m-high windswept cliffs. The views are spectacular, but there are even better viewpoints to the north of the ruins (from where you'll see the island of 'Eue'iki and part of Tongatapu) and on a rocky outcrop down to the east. Legend tells it that if you stand on this latter viewpoint at full moon and remain absolutely still you can see people swimming in the incredibly turbulent water below – lost spirits on an outing.



## THE FLORA & FAUNA OF 'EUA

'Eua has the largest tract of primary rainforest in Tonga, considerable areas of regenerating rainforest and plantation forest, dramatic cliffs and a wonderful shoreline, which combined make it the most diverse landscape in which to experience the kingdom's flora and fauna.

'Eua's most famous wildlife species is the large 'Eua parrot or red shining parrot (*koki* or *kaka*). This spectacular bird was introduced to Tonga prior to European arrival and you'll most likely hear its raucous call in 'Eua's forests – the forest around Liangahu'o 'a Maui is a good place to look. 'Eua has Tonga's only stable *koki* population (about 1000 birds), but deforestation and the illegal collection of live birds remain problematic.

Sea-bird colonies nest on 'Eua's cliffs. The windy east coast is a good place to see brown and black *ngongo* (noddies) and white-tailed *tavake* (tropic birds), with their easily recognisable long tail streamers. Soaring great frigate birds, with their distinctive pointed wings and forked tails, are a hugely impressive sight – Lakufa'anga cliff is a good place to see them. White-rumped *pekepeka-tae* (swiftlets) nest in caves here and navigate to their nests in pitch black by echolocation.

'Eua has eight endemic species of flowering plant, and many medicinal and culturally important plants that are still collected for use. Much of the island is covered in plantations and grassland with small patches of coastal forest where at dusk you may see the cave-dwelling *pekapeka* (sheath-tailed bat) hunting for insects. The large *peka* (fruit bat or flying fox) roosts in tall forest or plantation trees.

In the primary rainforest on the island's steep eastern slopes, the unique 'Eua gecko is found. It was only recently spotted for the first time, an indication of just how much there's left to be discovered here.

The red lake after which 'Anokula Palace (Map p216) was named has become a dry, burnished-red sand trap.

In the scrubby grassland that is south of 'Anokula are plenty of potential camp sites, but bring your own water as no reliable supply is available.

In order to get to 'Anokula Palace via Houma, turn right when the road forks to Kapa Beach and continue past the pine and coffee plantations of the Royal Estate. Taxis are generally happy to go as far as the palace, but no further south. The road heading south from 'Anokula stays in good shape for 1km or so and then starts to break up, but it is possible to follow the faint 4WD track to the Soldier's Grave. Be sure to inquire locally as to the condition of the route.

## CENTRAL 'EUA

'Eua Plantation Forest covers much of the slope that rises consistently east towards the island's 300m ridge, where lofty limestone cliffs plunge into 'Eua National Park. Plantations and villages dominate 'Eua's central western side.

There are a few good-looking, though rugged, beaches, and caves, sinkholes and waterfalls to explore.

## Tufuvai Beach

Tufuvai Beach's lovely arc of white sand is the perfect spot to position yourself for sunset, if not half the day. A natural **swimming pool** forms in the reef at high tide and provides some good snorkelling, though it's too shallow for swimming at low tide. The channel here is suitable for strong swimmers, but only at low tide – whatever you do, don't swim in this channel when the tide is going out!

To get here, head south along the coastal road (about 2km) from 'Ohonua or turn west off the main road at Pangai. Midway through Tufuvai village, a road to the west leads to the beach and the Deep Resort.

## 'Eua Plantation Forest

Limestone caves, gaping sinkholes (with enormous banyan trees reaching out of them) and a rather weird mix of exotic plantation-timber species combine to give this Swiss-cheese landscape the air of a magical realm. The forest (Map p216) covers 'Eua's drinking-water catchment area and is dense and jungle-like with giant tree ferns, vines and high humidity in some areas, and in others, all straight lines of plantation pine, sandalwood, mahogany or red cedar.

Many of 'Eua's tourist highlights are found here and most can be visited in a long day's

walk or on horseback. A 4WD could get you closer to many of them. One possible route you might take through the area (with a few detours) is listed here.

From the green MAF office in Sapa'ata, head east along a dirt road into the 'Eua Plantation Forest, towards the **MAF Nursery** (reached in about 35 minutes). Here the road forks. To the left, Rooney Rd leads up to Vetekina Rd (an overgrown and, in places, deeply rutted 4WD track) and on to the edge of the national park (2.6km). To the right, a track leads up to refreshing, fern-fringed **Hafu Pool** (250m), formed by the damming of a small stream that trickles through a slice of rainforest.

Cross over and continue along the old 4WD track. Ignore the first right turn and after about five minutes, the 4WD track levels off and a path breaks left (north) to a **Big 'Ovava** – a huge banyan tree growing out of a yawning sinkhole. Scramble down the path to the base of the sinkhole, which has a small stream running through it, then monkey-climb the roots to get out again. Continue straight ahead (east) on a thin track to **Heke Stream**, which courses down a long, smooth rock at about a 45-degree angle, creating a natural water slide (*heke*) in a beautiful, steep-sided gully covered in ferns and lichen. Further upstream is another slide above a larger pool.

Retrace your steps to the Big 'Ovava, then either backtrack to the MAF Nursery and head east along Rooney Rd (a good option in wet weather), or continue 900m up Tu'ifua Rd (a disused 4WD track) to the junction with Rooney Rd and then turn right. Either way, continue up to the end of Rooney Rd. One option from here is to continue along Lote Rd to Vetekina Rd, roughly 50 minutes from the Big 'Ovava, and turn left for Makalea and Soldier's Grave, which lie in plantations to the north. Otherwise, turn right into McDonald Rd and continue south, taking the fourth grassy 4WD track on the left and following it to the Lauua Lookout signpost off Vetekina Rd.

You'll need proper climbing gear to get down into the sinkhole that is **Makalea Cave**. It's reached after about eight minutes and lies about 100m north out of the forestry plantation boundary at an obscured sign under a small banyan tree due east (right) of the dirt road and a mango tree – you'll

have to travel through a plantation to get there. *Makalea* means 'speaking stone', and there is certainly an eerie echo in the cave, as well as some beautiful stalactites. Once you're facing its opening, head 15m or so to the left for the access point.

The right turn to **Soldier's Grave** lies about 250m after the turn-off to Makalea. A stand of pandanus is about the only marker of the overgrown path that leads uphill to 'Eua's highest point (312m) and the grave of AE Yealands, about whom there are a few versions of an apocryphal – or at least well-embellished – tale. See the boxed text, p220.

From the turn-off to Soldier's Grave it's about a two- to three-hour walk to the ruins of 'Anokula Palace at the northern end of 'Eua. Alternatively, after retracing your steps to the junction of Lote and Vetekina Rds, it's only an eight-minute walk south to the beginning of **Lokupo Track**, which leads down to **Lokupo Beach** (p220), and a further 15 minutes south to **'Ana Kuma** (Rats' Cave). Entering the cave via a hole in the rock and shuffling through the narrow passageway to a small ledge and a stunning view over the rainforest to the Pacific Ocean, is adrenaline-inducing. It's possible to climb down the left side of the overhanging ledge to another small cave cut into the cliff face about 2m below. It requires extreme care, as the cliff edge is very close when you drop down but the experience of perching here is well worth it.

South from 'Ana Kuma, signposts mark two vertiginous viewing platforms, **Lokupo Lookout** and **Lauua Lookout**, which cling to the cliff top and provide breathtaking views over the rainforest and the ocean pounding onto Lokupo Beach. It's always cool and windy here and if you're lucky you'll see red shining parrots and tropic birds gliding over the rainforest canopy below. The track to Lauua Lookout winds through the rainforest.

To make your way out of the forest from Lauua Lookout, retrace your steps to Vetekina Rd and then walk north to the junction of Vetekina and Faka'osi Rds. Turn left (west) down Faka'osi Rd and continue to McDonald Rd, which will lead you south to Telefoni Rd and the main road.

Southwest of the junction between Telefoni and McDonald Rds is **'Ana 'Ahu** (Smoking Cave), so called because of the mist that rises where a small stream plunges into the void. There is no set path; to get there head

### SOLDIER'S GRAVE

WWII did not blight the kingdom of Tonga as it did other Pacific islands, though Tongans fought and died for the Allied cause. During the war, a group of New Zealand signalmen were stationed on 'Eua along with a group of Tongan comrades. One day in February 1943, a 24-year-old New Zealand soldier (AE Yealands) and a Tongan got drunk and decided to play a bizarre game of hide-and-seek. They asked a friend to hide a gun for them. It was decided that the one who first found the gun was to kill the other.

Unfortunately for Yealands, the Tongan won the game. The Tongans reportedly felt so bad about the incident that they erected a monument in the soldier's honour on the island's highest point.

west down Telefoni Rd, and, where it makes a sharp right turn, follow a line of pine trees to the entrance.

Other impressive caves in this area include the sinkhole below another **Big 'Ovava** roughly 50m northeast of the telecommunications tower on Telefoni Rd. This ban-yan *must* be the largest on 'Eua. The root network is truly amazing. To find this tree, continue down Telefoni Rd to the bottom of a steep slope where a dirt road on the right cuts back uphill. Follow this road to a dead end and then take the footpath on the left leading to a cave. From here it's a 30-minute walk west, downhill to 'Eua's main road.

### 'Eua National Park

There's something magical about this undisturbed ocean-side rainforest (Map p216) that makes the legend of Maui fishing the rest of Tonga out of the water from 'Eua seem totally believable.

'Eua National Park protects a tract of virgin tropical rainforest above the southeastern coast, which is bordered on the western side by the sheer cliffs that descend directly from the highest ridge on the island. The easiest access to the rainforest is down the ridge on one of two purpose-built tracks.

The first is **Lokupo Track**, which leads down to **Lokupo Beach**. Two cement clumps that once anchored the signpost mark the track, just north of the Vetekina and Snowdon

Rds junction. At a rock crevice around 80m down the track, you'll step down onto **Hina's Seat** (that's the imprint of her bottom you're looking at!), though the sign is misleading and says 'Maui's Footsteps'. The track then veers to the right around the rocky outcrop and in about 70m comes to **Maui's Footsteps** where, legend has it, cranky Maui took aim at a rowdy rooster on Tongatapu (see p199). Can't find them? The footsteps are on top of a 1.5-cu-metre rock to the left of the track, nearby a tree with 'Eloni' carved into it.

The second track is **Veifefe Track**, which leads off Veketina Rd (further south), gently winding down in a southeasterly direction past Veifefe Campsite to the south end of Lokupo Beach. In theory, at low tide it's possible to walk along the beach between these two trails, but finding the entrance to the second trail (which is not signposted) would be difficult. For a drama-free return, mark where you exit the forest onto the beach.

Veifefe Campsite (a patch of overgrown grass at present) is the only official camp site on 'Eua.

### Matalanga 'a Maui

The story goes that the deep, dank and eerie sinkhole that is known as Matalanga 'a Maui (Maui's Fault; Map p216) was created when Maui buried the end of his planting stick in the earth and shook it back and forth, rocking the entire island and leaving it with a tilt that made the south end higher than the north. On bright days you'll see that the sinkhole is simply a huge hole whose walls are lined with tangled vegetation that disappears into the black void below. You'll get better views down into the cool, moist underworld with a torch. Climbing into the sinkhole and actually making it out again will require climbing gear and a climbing buddy.

To get there, head south from Ha'atu'a onto the dirt road, take the first left turn and continue for about 800m from the intersection, passing two vehicle tracks. The short walking track (currently signposted 'Maui's Fault') is on the right, about 70m from the second vehicle track, and leads about 30m through a vanilla plantation. Once you're in line with a row of pine trees to the right, turn left and you'll be on the edge of the abyss. Watch your step – you may not see the sinkhole until you almost fall into it!

### Showerfalls Cave

The small Showerfalls Cave (Map p216) hides behind a steady stream of cool, fresh water which flows through a narrow, fern-covered limestone gorge. It's possible to walk right through this cave and come out the other end, though it gets narrow and requires some climbing, and the water can be at chest height. Slippery rocks make even the climb down the waterfall (about 2m) to the cave entrance a challenge, accompanied by a guaranteed soaking. Anything more than a cursory exploration requires ropes, waterproof torches and shoes with a good grip.

To reach Showerfalls Cave, follow the vehicle track heading east away from the tarmac road, along the southern boundary fence of Hofangahua College in Petani, and step over the gate. The track leads through plantations and up into the hills. A thin path crosses the track after about 20 minutes, but continue straight ahead up the increasingly overgrown track until reaching a junction. Fork left across flatter ground, then after a couple of minutes fork left again onto a 4WD track. Continue down the steep slope and past a cavelike rocky overhang before arriving at the small gorge a couple of minutes later. Some of 'Eua's water supply is drawn from this place through PVC pipes.

### SOUTHERN 'EUA Ve'ehula Estate

Much of the southern third of the island belongs to the large Ve'ehula Estate, in the heart of which is Sainai Prison (Map p216), Tonga's largest correctional facility. Some of the best tracts of original rainforest are found here and there are many meandering bush tracks to explore.

### Ha'aluma Beach

'Eua's best beach is Ha'aluma (Map p216), a palm-fringed expanse of sand on the south coast, overlooking the small island of Kalau, 3km or so away. Deep rock pools (tide dependent) offer refreshing wading sites and there are good beach camping spots.

To get there, continue 4km south along the dirt road from Ha'atu'a until the road makes a sharp bend to the southeast (left) and turns into bitumen. At this intersection, take the steep 4WD track that veers slightly to the southwest (right) and continue for 1km or so.

### Southern End

The southern tip of the island (Map p183), an area known as Lakufa'anga, contains some of 'Eua's finest geological treasures.

In dry weather a taxi can take you much of the way there, or you can see the southern portion of the island as part of a tour (p223). Head south from Ha'atu'a and continue along the road as it curves to the east and becomes bitumen (the 4WD track to the south leads to Ha'aluma Beach), passing a few plantations before it reaches a gate with a 'Jesus Loves You' reminder. Pass through (be sure to close the gate) onto the green pasture punctuated with the grey, tombstone-like outcrops of the **Rock Garden**. These large slabs of eroded, grotesquely shaped coral recall the time that this area served as 'Eua's continental shelf. The meadow is often full of nervous wild horses.

Two information signs in front of a large coral mass tell of the legends of the nearby features. The cliff to the southeast is **Lakufa'anga Cliff** (Calling Turtle Cliff). Women used to drop *fā* (pandanus fruit) into the sea from the cliff and sing, to call turtles into shore. Unfortunately, turtles are rarely seen here these days due to overfishing (despite bans on catching them). Inviting as the crumbly cliffs may seem to would-be explorers, be warned that climbers have recently lost their lives here.

The beautiful **Liangahu'o 'a Maui**, a giant limestone arch, lies about 400m northeast of here. Maui, the folk hero of epic stature, had a reputation for a volatile temper. This huge abyss and the natural bridge are said to have been formed when Maui angrily threw his spear across 'Eua, lodging it in the rock wall here. From the cliffs, walk northward along the 4WD track that leads into a patch of woodland (keep an eye out for vibrant red parrots). Pick up the marked trail on the left and follow it 50m or so up the hill, veering right before coming to a lookout perched on the edge of a gaping hole, with a spectacular view of the roaring sea surging towards the natural archway. This is a lovely spot, where haunting insect choruses intermingle with the sound of waves crashing on the rocks.

Complete the loop back to the 4WD track on the north side of the archway and continue to the Bowl of Cliffs, an impressive half-circle of cliffs in which the sea below churns like a flushing toilet bowl.

### BLACKBIRDERS ON 'ATA

In May 1863 the Tasmanian whaling ship *Grecian*, under the command of Captain Thomas James McGrath, landed at 'Ata, an extinct volcanic island 136km southwest of Tongatapu. The details of what happened are hazy, but in 1929 two Tongans, who were 'Ata schoolchildren at the time, recalled that the ship was painted to resemble a man-of-war. The mayor of the island, Paul Vehi, boarded the ship and returned to report that the people of 'Ata were invited below the ship's deck to trade their wares for the ship's provisions. Once the islanders' goods were accepted, they were sent into cabins, ostensibly to select items they desired in exchange. The people remaining on shore never saw them again.

The *Grecian* was not licensed to land with slaves at Peruvian ports, where kidnapped Pacific islanders were normally taken. It seems that the cargo (including the Tongans) was sold to the *General Prim*, a slaver that crossed paths with the *Grecian* somewhere in the Cook Islands while searching for 'recruits' to carry back to Callao (Lima). When the *General Prim* arrived in South America, its captain reported that he carried 174 slaves from the island of 'Frinately' – obviously a mistranscription of Friendly Islands.

John Bryan, a crew member on the *Grecian*, reported that about 130 'Ata islanders had been taken on board. (It's also likely that the *Grecian* had been responsible for the kidnapping of 30 residents of Niuaf'ou, who had willingly left that island with the promise of lucrative jobs in Fiji.) The islanders blamed the mayor for arranging the blackbirding (kidnapping and slave trading) but it's unlikely that he knew anything about it beforehand. Concerned about blackbirding, King George Tupou I soon ordered the remaining 200 residents of 'Ata to resettle on 'Eua. 'Ata remains uninhabited to this day.

'Ata can only be accessed by private yacht, and finding a suitable, safe anchorage can be difficult.

From here, further exploration north into 'Eua National Park is possible, but to go any further you should plan to camp overnight. The pasture near the Bowl of Cliffs would make a fine, if exposed, camp site.

Rejoin the track heading north (which keeps to the easternmost ridge), cross the fence into a plantation and continue on the same track, following what remains of a white plastic water pipe. 'Ana Pekepeka (Swallows' Cave), named after the birds flitting in and out of the darkness, is a 25-minute walk from the fence. The dry floor of the large cave would make a decent camp site.

Vaiangina Falls is roughly a 15-minute walk past the cave. The remaining white pipe takes a sharp turn uphill just before Vaiangina Stream, but it's easier to walk ahead about 10m before rock climbing up to the tubing that leads to the stream. Vaiangina Stream emerges from between layers of limestone then disappears beneath an impassable thicket of vegetation before plunging more than 50m into the sea. The waterfall is only properly visible from the shoreline; though the stream is hardly impressive, it's one of the only freshwater sources in the area.

In some seasons it is possible to bushbash your way to Veifeke Campsite (p220) and then on to 'Anokula Palace. You'll be bushing most of the way along a track reclaimed by the jungle – allow several days.

### Activities

'Eua has great bushwalking, ranging from day walks taking in many of 'Eua's highlights, to a complete 10-day-or-so loop of the island. You'll experience rugged coastal views from soaring cliffs, squawking parrots wheeling through the forest canopy, caves to discover and towering 'Faraway Tree'-like banyan trees that climb out of gaping sinkholes; unique adventures abound.

Ask MAF or your guesthouse hosts about routes, camp sites and the availability of drinking water. You'll need a tent, map, compass and plenty of water containers.

Rock-climbing sites and 'Eua's largely unexplored cave systems have exciting potential. The Lokupo Beach area (Map p216), which is backed by steep cliffs, has good climbing potential – favourite anchoring spots seem to be the Lokupo and Lauua Lookouts. Caving and rock climbing here are not for amateurs; come properly equipped.

Between June and December, pods of whales make their way through the channel between 'Eua and Tongatapu and can be viewed from the west coast. Ideal viewpoints from land are at the Hideaway (right), which also organises half-day whale-watching boat trips (one/two/three people T\$150/125/100 per person), and at the Deep Resort (right).

Tonga's reportedly biggest sea caves are just off 'Eua, with the best ones found around the northern tip and down the eastern coast; one is likened to a cathedral. Visibility is upwards of 60m year-round. Contact the Deep Blue Diving Centre (p181).

### Tours

Accommodation ventures (p191) on Tongatapu run 4WD tours that can be tailored to your interests.

**Hideaway** (Map p216; ☎ 50255; fax 50128; www.kalianet.to/hideawayeua; Tufuvai) Helps to plan unguided tours, and runs 4WD tours (T\$45), and hiking tours (some including caves in the north; T\$60), both including lunch. Horse riding/mountain bikes can be arranged for T\$30/15.

**Susan's Island Tours** (Susan's Guest House; Map p216; ☎ 50088) Runs well-organised three-hour national park tours (T\$40), three-hour Southern Legends tours (T\$40) and two-hour 'Anokula Palace tours (T\$25).

**Taina's Place** (Map p216; ☎ 50186; fax 50128; Telefoni Rd) Van tours are T\$45 (children free). Bike or horse hire can be arranged for T\$12.

### Sleeping

'Eua's accommodation falls into the guesthouse or self-catering categories and can be

viewed at www.tongaholiday.com. If your plan is to stay just the one night and head back on the morning ferry, you could adopt 'Tongan style' by sleeping on the ferry's bench or floor space, sparing yourself the pre-4am wake-up call to head down to the ferry. Hosts generally offer wharf transfers for T\$4.

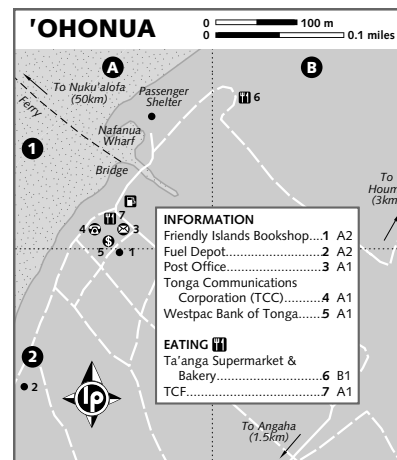
**Hideaway** (☎ 50255; fax 50128; www.kalianet.to/hideawayeua; Tufuvai; camping T\$12, s/d with bathroom & continental breakfast T\$40/50) This is the first choice for most travellers to 'Eua and perhaps its trump card. A viewing platform built over the rocky shore makes for fantastic sunset and whale-watching (June to December) and there is a *fale*-style bar and restaurant with ocean views (book by noon). The food is solid, with a choice of chicken, fish or pork à la garlic, sweet-and-sour or curry. Breakfast costs T\$6 to T\$8, dinner T\$18 to T\$20. The comfortable motel-style rooms have good, hot showers. Staff give sound walking advice and run a range of island tours.

**Taina's Place** (Map p216; ☎ 50186; fax 50128; Telefoni Rd; s/d/tr cabin T\$20/30/40, camping per tent T\$10, tent hire T\$15, kitchen use per day T\$5) Wood sprites can stay within a whisper of the forest's edge in one of five cute houses sprinkled through the gardens, with mosquito nets to keep stinging fairies at bay. The newly built family house has its own kitchen. Taina's five-dish dinner spread features chicken, rice and vegetables from the garden and for a few extra *pa'anga* she'll include Tongan specialties such as fish coconut cream curry and *'ota ika*. Breakfast costs T\$6, dinner T\$15 to T\$18.

**Susan's Guest House** (Map p216; ☎ 50088; s/d T\$20/30, extra person T\$10) Rooms are basic (with fans on request) but clean in this friendly family home. There's a communal dining room and a lounge featuring funky red and green velour couches. Breakfast (T\$7 to T\$8), dinner (Tongan fish or chicken dishes, T\$12) and a Sunday 'umu (T\$12) can be arranged.

**Highlight Guest House** (Map p216; ☎ 50143; fax 50128; Mata'aho; s/d T\$25/40, kitchen use per day T\$5) This is a spacious house with tiled floors, communal lounge and dining rooms, and comfortable beds in twin and double configurations. Cooked meals are available. Breakfast/lunch/dinner costs T\$6/8/12.

**Deep Resort** (☎ 50421, 27406; moanas@kalianet.to; Tufuvai; dm T\$25, s/d incl breakfast T\$40/80) The inner real-estate agent in you will be crying out 'position, position, position' upon sighting the beautiful sweep of Tufuvai Beach (p218)



onto which this place edges. Three roomy log-style cabins with terraces of whole tree branches have queen and single beds, a bathroom and screened windows. A downside is the weary linen. The Tongan-style bar and restaurant (open to guests and nonguests; meals T\$7.50 to T\$20) is a charming spot to soak up afternoon beverages and the symphony of surf crashing over the reef wall.

Consult **MAF** (☎ 50116) about any suitable camp sites in highland and beach areas.

### Eating

The only restaurants in 'Eua are those attached to the island's places to stay; they welcome nonguests who book ahead. Self-caterers can get basic supplies in 'Ohonua. Pickings are slim so consider bringing a few items from Tongatapu. Small *fale koloa* are scattered up and down the main road between Houma and Ha'atu'a – one of the best stocked is in 'Ohonua on the way to the High School. In addition, there is a Saturday-morning fruit and veggie market at Nafanua Wharf and vegetables at roadside markets.

**Ta'anga Supermarket & Bakery** (Map p223; 'Ohonua; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Thu, to 9pm Fri, 8am-1pm Sat, bakery only from 4.30pm Sun) Here you'll find a fair range of goods and...refrigerated chocolate! White bread is the staple, though fruit bread, cream buns and occasionally fried dough may make a special appearance on Sunday. It's up the hill from Nafanua Wharf.

**Tonga Cooperative Federation** (TCF; Map p223; ☎ 50131; 'Ohonua; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon & 6.30-8.30pm Sat) Alongside the post office, this supermarket south of Nafanua Wharf offers a limited choice including some meat.

### Drinking & Entertainment

The restaurant/bars at the Hideaway (p223) and the Deep Resort (p223), both oriented to maximise sea views, are open to nonguests and form most of the social scene.

**Maxi Disco Hall** (Main Rd, 'Eua; men/women T\$3/2; ☎ 8pm-2am Fri, 8pm-11.30pm Sat) The island's only dancing venue doesn't serve alcohol but the *fale koloa* next door to it does, and patrons get rowdy just the same. Go with a local or prepare to be harassed.

### Getting There & Around

On a calm day there is nothing to the ferry trip between 'Eua and Tongatapu (p287), but when it gets rough...well, people have slid off the ferry roof into the trench. The return leg from 'Eua is generally a smoother ride.

At the time of writing, flights between Tongatapu and 'Eua's Kaufana Airport in Fata'ulua (10 minutes) had been suspended.

There is no bus service but you shouldn't have any problems hitching rides (note: palm down rather than thumb up) along the main road between Houma and Ha'atu'a. Normal safety precautions apply. Elsewhere you'll probably have to walk as there's very little traffic.

Your accommodation hosts will be able to assist with transportation to sights and trails, or you can call ☎ 50240 or ☎ 50320 for a taxi.

Most places to stay will organise horse hire (with blankets for padding rather than saddles) for T\$30 per day, or mountain-bike hire (with pedal brakes) for T\$15 per day. Both provide a bit of income for locals renting out their own horses and bikes.