

# Samoa

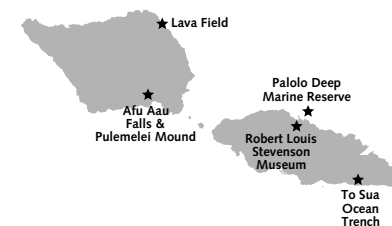
Samoa has some of the most beautiful and enticing islandscapes in the South Pacific. It's an opinion few travellers will disagree with once they've spent a few weeks rattling up steep rocky trails to stare into the overgrown maws of extinct craters, swished their way through the lush undergrowth of sprawling plantations to clamber into eerie lava tubes, and strapped on a mask before coming face to face with multicoloured coral and other marine life in the shallow waters of deliriously lovely lagoons. Some of the beaches are so stunning that you'll just want to fall over and pretend you're a piece of driftwood, and hidden within isolated valleys in the hinterlands are paradisaic waterfalls that plunge into idyllic swimming holes. Add rainforests, rugged sea cliffs, blowholes and lava flows into the mix, and you can begin to appreciate the enigmatic physical nature of these islands.

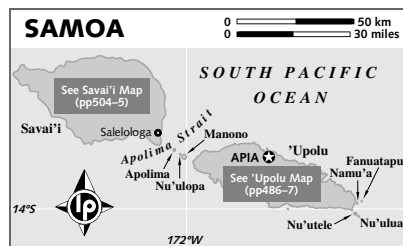
The inhabitants of Samoa have taken a few cues from their languid tropical home. Samoans are never in much of a hurry to do anything, a trait which tends to incite culture shock and a mild, temporary panic in visitors who have arrived from schedule-centric, clock-watching societies. And Samoans' moods can sometimes change as quickly as the tropical weather, with bright outlooks giving way to stormy fronts before inevitably clearing up again. But most conspicuously, they are also famously hospitable: Samoans are rarely short of a toothy grin, a flap of the hand or a friendly comment where outsiders are concerned.

So don't underestimate how much time you'll want to spend tramping into Samoa's wild interior, bobbing around its lagoons or lying on one of its sun-baked beaches. Follow the lead of Samoa's generous spirit and just spoil yourself.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Drift through spectacular coral colonies at **Palolo Deep Marine Reserve** (p489)
- Submerge yourself in the jungle pool at **Afu Aau Falls** (p508) before standing atop enigmatic **Pulemelei Mound** (p508)
- Stroll the historic corridors of Villa Vaillima at the **Robert Louis Stevenson Museum** (p492)
- Admire the eerie desolation of the **Lava Field** (p506)
- Gaze up at the sky while floating around **To Sua Ocean Trench** (p493)





## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Weatherwise, the most comfortable time to visit Samoa is between May and October, during the country's dry season. An extra incentive to visit at this time of year is that this is when major Samoan festivals are held. During the wet season from November to April, the islands tend to squelch underfoot and receive the occasional battering from tropical cyclones; the last big storm to hit the region was Olaf, which blew across the area in early 2005. Huge numbers of Samoans jet in from New Zealand (NZ), Australia and the USA during the December–January holiday period, when you may have trouble booking flights.

The average annual temperature is 26.5°C in coastal areas, with a decrease in temperature as the land rises inland, while humidity averages around 80%. For more climatic information, see p827.

## HISTORY

### Prehistory

The oldest evidence of human occupation in Samoa is Lapita village, partially submerged in the lagoon at Mulifanua on the island of 'Upolu. Carbon tests date the site at 1000 BC. For more on Lapita, see p39.

### SAMOA FACTS

- **Capital City (and island):** Apia ('Upolu)
- **Population:** 165,000
- **Land area:** 2934 sq km
- **International telephone code:** ☎ 685
- **Currency:** Samoan tala (ST)
- **Languages:** Samoan, English
- **Greetings:** *talofa; malo* (informal)
- **Website:** www.visitsamoa.ws

Archaeologists have discovered more than 100 star-shaped stone platforms across 'Upolu, Savai'i and Manono. It's believed that these platforms, dubbed 'star mounds' (see p529), were used to snare wild pigeons, which was once a favoured pastime of *matai* (chiefs). Also on Savai'i is the pyramid of Pulemelei, the largest ancient structure in the Pacific.

Around AD 950, warriors from nearby Tonga established their rule on Savai'i, and then moved on to 'Upolu. They were eventually repelled by Malietoa Savea, a Samoan chief whose title, *Malie toa* (Brave warrior), was derived from the shouted tributes of the retreating Tongans; the present nonagenarian head of state in Samoa bears this same proud title. There was also contact with Fiji, from where legends say two girls brought the art of tattooing. The Samoans never really trusted their neighbours – *togafiti* (tonga fiji) means a trick.

### European Contact

Whalers, pirates and escaped convicts apparently introduced themselves to Samoa well before the first officially recorded European arrival in the region. This was the Dutchman Jacob Roggeveen, who approached the Manu'a Islands (as they are now known) in American Samoa in 1722. Other visitors followed in his wake and over the next 100 years numerous Europeans settled in. The settlers established a society in Apia and a minimal code of law in order to govern their affairs, all with the consent of 'Upolu chiefs who maintained sovereignty in their own villages. Besides technological expertise, however, the *palagi* (Westerners) unfortunately also brought with them diseases to which the islanders had no immunity.

### Missionaries

In August 1830, missionaries John Williams and Charles Barff of the London Missionary Society (LMS) arrived at Sapapali'i on Savai'i's eastern coast. They were followed by Methodist and Catholic missionaries, and in 1888 Mormons added to the competition for souls. Samoans were quite willing to accept Christianity due to the similarity of Christian creation beliefs to Samoan legend, and because of a prophecy by war goddess Nafanua that a new religion would take root in the islands. Although inter-

### IN THE NAME OF CLARITY

The Samoan islands actually comprise two separate political entities: Samoa and American Samoa (p519). Samoa was formerly known as Independent Samoa (or Western Samoa). But in July 1997 the island nation officially adopted the name 'Samoa', which is how we refer to it throughout this book.

district warfare was not abolished until the start of the 20th century, schools and education were eagerly adopted.

### Squabbling Powers

There were (and still are) four paramount titles relating to four *'aiga* (extended families), equivalent to royal dynasties, in what is now Samoa: Malietoa, Tupua Tamasese, Mata'afa and Tu'imaleali'ifano. During the 1870s a civil dispute broke out between two of these families, dividing Samoa. Much land was sold to Europeans by Samoans seeking to acquire armaments to settle the matter.

The British, Americans and Germans then set about squabbling over Samoan territory, and by the late 1880s Apia Harbour was crowded with naval hardware from all three countries. Most of it subsequently sunk – not because of enemy firepower, but because of a cyclone that struck the harbour in March

1889. After several attempted compromises, the Tripartite Treaty was signed in 1899, giving control of western Samoa to the Germans and eastern Samoa to the Americans.

### Foreign Administration

In February 1900 Dr Wilhelm Solf was appointed governor and the German trading company DHPG began to import thousands of Melanesians and Chinese to work on its huge plantations. But although the Germans had agreed to rule 'according to Samoan custom', they didn't keep their word. Three years after the eruption of Mt Matavanu on Savai'i destroyed Sale'aula village, there was an eruption of human discontent in 1908 with the organisation of the Mau a Pule (Mau Movement) by Namulau'ulu Lauaki Mamoe. In January 1909 Namulau'ulu and his chief supporters were sent into exile.

In 1914, at the outbreak of WWI, Britain persuaded nearby NZ to seize German Samoa. Preoccupation with affairs on the home front prevented Germany from resisting. Under the NZ administration, Samoa suffered a devastating outbreak of influenza in 1919; more than 7000 people (one-fifth of the population) died, further fuelling anger with the foreign rulers. Along with increasing calls for independence by the Mau Movement, this culminated in the authorities opening fire on a demonstration at the courthouse in Apia in 1929. Eleven

### WHEN IT'S RAINING CATS & DOGS

Jan Allen is about to face another day of desexing. She and her colleagues wait in a remote Samoan village for their clients to arrive. A small boy carries in a dog almost as big as himself. A young family brings a litter of female puppies. A man arrives on a bicycle carrying three cats in a rice sack. Jan whips out a scalpel and gets to work.

Jan is a veterinarian with the **Animal Protection Society of Samoa** (APS; www.samoa.ws/aps), placed by **Australian Volunteers International** (www.australianvolunteers.com). Her role is to provide animal health services in remote areas.

Samoa has large numbers of unwanted and unclaimed dogs and cats. These animals pose a significant health risk, especially in poor or rural areas, so the APS has embarked on a nationwide desexing programme to reduce the population. The programme includes regular village visits, where APS vets examine and desex animals, and humanely euthanise sick or neglected animals.

Jan reports that the programme is slowly but steadily making progress. 'The village visits are always successful in the numbers of animals treated, and also provide a wealth of community education. We have returned to villages five times because it's become the 'cool' thing to get your dog desexed.'

As the sun sets, Jan and her colleagues pack up and head back to the truck. They've picked up some extra cargo – the female puppies, for whom they'll find a home in Apia. Another day is over, and the rain of cats and dogs has slightly eased.

**FA'ALAVELAVE** *Martin Robinson*

*Fa'alavelave* (lavish gift-exchange ceremonies) are a fundamental part of the *fa'a* Samoa (Samoan way). It could be a wedding, funeral, title-installation or the opening of a new school or church; the basics are the same and can last all day. Everyone dresses up in dazzling colours as the '*aiga* (extended families), village or church shows off their wealth and status. This is measured in terms of *ie toga* (fine mats) and money gifts as well as the feast of pork, taro, chop suey and cakes. An '*ava* (kava) ceremony involves the *matai* (chiefs) and honoured guests. Then the *tulafale* (orators or talking chiefs) make long, poetic speeches, and generous gifts of *ie toga*, food and money are exchanged by different groups. A careful note is made of all these exchanges and everything is done with a flourish. Afterwards youth groups may put on a *fiafia* (a village play or musical) with music and group dances.

It takes months to raise the money and weeks of hard work to organise these events. In American Samoa major ceremonies involve thousands of kilos of food, thousands of *ie toga* and tens of thousands of dollars. The large remittances sent back to their '*aiga* on the islands by Samoans abroad are another burdensome *fa'alavelave*, and are at the expense of their own, often struggling, families. Politics is also caught up in the system and before elections constituents receive *o'o* (gifts). Seven villages in one constituency received 20 cattle, 10 pigs, 150 boxes of salted beef, 400 cartons of herring and \$20,000 from one candidate. Democracy is more about '*aiga* alliances and *fa'alavelave* than a choice about policies.

*Martin Robinson lived on Samoa for a year and got to know the islands from the grass roots by staying with hospitable families in small villages on all the main islands.*

Samoans, including the Mau leader Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, were killed.

Following a change of government (and policy) in NZ, Western Samoa's independence was acknowledged as inevitable and even desirable, and in 1959 Prime Minister Fiamē Mata'afa was appointed. The following year a formal constitution was adopted and, on 1 January 1962, independence was finally achieved.

**Since Independence**

The Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) has been in power for most of the period since independence. Economic development has been excruciatingly slow or nonexistent, far below population growth, but at least the country has been politically stable.

'Upolu and Savai'i have been battered by several huge tropical storms over the past two decades, beginning with cyclone Ofa in February 1990 and cyclone Val in December 1991. The most recent storm to hit the island was Olaf in February 2005, though damage turned out to be much less than at first feared.

**THE CULTURE**

Many visitors correctly sense that below the surface of the outwardly friendly and casual Samoan people lies a complex code

of traditional etiquette. Beneath the light-heartedness, the strict and demanding *fa'a* Samoa (the Samoan way) is upheld with expectations that can stifle individuality and enterprise.

**The National Psyche**

Each Samoan *nu'u* (village) comprises a group of '*aiga* that include as many relatives as can be claimed. The larger an '*aiga*, the more powerful it is, and to be part of a powerful '*aiga* is the goal of all tradition-minded Samoans. Each '*aiga* is headed by a *matai*, who represents the family on the *fono* (village council). *Matai* are elected by all adult members of the '*aiga* and can be male or female, but over 90% of current *matai* are male.

The *fono* consists of the *matai* of all of the '*aiga* associated with the village. The *ali'i* (high chief of the village) sits at the head of the *fono*. In addition, each village has one *pulenu'u* (a combination of mayor and police chief), and one or more *tulafale* (orator or talking chief). The *pulenu'u* acts as an intermediary between the village and the national government, while the *tulafale* liaises between the *ali'i* and outside entities, carries out ceremonial duties and engages in ritual debates.

Beneath the *matai*, members of a village are divided into four categories. The society

of untitled men, the *aumaga*, are responsible for growing the village food. The *auluma* is the society of unmarried, widowed or separated women. They are responsible for providing hospitality and producing various goods such as *ie toga* (fine mats) and *siapo* (decorated bark cloth). Married women are called *faletua ma tauasi*. Their role revolves around serving their husband and his family. The final group is the *tamaiti* (children). Close social interaction is generally restricted to members of one's own group.

Individuals are subordinate to the extended family. There is no 'I', only 'we'. The lazy or incapable are looked after by their family rather than by taxpayers, and with such onerous family (plus village and church) obligations, it's a struggle for any individual to become wealthy. Life is not about individual advancement or achievement, but about serving and raising up the status of your '*aiga*. Unfortunately the communal ownership of land and lack of reward for individual effort cripples economic development.

**Lifestyle**

Parents and other relatives treat babies with great affection, but at the age of three years the children are made the responsibility of an older sibling or cousin. *Fa'aaloalo* is respect for elders, the most crucial aspect of the *fa'a* Samoa, and children are expected to

obey not just their immediate relatives, but all the *matai* and adults in the village as well as older siblings. Parents rarely hug or praise their children, so the youth often suffer from low self-esteem and lack confidence and ambition. Parents also routinely resort to violence to punish their children. Fun family activities are few and far between; a rare exception is White Sunday in October, when children eat first, star in church services and are bought new clothes and toys. Some teenagers resort to *musu*, which is refusing to speak to anybody as a form of protest. For a desperate few the only escape is suicide, and the youth suicide rate remains tragically high despite attempts at reducing it.

Samoans generally share the attitude of other fundamental Christians and dislike gay men and women, but this is tempered by a generally tolerant attitude to *fa'afafine* – men who dress and behave like women. *Fa'afafine* see themselves as women trapped in a man's body and have traditionally been outsiders who played the role of satirical jester and entertainer.

Speaking of religion, every village has at least one large church, ideally a larger one than in neighbouring villages. These operate as the village social centre, the place where almost everyone makes an appearance on Sunday, dressed up in their formal best. Sunday morning church services

**IT'S JUST NOT CRICKET**

One of the primary requirements for any serious *kirikiti* player is the ability to dance and play cricket at the same time. Tapu Misa, a columnist with the *Samoa Observer*, has pointed out that this is something that few Test cricketers have been able to demonstrate. Nor can they whistle and handclap in chorus while attempting to catch a ball.

*Kirikiti* is a unique South Pacific version of the English game of cricket and is a great example of how an imported measure of civilisation has been adapted to suit Samoan needs. The willow bat became a three-sided club of a size that would make any warlord happy, and the ball was fashioned out of rubber – all the better to be catapulted into the local lagoon. This is a colourful game, too – Samoans keep their whites for church on Sunday; the runs are made in *lava-lava* (wraparound sarong) and sandals.

And the rules? Well, it's just not cricket. There can be any number of players in a Samoan team, which means a game can continue for days, sometimes weeks, at a time. But there's none of that 'stand and watch the grass grow' stuff about this game either. As the batsman swings at every ball, the leader of the opposite team jumps up and down and blows his whistle incessantly in a kind of syncopated rhythm. The rest of the team also gyrates, clapping hands in rhythmic harmony, at the same time watching for an opportunity to catch out the rival. Only when all the batsmen of the opposing team have been dismissed does the other team get its chance.

It's energetic, exuberant and lots of fun. From June to September you'll see it in every village just before sunset.

are inevitably followed by *to'onai* (Sunday lunch), when families put on banquets fit for royalty.

*Sa*, which means 'sacred', is the nightly vespers, though it's not applied strictly and not all villages enforce it. Sometime between 6pm and 7pm a village gong sounds, signifying that the village should prepare for *sa*. When the second gong is sounded, *sa* has begun. All activity should come to a halt. If you're caught in a village during *sa*, stop what you're doing, sit down and quietly wait for the third gong, about 10 or 15 minutes later, when it's over.

'*Ava* (kava) is a drink derived from the ground root of the pepper plant. The '*ava* ceremony is a ritual in Samoa, and every government and *matai* meeting is preceded by one.

## Population

The population of Samoa is around 165,000, the vast majority of whom are Polynesian Samoans. Most Samoans live on the island of 'Upolu or its tiny satellite islands; the urban area of Apia houses around 25% of the national population. A tiny ethnic minority is the Chinese Samoan community in Apia, which is prominent in the retail and restaurant sectors.

## SPORT

On weekday afternoons, young Samoans gather on the *malae* (village green) to play rugby, volleyball and *kirikiti* (see the boxed text, p481). *Fautasi* (45-man canoe) races are held on special occasions. Samoa's biggest competitive sport is rugby and the main stadium is at Apia Park. The national team is Manu Samoa and Samoans also play for rugby teams in many countries.

Among women, the most popular sport is netball. Many Samoans play for the world-beating NZ netball team.

## ARTS Architecture

Traditional (not to mention highly practical) Samoan architecture is exemplified by the *fale*, an oval structure with wooden posts but no walls, thus allowing 'natural' air-conditioning. It's traditionally built on a stone or coral rock foundation and thatched with woven palm or sago leaves. Woven coconut-leaf blinds can be pulled

down to protect against rain or prying eyes, but in truth, privacy in such a building is practically impossible.

*Palagi*-style square homes with walls, louver windows and doors, though uncomfortably hot and requiring fans, have more status than traditional *fale* and are becoming more common in Samoa.

## Fiafia

Originally, the *fiafia* was a village play or musical presentation in which participants would dress in a variety of costumes and accept money or other donations. These days the term '*fiafia* night' often refers to a lavish presentation of Samoan dancing and singing staged at large hotels and accompanied by a buffet dinner. But traditional *fiafia* are still performed during weddings, birthdays, title-conferring ceremonies and at the opening of churches and schools.

Drummers keep the beat while dancers sing traditional songs illustrated by coordinated hand gestures. A *fiafia* traditionally ends with the *siva*, a slow and fluid dance performed by the village *taupou* (usually the daughter of a high chief), dressed in *siapo* and with her body oiled seductively.

## Literature

Albert Wendt is Samoa's most renowned novelist and scholar. His many novels deal with the *fa'a* Samoa bumping against *palagi* ideas and attitudes. His greatest novel is *Leaves of the Banyan Tree*. *Sons For The Return Home* is an earlier, best-selling novel, set in 1970s NZ and Samoa, that tells the story of two lovers (one white, one Samoan) and their families' response to their relationship.

Performance poet and writer Sia Figiel's powerful first novel, *Where We Once Belonged*, tells the exuberant story of a young girl growing up and searching for identity in a traditional Samoan village. The in-your-face, episodic novel de-romanticises Western perceptions of Pacific island women and tackles head-on issues such as domestic violence and youth suicide.

*The Beach at Falesa* by Robert Louis Stevenson is a brilliant short story set in Samoa by a master stylist with inside knowledge of the South Pacific. For more detail on Stevenson's intimate connection with Samoa, where he spent the last four years of his life, see p492.

## Music

Samoan songs are usually written to tell stories or commemorate events, most of which are sad and stirring. Love songs are the most popular, followed by patriotic songs extolling local virtues. *We are Samoa* by Jerome Grey is Samoa's unofficial national anthem.

Don't leave without hearing at least one church choir. Traditional music is normally sung in Samoa but can still be enjoyed by visitors. A dozen villages still maintain brass bands, which date back to German rule; the top one is the Police Brass Band, which marches from the police station in Apia every weekday at 7.45am and performs as the national flag is raised in front of the government offices.

Contemporary artists who have had success overseas include Katrina, Random and Aniseti Falemoe. King Kapisu and Scribe are the lords of hip-hop in NZ.

## Siapo & Ie Toga

The bark cloth known as *siapo* is made from the inner bark of the *u'a* (paper mulberry tree) and provides a medium for some of the loveliest artwork in Samoa.

The fine mat called *ie toga* is woven from pandanus fibres split into widths of just a couple of millimetres and involves years of painstaking work. When finished, it has the look and feel of fine linen or silk. *Ie toga*, along with *siapo*, make up 'the gifts of the women' that must be exchanged at every

formal Samoan ceremony. Agricultural products comprise 'the gifts of the men'.

## Tattooing

Samoa is the last of the Polynesian nations where traditional tattooing is still widely practised (albeit against the wishes of many religious leaders). The traditional *pe'a* (male tattoo) normally covers the man's body from the waist to the knees. Women can elect to receive a *malu* (female tattoo), but their designs cover only the thighs.

The skills and tools of the *tufuga pe'a* (tattoo artist) were traditionally passed down from father to son, and sharpened shark teeth or boar tusks were used to carve the intricate designs into the skin. It was believed that the man being tattooed must not be left alone in case the *aitu* (spirits) took him. In most cases the procedure takes at least a fortnight. Noncompletion would cause shame to the subject and his '*aiga*).

## LANGUAGE

Samoan is the main language spoken, although most people also speak English as a second language. In Samoan, the 's' replaces the 'h' of many other Polynesian languages, 'l' replaces 'r', and a glottal stop replaces 'k'. Therefore, the Tahitian word for 'one', *tahi*, is *tasi* in Samoan, *rua* (two) is *lua*, and *ika* (Rarotongan for 'fish') is *i'a*. The soft 'ng' sound in Samoan is written as a 'g' (*palangi*, for example, is pronounced 'pah-lah-ngee').

### ILLUSTRATING SAMOA

The full-bodied *pe'a* (male tattoo), which extends from the waist to just below the knees, is a prized status symbol in Samoa. It can take several weeks to complete and is a very painful process. Thus, anyone who undergoes the ritual is considered to be extremely brave. Any adult member can, in effect, receive a *pe'a* if the '*aiga*, *tufuga* (tattoo artist) and village leaders agree that it is suitable.

The *tufuga tatatau* (master tattooist) is considered an artist and the visual arts in Samoa have been represented by the designs of the *pe'a* and the *siapo* (bark cloth). The *tufuga* is usually paid with traditional gifts of *ie toga* and food.

Tattooing was discouraged when the missionaries came, but as young Pacific islanders take more pride in their cultural heritage, there has been a revival of interest in the traditional designs, though with a contemporary twist.

The contemporary tattoo sported by many young, more Westernised Samoans, comes without social and cultural restrictions. But the designs may signify a person's '*aiga*, ancestors, reference to nature or something very personal. The wrist and armband tattoos may have been originally developed for tourists, but they are now a popular Samoan fashion and many young Samoans sport a wrist, arm or ankle tattoo of their own design. They can be made with the modern machine or by the traditional comb.

## Samoa basics

Hello.	<i>Talofa or Malo.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Tofa.</i>
How are you?	<i>O a mai 'oe?</i>
I'm well (thanks).	<i>Manuia (fa'afetai).</i>
Please.	<i>Fa'amolemole.</i>
Thanks (very much).	<i>Fa'afetai (tele).</i>
Yes.	<i>Ioe.</i>
No.	<i>Leai.</i>
2 beers please.	<i>E lua pia fa'amole mole.</i>

## ENVIRONMENT Geography

Samoa lies in the heart of the vast South Pacific, 3700km southwest of Hawai'i. Tonga lies to the south, Fiji to the southwest, Tuvalu to the northwest and Tokelau to the north, while to the southeast are the Cook Islands and Tahiti.

The country has a total land area of 2934 sq km and is composed primarily of high, eroded volcanic islands with narrow coastal plains. It has two large islands: Savai'i (1700 sq km) and 'Upolu (1115 sq km). The nation's highest peak, Mt Silisili on Savai'i, rises to 1866m. The small islands of Manono and Apolima lie in the 22km-wide Apolima Strait that separates 'Upolu and Savai'i. A few other tiny, uninhabited rocky islets and outcrops lie southeast of 'Upolu.

## Ecology

On the heights of Savai'i and 'Upolu is temperate forest vegetation: tree ferns, grasses, wild coleus and epiphytic plants. The magnificent *aoa* (banyan tree) dominates the higher landscapes of these islands, while other areas are characterised by scrublands, marshes, pandanus forests and mangrove swamps. The rainforests of Samoa are a natural apothecary, home to some 75 medicinal plant species.

Because Samoa is relatively remote, few animal species have managed to colonise it. The Lapita brought with them domestic pigs, dogs and chickens, as well as the ubiquitous Polynesian rat. But apart from two species of fruit bat (protected throughout the islands after being hunted close to extinction) and the small, sheath-tailed bat, mammals not introduced by humans are limited to the marine varieties. Whales, dolphins and porpoises migrate north and

## BEST EATING

Eating experiences in Samoa range from seafood snacks to international meals prepared with a Polynesian twist. The following are Lonely Planet's top five mealtime indulgences in the islands:

- Order a takeaway meal of fresh fish and uber-salty chips from Gourmet Seafood (p500), swing by a supermarket to get a cold bottle of Vailima beer, and join the happy throng on Apia's breakwater as the sun goes down.
- OK, pizza isn't exactly a Samoan speciality, but the convivial, down-to-earth atmosphere of the waterfront Italiano Pizza Bar (p500) eatery in Apia makes it a great place to stuff your face while chatting with talkative locals and expats.

*Errol Hunt, commissioning editor*

*Paul Smitz, author, Samoa chapter*

- Some great food is served at Sails (p501), upstairs in the old colonial building where Robert Louis Stevenson was said to have lived when he first arrived in Apia.
- Snorkel with brightly coloured (and no doubt slightly endangered) reef fish all day, then sit down to delicious fried reef fish beside your Lalomanu *fale* (p498) for dinner. That's synchronicity!
- Have one of the fine lunches and dinners at Lusía's Lagoon Chalets (p509) – and one of the delicious, freshly baked desserts too! – delivered onto the private deck of your stilt-raised *fale*, where you can eat it while staring out over the gentle waters of a secluded cove.

*Tony Wheeler, LP cofounder*

*Errol Hunt, commissioning editor*

*Paul Smitz, author, Samoa chapter*

south through the islands, depending on the season.

*Pili* (skinks) and *mo'o* (geckos) can be seen everywhere, and various types of turtles visit the islands. The only land creature to beware of (besides the unloved and unlovely dogs) is the giant centipede, which packs a surprisingly nasty bite.

## 'UPOLU

pop 110,000 / area 1115 sq km

Samoa's second-largest island is a tropical daydream come true. Outside the crowded exuberance of the main town and national capital, Apia, are small villages where cars are expected to make way for pedestrians and livestock, beaches that are minimally imprinted by human visitation, and a hilly interior that hides secretive lakes and waterfalls. Most visitors devote themselves to the dazzling strips of sand that skirt 'Upolu's shoreline, with occasional forays into the pristine offshore lagoons to poke their noses into coral groves and schools of fish. But you can also hike into tangled,

## 'UPOLU IN...

### Two Days

After arriving in Apia, head straight to **Palolo Deep Marine Reserve** (p489) to snorkel its idyllic depths. Then visit the stately **Robert Louis Stevenson Museum** (p492) before returning to Apia for a meal at the sociable **Italiano Pizza Bar** (p500) and a drink at **Paddles** (p501). Head east for a float in **Fatimea Pool** (p493) before plopping yourself on gorgeous **Lalomanu Beach** (p493) for the rest of the day. The next morning, travel west to the magnificent **To Sua Ocean Trench** (p493), peaceful **Togitogiga Recreation Reserve** (p494), and the lava cliffs at **O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park** (p494). Explore more **south coast beaches** (p494) before returning to Apia.

### Four Days

There are numerous options for expanding your two-day itinerary. In Apia, put aside a night to see a high-energy **fiafia** (p503). Allow more time at Villa Vailima to wander the surrounding **Mt Vaea Scenic Reserve** (p492), followed by a peek at the nearby **Bahá'i House of Worship** (p492). A day trip (or overnight stay) on quiet **Manono** (p495) is also a must. If you feel you've experienced enough of 'Upolu beach life, you can always zip across to **Savai'i** (p503) to climb volcanoes, stand astride ancient monuments and scale a giant banyan tree.

little-explored rainforest, check out rough coastal cliffs formed by the cooling of lava rivers, adopt an old-world manner in a colonial manor, and enjoy the company and cultural teachings of congenial locals.

## ORIENTATION

The sealed Main Coast Rd winds its way around 'Upolu's coast, while three cross-island roads pass over the island's east-west central ridge and divide it roughly into quarters. The central one begins in Apia at Falealili St before becoming The Cross Island Rd further south, where it passes close to 'Upolu's highest peak, Mt Fito (1028m). There's another Cross Island Rd to the west and the steeper, picturesque Le Mafa Pass Rd in the east.

The Samoan capital, Apia, dominates the central north coast with its domestic sprawl. The hub for international flights is Faleolo Airport, located 35km west of Apia; for info on transport to/from the airport, see p488.

## Maps

Hema has published a detailed, though somewhat dated, *Samoa* maps (ST10) which includes a plan of Apia. Jason distributes the basic fold-out *Samoa Visitor Map* (free), which also sketches Apia's street grid and is widely distributed in local hotels. Both maps are available from the Tourism Authority.

## INFORMATION Bookshops

**CCK Store** (Map pp490–1; Convent St, Apia) Has several shelves of used paperbacks upstairs.

**Le Tusi Faitau** (Map pp490–1; ☎ 31626; Lvl 2, Wesley Arcade, Methodist Church Bldg, Beach Rd, Apia) Has an excellent range of second-hand pulp fiction.

## Internet Access

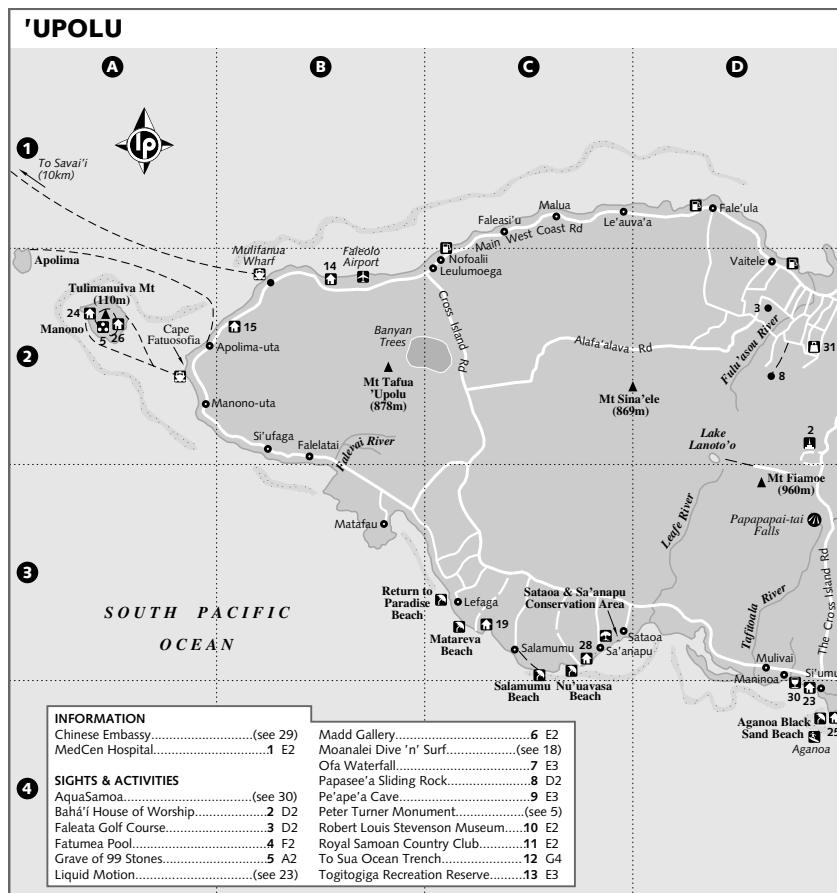
**iPasifika** (Map pp490–1; ☎ 29919; www.ipasifika.net; Beach Rd, Apia)

**LeSamoa.net** (Map pp490–1; ☎ 21016; lesa@lesamoanet.net; Lotemau Centre, cnr Convent & Mt Vaea Sts, Apia)

**Travellers' Lounge** (Map pp490–1; ☎ 22144; Beach Rd, Apia)

## Medical Services

**MedCen Hospital** (Map pp486–7; ☎ 26519, 26323; medcen@ipasifika.net; The Cross Island Rd, Vailima) Has a 24-hour emergency department. A doctor is on site from 9am to 10pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to noon Saturday and Sunday. A consultation costs ST55.



**Samoa Pharmacy** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20355; Mulinu'u Rd, Apia; ☎ 8am-noon, 1.30-4.30pm & 6-10pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon & 6-10pm Sat, 10am-noon & 6-10pm Sun)

## Money

**ANZ Bank** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 69999; Beach Rd, Apia) ANZ's Beach Rd branch has a pair of ATMs. There's also an ANZ ATM at Faleolo Airport.

**National Bank of Samoa** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 23076; Beach Rd, Apia) Also has a branch at Apia's Marketi Fou which is open on Saturday morning.

**Westpac Bank** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20000; Beach Rd, Apia) Has an ATM out front.

## Post

**Main post office** (Map pp490-1; Post Office St, Apia) Apia's main post office has been incorporated into the

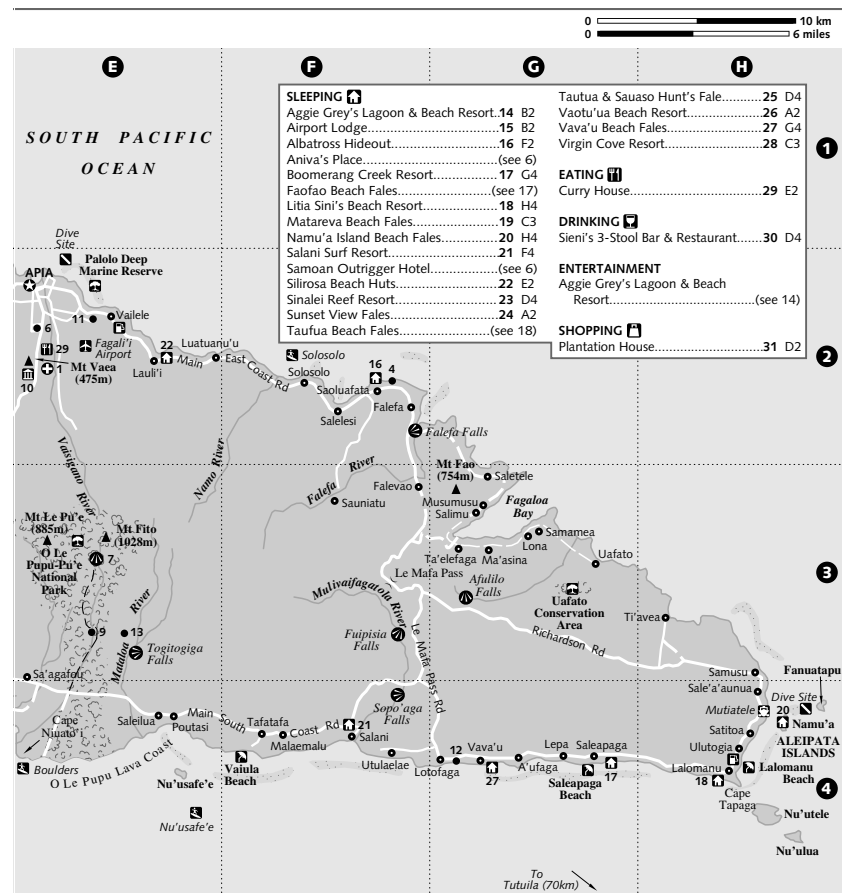
head office of the country's telecommunications provider, SamoaTel.

**Poste restante office** (Map pp490-1; Post Office St, Apia) For poste restante, go to the separate office, two doors from the main lobby. Have mail addressed to your care of: Poste Restante, Chief Post Office, SamoaTel, Apia, Samoa.

## Tourist Information

**Samoa Hotels Association** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 30160; Beach Rd, Apia; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) This extremely helpful organisation can make accommodation bookings around 'Upolu and Savai'i. It's located within the Samoa Tourism Authority *fale*.

**Samoa Tourism Authority** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 63500; www.visitsamoa.ws; Beach Rd, Apia; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Over repeated visits we unfortunately found



Tourism Authority staff uninterested and unhelpful. Hopefully their service has improved by the time you read this.

## Travel Agencies

**Island Hopper Vacations** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 23388; www.islandhoppervacations.com; Lotemau Centre, cnr Convent & Mt Vaea Sts, Apia) Also has a desk at Faleolo Airport (☎ 42938), though opening hours are haphazard.

**Oceania Travel & Tours** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 24443; www.samoatour.com; Hotel Kitano Tustitala, Mulinu'u Rd, Apia)

## TRANSPORT

### Getting There & Away

**AIR**  
All international flights to Samoa arrive at Faleolo Airport, west of Apia. For details of international services, see p516.

**Polynesian Airlines** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21261; www.polynesianairlines.com; NPF Bldg, Beach Rd, Apia) flies the 15-minute route between Fagali'i Airport, just east of Apia, and Ma'ota Airport, 5km west of Salelologa on Savai'i. The fare is from ST50/95 one way/return.

## BOAT

Ferries tackle the 22km Apolima Strait between 'Upolu and Savai'i every day. Tickets cost ST9/65 per person/car. Large ferries depart the Mulifanua Wharf on 'Upolu (and the Salelologa Wharf on Savai'i) every two hours between 6am and 4pm Wednesday to Monday, while a smaller ferry services this route at less regular intervals on Tuesday.

Vehicles should be prebooked through the **Samoa Shipping Corporation** (in Apia ☎ 20935, in Salelologa 51477). Before putting your car on the ferry at Mulifanua Wharf, you must have its underside cleaned (free) at the spraying station 100m before the boat terminal. This is done to prevent the spread of the Giant African Snail. Present the quarantine card at the ferry.

For details of boat services to Manono, see the section about that island (p495). Similarly, see the Apolima section (p495) for info on organising transport to that island.

For info on international boat services between 'Upolu and both American Samoa and Tokelau, see p516.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

To get to Faleolo Airport from Apia, take any bus marked 'Pasi o le Va'a' or 'Faleolo' (ST2); note that the last bus leaves Apia at 2.30pm. Alternatively, catch the airport shuttle operated by **Samoa Scenic Tours** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22880; Aggie Grey's Hotel, Beach Rd, Apia). Tickets (ST15) must be prebooked and the shuttle picks up from any central Apia hotel. This shuttle only runs from Apia to the airport, not vice versa.

Taxis between Apia and Faleolo Airport cost ST40.

## BUS

Buses connecting Apia with almost every other part of 'Upolu leave from Maketi Fou (the main market) and from behind the Flea Market. The routes, however, are rarely straightforward, as drivers often circle the town centre until they fill the bus and are liable to veer off-route to deposit locals at their front doors. Buses begin running early in the morning and stop in the early afternoon.

A bus schedule for 'Upolu that includes fare information is available from the **Samoa Tourism Authority** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 63500; www.visitsamoa.ws; Beach Rd, Apia; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat). To reach the Aleipata district at the eastern end of the island, catch the Lalomanu bus. To head east along the north coast, take the Falefa, Fagaloa or Lotofaga bus. For any point along The Cross Island Rd, take either the Si'umu or Salani bus. For Togitogiga and O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park, take the Falealili or Salani bus. Sample fares from Apia include to Robert

Louis Stevenson Museum (ST1.20), Falefa (ST2), Faleolo Airport (ST2), Mulifanua Wharf (ST2), Virgin Cove (ST2.30) and Lalomanu (ST4).

## CAR

Unless heavy rain has turned unsealed side roads into bogs, you can drive throughout 'Upolu in a high-clearance 2WD vehicle. Petrol stations are almost exclusively found in and around Apia. For information on getting a temporary driving licence, see p518.

Apia has numerous car-hire agencies. Prices start at around ST120 per day, with discounts offered for longer-term rentals. Hire cars are subject to a ST2500 insurance excess (nonreduceable) in the event of any accident that's your fault. Most outfits allow you to put their vehicles on the ferry to Savai'i, but double-check this before driving to Mulifanua Wharf.

Recommended companies:

**Blue Pacific Car Hire** (☎ 22668; bluepacific@lesamoa.net) Free delivery to all Apia hotels and the airport.

**Budget Car Rental** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20561, 22191; www.budget.com; ground fl, NPF Bldg, Beach Rd, Apia)

**Funway Rent-A-Car** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22045; www.funwayrentals.ws; Beach Rd, Apia)

**Juliana's Car Rentals** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 23009; Mata'utu St, Apia)

## TAXI

Taxis can be convenient for day-tripping around 'Upolu. You'll pay around ST30 an hour or ST150 for a full day of sightseeing. Always agree on a price with the driver before climbing in.

From Apia, a taxi to the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum costs ST6; to the Bahá'í temple the fare is ST14; to the Manono-uta wharf the fare is ST42; to Mulifanua Wharf the fare is ST45; and to Lalomanu the fare is ST65.

Recommended companies:

**City Central Taxis** (☎ 23600)

**Radio Taxi** (☎ 24432)

## APIA

pop 44,000

The Samoan capital does not usually attract rave reviews from travellers due to its crowded, noisy and rubbish-ridden environs. But its mixture of colonial architecture, dilapidated modernity and overgrown 'suburbs' does lend it a certain

shabby charm. It's worth pausing here long enough to throw yourself headlong into the town's markets, bars and waterfront hub-bub to experience some authentic Samoan street life.

Apia's highlight is undoubtedly **Palolo Deep Marine Reserve** (Map pp490-1; Vaiala Beach Rd; adult/child ST2/1; ☎ 8am-6pm), a magnificent stretch of shallow reef that features a deep, coral-encrusted hole thronging with marine life. Just offshore you'll also encounter submerged cages crammed with giant clams. The reserve is best visited at high tide; coral scrapes are almost guaranteed at low tide. To reach the drop-off, swim out from the beach to the dark patch of water to the left of the marker stick. Two-hour rentals of snorkels/flippers/masks cost ST2/4/4.

The town's three main marketplaces will satisfy any shopaholic. The main market is **Maketi Fou** (Map pp490-1; Fugalei St), a 24-hour fresh produce bazaar which is almost always jammed with Samoans lugging vegetables, meats and cakes, and devouring ready-made *palusami* (coconut cream wrapped in taro leaves and cooked in banana leaves). Craft hunters will find a treasure trove of goods such as *siapo*, woodcarvings, coconut-shell jewellery, *kirikiti* bats and balls, *lava-lava* and T-shirts. The ambience is somewhat enlivened by the fume-ridden chaos of the adjacent bus station.

Down on the waterfront is Apia's **Flea Market** (Map pp490-1; off Beach Rd; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat), a labyrinth of small stalls selling all of the aforementioned craftwork and more. Don't bother to test your bargaining skills here, however, as haggling is not an element of Samoan commerce. Nearby is the **fish market** (Map pp490-1; off Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-2pm), where a scramble takes place every Sunday morning to snag the freshest catches for the postchurch *to'ona'i*.

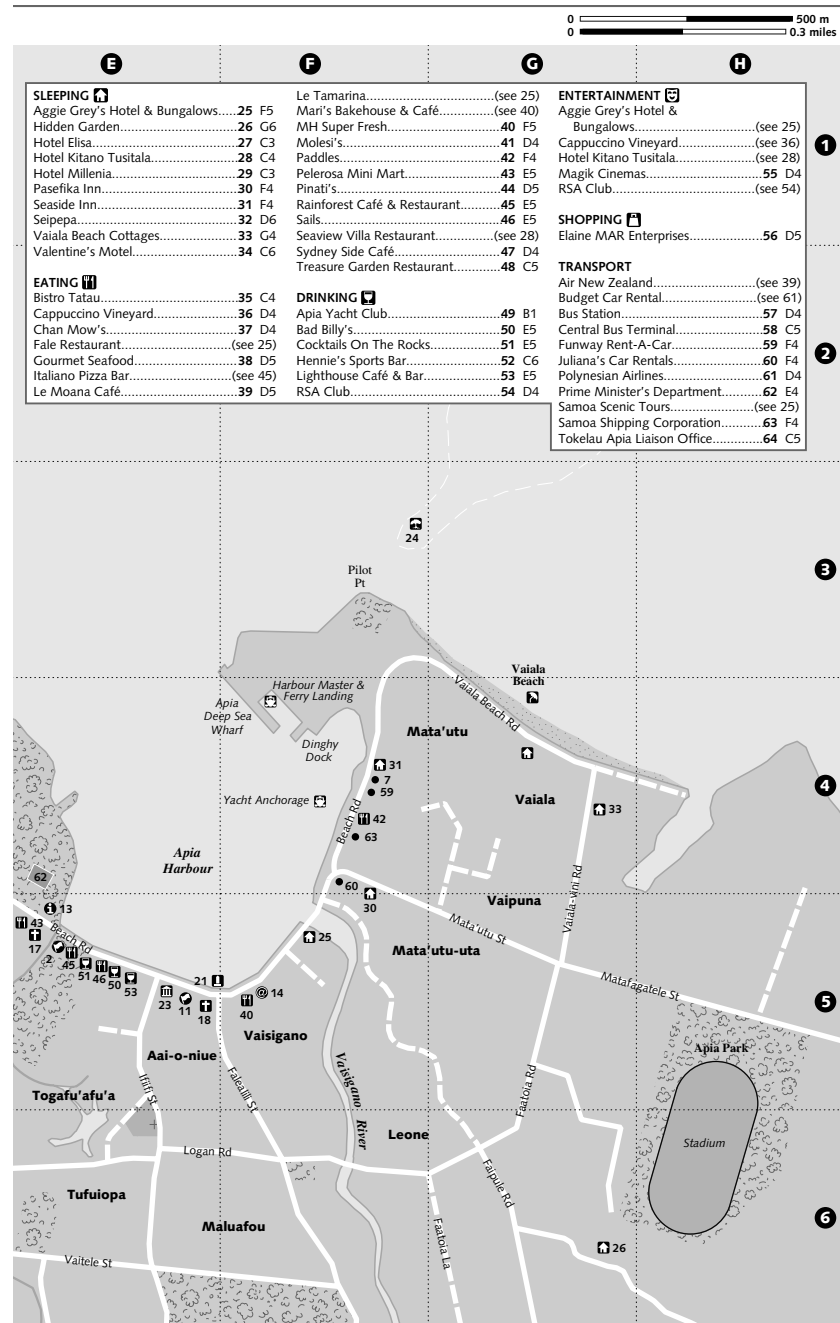
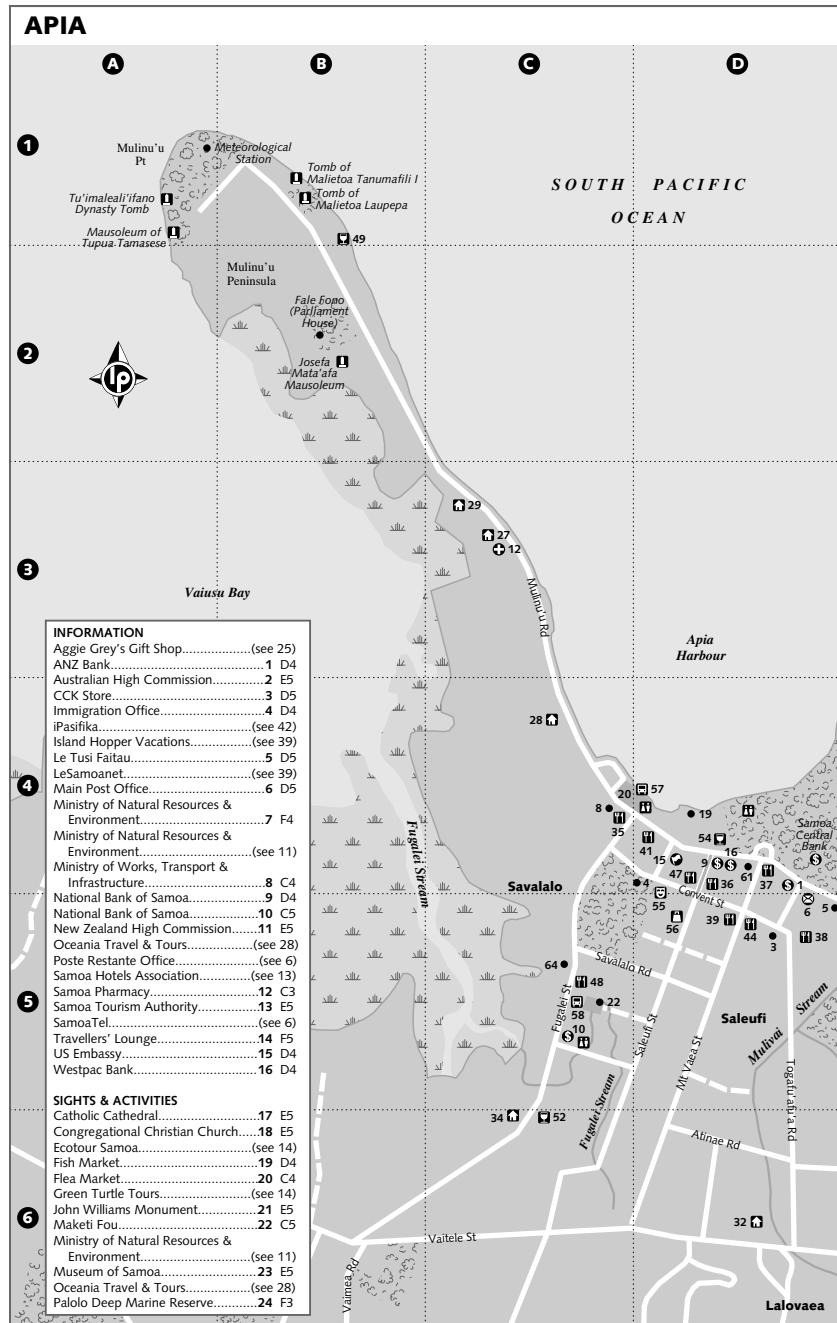
Nobody seems to be quite sure how many churches there are in Apia and the surrounding area but it's obvious from their prominence that Christianity is big business in Samoa. On Sunday, masses of Apians dress in sparkling white to attend morning church services. Some are conducted in English and visitors are welcome; dress modestly. Looking over the harbour is the white, Madonna-topped **Catholic Cathedral** (Map pp490-1; Beach Rd), built in 1905 and a reliable landmark for sea-weary sailors

until government and bank offices rose up in front of it. The humble, 1930 **John Williams monument** (Map pp490-1; Beach Rd) sits across the road from the now disused **Congregational Christian Church** (Map pp490-1; cnr Beach Rd & Falealili St), under which the influential reverend's bones are buried.

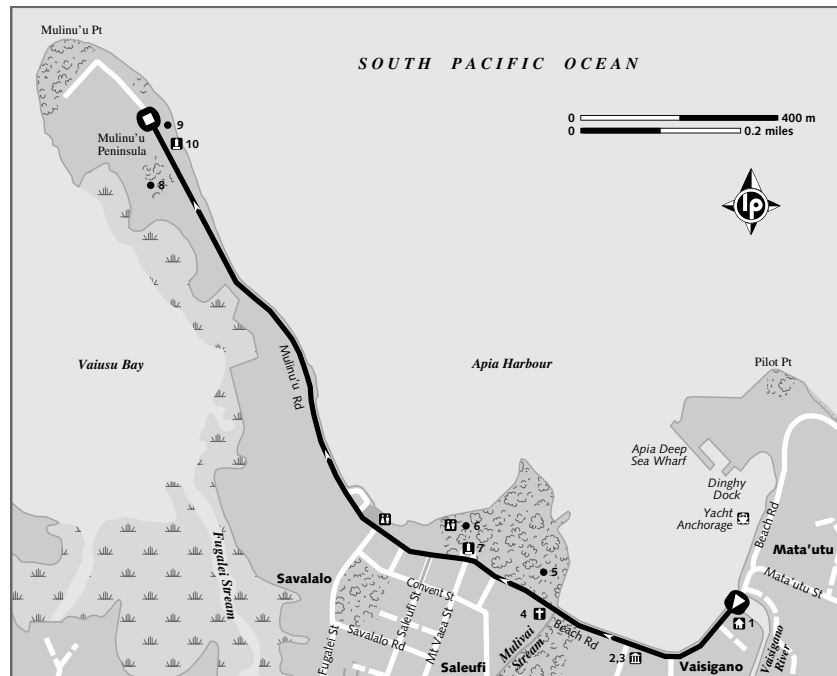
Anyone interested in Samoan history should visit the compact **Museum of Samoa** (Map pp490-1; Beach Rd; admission free; ☎ noon-3.30pm Mon-Fri) to browse its faded photographs, displays on traditional crafts, and items such as carved canoes that bring to life the country's culture. For contemporary art visit the **Madd Gallery** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 28533; Ifiifi St; admission free; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri), set up by painter Momoe von Reiche more than 20 years ago to fuel interest in local arts.

## Apia Walking Tour

This walking tour (see the map, p492) takes you past structures that reflect both Samoa's past and its present. Start from outside the landmark **Aggie Grey's Hotel (1)**; p498), a one-time club founded in 1933 by a woman who became a Pacific celebrity thanks to her starring role in James Michener's novel, *Tales of the South Pacific*. Walk west along Beach Rd to the colonial-style, two-storey **Supreme Court (2)**, the upper level of which is home to the **Museum of Samoa (3)**; above). Continue further down Beach Rd to gaze up at the recessed statues and twin turrets of the **Catholic Cathedral (4)**; left) before heading across the road to check out the seven-storey **government office building (5)** – its universally unpopular design was only slightly improved by the addition of a top-floor *fale*. Nearby is the **Pulenu'u Fale (6)** where *pulenu'u* meet. Further west is a **clock tower (7)** constructed in memory of those who fought and were killed in WWI. Now amble north along the sea wall that buttresses the eastern shore of Mulinu'u Peninsula until you reach the large beehive that is Samoa's parliament house, the **Fale Fono (8)**. Close by is the **Lands & Titles Court (9)**, the entity that settles land-rights cases. In case you had any doubts about Samoa's Christian leanings, read the **Independence Memorial (10)** in front of the court. It was built to mark the independence of Western Samoa, granted on 1 January 1962, and bears the inscription 'Samoa was founded on God'.





**WALK FACTS**

**Start** Aggie Grey's Hotel  
**Finish** Independence Memorial  
**Distance** 3.5km  
**Duration** 1½ hours

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON MUSEUM & MT VAEA SCENIC RESERVE

The **Robert Louis Stevenson Museum** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 20798; The Cross Island Rd; adult/child ST15/5; 🕒 9am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) is set in the Scottish author's beautifully restored former residence, Villa Vailima. Stevenson had the mansion built in 1890 after deciding the tropical climate of 'Upolu might ameliorate his tuberculosis, but he died there a mere four years later. The museum opened in 1994 on the centenary of Stevenson's death.

The estate is an enchanting, mellow place, with a centrepiece lawn and peaceful surrounding gardens that are manicured to look picture-perfect. Villa Vailima is explored on a half-hour tour that takes you from Stevenson's own library and bedroom through

now-quiet rooms filled with imported furniture, antique musical instruments and sepia family photographs.

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson and his wife Fanny Osborne are buried in the adjacent **Mt Vaea Scenic Reserve** (admission free). To reach the tombs, take the path leading west from the house and turn left at the first trail intersection. After a short climb this path forks: the right-hand trail (30 minutes) entails an extremely steep and slippery climb; the left-hand trail (45 minutes) is less taxing.

A taxi from Apia costs ST6, or take the Vaoola or Siumu bus (ST1.20).

## BAHÁ'Í HOUSE OF WORSHIP

While the Bahá'í faith is less than 200 hundred years old, its presence in far-flung corners of the globe technically makes it one of the world's most widespread religions. The attractive **Bahá'í House of Worship** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 24192; 🕒 information centre 6am-6pm) sits in a lovely manicured plot near the highest point of The Cross Island Rd and is one of only eight such structures in

the world – all are architecturally different except for being domed and having nine sides and entrances, reflecting the faith's central tenet of a basic unity of religions and peoples. Attendants in the adjoining information centre will happily answer any questions visitors pester them with.

A taxi from Apia costs around ST14.

## LAKE LANOTO'O

The pea-green crater of **Lake Lanoto'o** (Map pp486-7) is about as removed from human habitation as you can get on 'Upolu. Its remote central highlands location and alternating warm and cold currents have lent it an eerie nature which has been further strengthened by some apocryphal rumours. One story has it that the lake bed has never been found, but Lanoto'o's depth was actually determined several years ago (it's apparently not that deep). It's also known as Goldfish Lake as it's full of wild goldfish.

The steep trail leading to the lake from the car park (located 3km along a very rough side road) is overgrown and forks repeatedly. Consequently, a number of hikers have gotten lost trying to find the lake and anyone considering a visit is strongly advised to hire a guide. A dependable outfit is **SamoaOnFoot** (☎ 21529, 25416; samoaonfoot@hotmail.com), which organises half-day trips to the lake (ST55; includes rubber-boot hire).

## PAPAPAPAI-TAI FALLS

About 3.5km south of the Bahá'í temple is the parking area for **Papapapai-tai Falls** (Map pp486-7; 🕒 9.30am-4pm Tue-Sat). It's only a few steps to the lookout over this spectacular 100m waterfall that plunges into a dramatic, forested gorge.

## FATUEA POOL

East of Apia, secreted beneath the campus of Piula Methodist Theological College, is **Fatuea Pool** (Map pp486-7; Main East Coast Rd; admission ST2; 🕒 8am-4pm Mon-Sat), also known as Piula Cave Pool. There are two magical freshwater cave pools here, joined by a 3m underwater passage where you can hum the *Mission Impossible* theme song as you swim through it. Wimps can walk between the caves; the opening to the second cave is about 20m northeast of the first.

## UAFATO CONSERVATION AREA

The 14 sq km of wild and rugged terrain that comprises the **Uafato Conservation Area** (Map pp486-7) receives relatively few visitors, even though it boasts untouched rainforest that marches down from 'Upolu's north-eastern hills almost to the ocean's high-tide mark. It's perhaps for this reason that the region remains blanketed by a stillness that seems otherworldly. Flora-lovers can track down a rare stand of *ifilele* (the tree used for carving 'ava bowls), while fauna-lovers can observe numerous bird and bat species going about their aerial business. **Traditional carvers** live in Uafato village and are usually willing to demonstrate their accomplished art to visitors.

Uafato can be reached via a rough track that winds around Fagaloa Bay; the turn-off is at powerful Falefa Falls. This track offers beautiful views through the rainforest down to the sea, but don't go past Saletele without a high-clearance vehicle. Another option is the road (4WD only; 10km) signposted off Le Mafa Pass Rd to the village of Ta'elegaga.

## ALEIPATA BEACHES & REEFS

A reef system and associated ecology that remains relatively unscarred by starfish infestations, or destructive human practices such as dynamite fishing, is the reason why the Aleipata district at the southeastern end of 'Upolu offers some of the island's best snorkelling and diving. Familiarise yourself with its submerged beauty by just walking in off the fabulous beach at **Lalomanu** (Map pp486-7), or by venturing offshore to the islands of **Nu'utele**, **Nu'ulua** and **Namu'a** – the first two are part of a conservation area that protects sea-bird nesting grounds – but beware of potentially deadly varieties of cone shells and strong high-tide currents.

Other beaches in the district such as **Saleapaga** (Map pp486-7) aren't quite as inviting as Lalomanu but are still very attractive.

The bus ride from Apia to either Lalomanu (ST4) or A'ufaga (ST4) takes up to 90 minutes.

## TO SUA OCEAN TRENCH

While cruising along the Main South Coast Rd, watch out for the partially obscured sign for the superb **To Sua Ocean Trench** (Map

pp486-7; Main South Coast Rd; adult/child ST4/2; (🚶) 8am-5pm). The so-called trench is actually a pair of huge sunken waterholes separated by a short rocky archway, all of it swept by an ocean current that surges in through an underwater passageway. Descend into the second waterhole via the 15m rope ladder and then float around the subground pools to your heart's content. Note, however, that the current can be surprisingly strong, and we strongly advise against attempting to enter the passageway to the ocean.

The serene privacy of the stone-walled trench is perfect for those fit enough to clamber down and (most importantly) back up the high, freely swinging rope ladder. But it will be an ordeal for anyone who doesn't have the strength to haul themselves out and needs to summon help to do so. Further complicating the matter is the fact that the rope ladder is not always in the best condition – report any loose or broken rungs to the land owners.

When you've had your fill of these magical waterholes, take the short track south to ocean cliffs where you can watch large waves flailing against the sheer rocks.

## SOPO'AGA FALLS

It's worth stopping to check out **Sopo'aga Falls** (Map pp486-7; Le Mafa Pass Rd; adult/child ST3/free), which empty themselves into an enormous gorge. The lookout over the 54m-high waterfall is accessed through a garden replete with intriguing tropical plants such as Indian mulberry, pineapple and kava. Traditional artefacts are also displayed, including a *umukuka* (cooking house). There's an honesty box for when the attendant's house is unattended.

## TOGITOGIGA RECREATION RESERVE

The **Togitogiga Recreation Reserve** (Map pp486-7; (🚶) 6am-6pm) is a pleasant tropical oasis centred on a series of gentle waterfalls. Unless you visit on a Saturday, you'll probably have the sheltered swimming holes between the falls and the picnic grounds above them to yourself. To get here, turn on to the access road for O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park and continue to the second parking area. The toilet facilities have been boarded up so day-trippers should come prepared for wilderness ablutions.

## O LE PUPU-PU'E NATIONAL PARK

The 29-sq-km **O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park** (Map pp486-7; (🚶) 6am-6pm), the name of which translates as 'From the Coast to the Mountain Top', was created in 1978. The information building at the park entrance is just a tease – it's been closed for some time – but the on-site ranger usually appears when visitors arrive.

A hiking trail begins opposite the side track to O Le Pupu Lava Coast and leads through thick rainforest to **Pe'ape'a Cave** (Map pp486-7; six hours return), a large lava tube inhabited by *pe'ape'a* (swiftlets). This walk is only recommended for experienced hikers; bring your own (BYO) torch (flashlight). From the cave, you can continue along a heavily overgrown (often obscured) trail to **Ofa Waterfall** (Map pp486-7; three days return for the trip from the main road via the cave). A guide is obligatory. For more info on this trek, visit the resource centre at the **Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 23800; Beach Rd) office beside the NZ High Commission in Apia.

At the park's western boundary, a rough 3.5km **track** ((🚶) 6am-6pm) leads south from the main road to the magnificently rugged **O Le Pupu Lava Coast** (Map pp486-7), where a rocky coastal trail leads you along lava cliffs that are constantly harassed by enormous waves.

## SOUTH COAST BEACHES & REEFS

The south coast of 'Upolu hosts numerous beaches where you can play castaway amid leaning coconut palms and surf-lapped sand. At Lefaga village is **Return to Paradise Beach** (Map pp486-7; day access per person/bicycle/car ST2/3/10; (🚶) Mon-Sat), which had a starring role in the 1951 Gary Cooper film *Return to Paradise*. This particular paradise is a little rough on swimmers, however, due to submerged boulders and heavy surf. From here a narrow road lined by dozing villages and with great views heads west to Falelatai.

Down a 3km access road east of Return to Paradise Beach is **Matareva** (Map pp486-7; day access per person/bicycle/car ST2/3/10), a series of delightful coves with shallow snorkelling areas and lots of rock pools. A few kilometres east of Matareva is beautiful **Salamumu Beach** (Map pp486-7; day access per bicycle/car ST3/6; (🚶) Mon-Sat), reached via a potholed 5.5km track.

About 15km further east is **Aganoa Black Sand Beach** (Map pp486-7; day access per car ST5), where the water is deep enough for swimming. There's also a popular surf-break called **Boulders** (Map pp486-7) just off Cape Niua'o'i. The turn-off to the very rough 3km track to Aganoa is opposite a blue house 150m east of the one-lane stone bridge in Sa'agafou. The beach is a 10-minute walk to the east of where this track terminates; locals told us to just ignore the 'Private Property' sign.

Accessed from the village of Tafatafa to the east of O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park is **Vaiula Beach** (Map pp486-7), which has a good surf-break.

## PAPASEE'A SLIDING ROCK

Kids and adults alike have a great time skimming down the waterfall into a cool rock pool at **Papasee'a Sliding Rock** (Map pp486-7; off Maugafolau Rd; adult/child ST2/1; (🚶) 6am-6pm). Competition for a seat at the top of the main 5m slide can be fierce, but there are also three smaller slides to enjoy. If you visit during the dry season, check that the water level in the pool is deep enough to be safe. The path down to the pool comprises a steep, slippery, 200-step stairway, so save some energy for the climb back up.

Take the Se'ese'e bus (ST1.30) from the Maketi Fou and ask to be dropped off at the turn-off for Papasee'a.

## MANONO

pop 1400 / area 3 sq km

If you'd like to temporarily escape the engine noise and boom-box soundscape created by Samoan buses and cars, as well as forego encounters with fractious village dogs, boat over to the small island of Manono in Apolima Strait. The only transport option here is the humble foot, and canines appear to have been banished, which makes Manono a truly tranquil destination. The only things that can snap you out of a tropical reverie here are occasional blasts from local stereos and the hotel tour groups that can clog the island's main trail.

It's obligatory for visitors to do the two-to 2½-hour circumnavigation of the island by following a narrow trail edged with distinctive yellow *lantalotalo* (local variety of lily), banana palms and hibiscus. Handicrafts such as *lava-lava* and woven baskets are

sometimes hawked along this path by village women. The trail winds through Lepuia'i, where you'll see the two-tiered **Grave of 99 Stones** (Map pp486-7). It's dedicated to high chief Vaovasa, who was killed after an unsuccessful attempt to abduct his 100th wife from 'Upolu. The **Peter Turner monument** (Map pp486-7) at Faleu commemorates the 1835 landing of the Methodist missionary.

If you follow the path behind the women's committee building in Salua, you'll eventually end up on top of Mt Tulimanuiva (110m) where there's a large **star mound**. Nearby is the **grave of Afutiti**, who was buried standing up to keep watch over the island. This side trip takes 90 minutes to two hours.

Guided tours of Manono (ST20) and various other activities, from canoe trips to instruction in traditional weaving and cooking, are offered by both of the island's places to stay (see p500).

To visit Manono, head for the jetty at Cape Fatusofia, just south of Samoan Village Resorts. To charter a boat for a return day trip should cost ST40 for the entire boat. Buses marked either 'Manono-uta' or 'Falelatai' (ST2) will take you to the jetty from Apia. A taxi costs ST42.

## APOLIMA

pop 100 / area 1 sq km

Few travellers make the trip out to minuscule Apolima in Apolima Strait, which means few outsiders get to appreciate the island's fantastic isolation and rugged beauty. From a distance, Apolima looks like a steep-sided, inaccessible volcanic cone adrift in the Pacific. It's only when you get close enough that you spy the narrow gap in the island's northern cliffs, through which small boats are driven right up onto a narrow sandy beach. Only 100 people live in Apolima's compact crater, where a handful of buildings are interspersed with pig pens, jungly foliage and (naturally) a volleyball court. One of the largest timber-roofed structures is Apolima's church, where a mellifluous **choir** practices on Saturday night before singing with even more harmonious conviction during Sunday morning **church services**; dress up for the occasion. To get a wonderful overview of the island and surrounding ocean, climb up to the small **lighthouse** perched high on the crater's northern rim.

An invitation is necessary to visit Apolima. Drop into the shop in Apolima-uta with the Western Union sign out front and ask to speak to Sofia. She may contact an islander on your behalf to arrange a visit. Boats depart from the wharf behind this shop. Accommodation providers on nearby Manono (see p500) may also be able to arrange a visit.

Accommodation and food should cost around ST50 per person per night. It's also much appreciated if you gift some food to the host family (about ST20 worth of chicken is a reliable choice). Confirm that the cost of the return boat trip is included in the agreed price. If a boat has to be organised expressly for you (such as on Sunday, when Apolima's boats are beached) it will cost ST150 for a one-way trip.

## ACTIVITIES

Aficionados of snorkelling and diving will find plenty of spectacular underwater territory to explore around 'Upolu, while experienced surfers and kayakers have a challenging time on surface swells. Land lubbers are kept happy by some stunning inland trails; the less energetic content themselves with a round of golf.

## Diving

**Moanalei Dive 'n' Surf** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 777 7216), based at Taufua Beach Fales (see p499), in the Aleipata district, conducts diving trips (from ST195) along 'Upolu's southeastern coast.

**Liquid Motion** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 64381; www.liquidmotion.ws), based at Sinalei Reef Resort (p499), does various south-coast dives (ST150 for one dive, ST120 for each of one to five dives) and offers five-day Professional Association of Dive Instructors (PADI) courses (ST1200). Also try **AquaSamoa** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 23805; www.aquasamoa.com), based at Cocanuts Beach Club & Resort at Maninoa, on the island's south coast.

## Golf

The **Royal Samoa Country Club** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 20120; off Main East Coast Rd) has an 18-hole, par 72 course. Visitors are welcome and pay ST10/20 to play nine/18 holes. Club hire is ST20 (with a ST50 deposit).

There's also the **Faleata Golf Course** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 23964), a few kilometres south of Vaitele. To play nine/18 holes costs ST5/8.

Only half-sets of clubs are available for hire (ST10).

## Hiking

**SamoaOnFoot** (☎ 21529, 25416; samoaonfoot@hotmail.com) offers expert guided hikes through some of 'Upolu's most rewarding terrain. Options include a 15km guided walk (ST90) around Fagaloa Bay and an excursion to mysterious Lake Lanoto'o (p493).

Other rewarding places for a walk are the coastal and rainforest trails in O Le Pupupu'e National Park (p494) and the short but rather taxing walk to see the graves of Robert Louis and Fanny Stevenson near the summit of Mt Vaea (p492).

## Kayaking

**EcoTour Samoa** (☎ 22144; www.ecotoursamoa.com) offers a seven-day sea-kayaking tour (US\$190 per person per day) where you'll see coral reefs just 4.5m below you, chat with local fishers in their *paopao* (canoes) and spot dolphins.

**Island Explorer Sea Kayaking** (☎ 22401; www.islandexplorer.ws) caters to everyone from beginners to experienced paddlers. Day trips cost ST180 per person, while overnight two-day tours to Manono or the offshore islands at Aleipata are ST360 (plus an extra ST50 to ST70 for accommodation and meals).

## Snorkelling & Swimming

The snorkelling off 'Upolu is superb, particularly the Aleipata district (p493), around Manono (p495) and at Palolo Deep (p489). If you plan to do a lot of snorkelling, bring your own gear as few places hire snorkels, masks and flippers, and the equipment supplied by some accommodation providers is usually not in great condition.

The majority of beaches around the island are too shallow for satisfying swimming, but you won't hear anyone complaining.

## Surfing

Surfers should take their boards to the break off Vaiula Beach, which lies immediately east of Tafatafa village. Experienced board riders can also go day surfing at Salani Surf Resort (p499); the ST150 fee covers guided surfing and a buffet lunch.

**Moanalei Dive 'n' Surf** (☎ 777 7216), based at Taufua Beach Fales (p499), organises guided surfing trips (from ST50).

## 'UPOLU FOR CHILDREN

There are lots of entertaining distractions for children in 'Upolu. A handful of these are located indoors, such as the cultural knick-knacks in Apia's Maketi Fou (p489) and its Flea Market (p489), the absorbing history of the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum (p492) and exuberant Samoan *fiafia* (p503). But the majority lie out in Samoa's fresh tropical air. Treat the kids to safe snorkelling at Palolo Deep (p489) and off Lalomanu Beach (p493), the exhilarating plunge at Papasee's Sliding Rock (p495), or a picnic at the Togitogiga Recreation Reserve (p494).

Unfortunately, professional baby-sitting is not a growth industry in Samoa. Ask your accommodation provider about child-minding options.

## TOURS

The following Apia-based companies conduct tours of 'Upolu:

**Ecotour Samoa** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22144; www.ecotoursamoa.com; Travellers' Lounge, Beach Rd) Its all-inclusive ecotours give participants the chance to indulge in 4WD excursions, bird-watching and sea kayaking. Most tours cost US\$190 per person per day.

**Green Turtle Tours** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22144, 29229; www.greenturtle.com; Travellers' Lounge, Beach Rd) This outfit's guide-accompanied hop-on, hop-off bus services conveniently circle 'Upolu daily. But its attempts to get you to prebook with its favoured accommodation doesn't work in favour of travellers seeking true flexibility, and budget travellers can easily find better deals than its ST90 per night accommodation vouchers. A one-month pass costs ST170, not including accommodation and many daily activities. It also offers day tours of 'Upolu (ST90).

**Oceania Travel & Tours** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 24443; www.samoatravel.com; Hotel Kitano Tusitala, Mulinu'u Rd) Among Oceania's day tours is one taking in eastern 'Upolu (US\$40), including Lalomanu and Fatumea Pool, and one of Manono (US\$40).

**Samoa Scenic Tours** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 26981, 22880; www.samoascenic.com; Aggie Grey's Hotel, Beach Rd) Runs half-/full-day scenic, cultural and ecotours around Apia and 'Upolu costing from ST60/120 per person.

## SLEEPING

There are abundant accommodation options in and around central Apia to suit all budgets. If you're looking for something less urban and more beachy, the island's south coast is strewn with all manner of *fale* and other, fancier bedrooms; much of this

southern beachside accommodation lies in the Aleipata district. There are also several great places to stay on the north coast (east of Apia).

## Apia

### BUDGET

**Hidden Garden** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 25416, 31252; garden@lesamoa.net; Vini Rd; fale per person ST35-45) This budget setup is extremely popular with travellers because its languid environs are well removed from the congestion of central Apia, and because its stilt-raised *fale* are scattered haphazardly across an appealingly overgrown plot of land. The owner, Eti, conducts hikes throughout Samoa via SamoaOnFoot (opposite).

**Seipepa** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 25447; seipepa@samoalexperience.com; off Vaitele St; dm/s/d incl breakfast ST45/75/90; ☎) This lovely place is ensconced in one of the peaceful villages that make up the outer 'suburbs' of Apia. The quartet of rooms in the main house are highly sought after as they offer more privacy than the tight grouping of *fale* in the backyard. Kitchen and bathroom facilities are shared.

**Valentine's Motel** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22158; valentine@samoaws.com; Fugalei St; s/d from ST40/60; ☎ ☎) This friendly place has the feel of a big family home, a perception reinforced by the prominent tomb of a family member out on the back lawn. When you want a break from the confines of the budget rooms, head downstairs to sprawl in the spacious lounge. Air-conditioned rooms with bathrooms are available for ST100.

**Seaside Inn** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22578; seasideinn@ipasifika.net; Beach Rd; dm ST30, s ST65-70, d ST75-85) The laid-back Seaside Inn has an unpredictable mixture of rooms: some are a little worn out and claustrophobic, while others seem to be in much better condition. Check out the rooms on offer before committing to an overnight stay. The convivial café-bar out front serves cheap fast food and is a gathering place for thirsty travellers.

### MIDRANGE

**Aniva's Place** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 23431, 20501; anivas@lesamoa.net; off Falealili St, Moto'otua; s ST95-115, d ST115-135; ☎ ☎) This two-storey 'suburban' dwelling offers all the creature comforts of someone else's home, as well as a small bar, a refreshing pool and a personable character that is lacking in most of Apia's

other places to stay. It's a fair way from the town centre, but Aniva's relaxing air is well worth the extra travel time. Prices include breakfast.

**Pasefika Inn** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20971; www.pasefika.inn.ws; Mata'utu St; r incl breakfast from ST90; ☒ ☑) Rooms at the Pasefika are great value for money. They're generally in very good condition and have a bathroom, telephone and a fridge to stock refreshments. The inn has a casual, airy feel enhanced by the balcony wrapped around the front and a spacious dining-bar area where guests gobble the complimentary breakfast.

**Samoa Outrigger Hotel** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 20042; outrigger@samoa.ws; Falealili St; fale per person ST45, s ST100-140, d ST110-160; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) This charming hotel is set in a high-ceilinged, century-old timber building hidden away behind a high hedge. Upmarket sophistication is implied by the billiard table, swimming pool and the calm authority of the staff, but the price tag is resolutely midrange. For something a bit different, rent one of the *fale* out back.

**Vaiala Beach Cottages** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22202; www.samoana.org/vaiala; Vaiala-vini Rd; s/d/tr US\$45/70/80; ☒) This grouping of modern, self-contained cottages is only a short stroll from the soothing blue of the South Pacific Ocean, including the beautiful depths of Palolo Deep. It's an ideal base for families keen to exploit the lower rates offered for longer stays, though it's not the quietest place in Apia when full up.

**Hotel Millenia** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 28284; www.hotelmilleniasamoa.com; Mulinu'u Rd; r incl breakfast from ST180; ☒ ☑) This large hotel is perched halfway up breezy Mulinu'u Peninsula, where there's relatively little traffic noise to disturb the seaside ambience. Rooms are well appointed and come with breakfast, while the upstairs sitting room is perfect for lounging with a book in one hand and a cocktail in another.

## TOP END

**Hotel Kitano Tusitala** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21122; www.kitano.ws; Mulinu'u Rd; s US\$95-175, d US\$105-180, tr US\$125-195; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) The Kitano Tusitala thumbed its nose at the noisiness of central Apia and chose instead to site itself on an attractive, landscaped 5.5-hectare plot at the base of Mulinu'u Peninsula. When not lazing around the pool or snoozing in the

spacious air-conditioned rooms, guests are indulging in the fine dining at the Seaview Villa Restaurant (p501).

**Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22880; www.aggiegreys.com; Beach Rd; s US\$120-170, d & tw US\$125-175, st US\$280-340; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) This four-star hotel is a Samoan icon thanks to James Michener's immortalisation of its namesake owner in one of his books. It's certainly luxurious, with most rooms and bungalows (named after various celebrities) arranged around an attractive central pool; some good eateries, including the Fale Restaurant (see p502); a popular *fiafia* (see p503); and excellent facilities, from Internet access to organised tours. Poolside rooms are, however, disappointingly poky considering their price – get a harbour-facing room instead.

**Hotel Elisa** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21116; www.hotel.elisa.ws; Mulinu'u Rd; r ST290-320, st ST750; ☒ ☑ ☒) The east-facing rooms at Hotel Elisa offer ocean vistas, while west-facing rooms point you towards the island's steep central ridge. The views and the hotel's soporific location on Mulinu'u Peninsula help make up for its rather functional design aesthetic.

## Northeastern 'Upolu

**Albatross Hideout** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 40375; Saoluafata; fale per person ST30, r ST70) The excellent, table-equipped *fale* here extend out over the waters of a shallow bay, so you can update your travel diary or munch one of the tasty meals served up in the on-site restaurant (breakfast ST10, lunch and dinner ST18 to ST45; open lunch and dinner Monday to Saturday) while listening to water lapping underneath you. Look for the roadside sign reading 'Dal Mart' on its top half.

**Siliroa Beach Huts** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 40656; Laulii; r per person ST30) This budget place comprises jerry-built beachfront huts that look as if a strong wind could sweep them away; fortunately they're more resilient than they look. The handmade nature of the accommodation, the requirement for self-catering (a wood stove is supplied) and the overgrown surrounds will suit backpackers looking for a truly down-to-earth experience.

## Aleiapata District

**Litia Sini's Beach Resort** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 41050, 41388; www.litiasini.beach.ws; Main South Coast Rd, Lalomanu; fale per person incl breakfast & dinner ST70; ☒) The

enclosed *fale* at this highly recommended accommodation are lined up along the gorgeous sands of Lalomanu Beach. From their small raised decks, it's only a short dash into Aleiapata's turquoise lagoon; snorkel gear is available for hire (ST15, ST50 deposit). Breakfast and dinner are included in the price, and a windswept on-site restaurant (meals ST12 to ST20) provides basic lunches. The resort also has a bar with an outside deck overlooking the beach.

**Namu'a Island Beach Fales** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 20566; namuaisland@hotmail.com; Namu'a; fale per person incl meals ST70) Namu'a is only a short boat ride from Mutiatele (cars minded for ST10), but once you're on this tiny, family-owned island you'll feel like 'Upolu is light years away. Do an early morning circumnavigation of the shoreline, clamber up the steep central peak and snorkel the surrounding reef. Ask for a west-facing *fale*, as those facing north bear the brunt of incoming wind. Prices include all meals; BYO favourite liquids.

**Taufua Beach Fales** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 41051; Main South Coast Rd, Lalomanu; fale per person incl breakfast & dinner ST55-60) Taufua is set up beside Litia Sini's on Lalomanu Beach and draws praise from travellers who appreciate its lovely setting and gregarious nature. Choose between enclosed and open *fale*.

**Faofao Beach Fales** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 41067; Main South Coast Rd, Saleapaga; fale per person ST20) Faofao treats each guest like one of the family. Meal-times often feel more like social events, and the Saturday night *fiafia* (guests/nonguests free/ST30) is just one cause for celebration. There's a separate charge for meals (breakfast ST10, lunch ST15 and dinner ST15) but when you tote it all up it's still a reasonable collective rate for food and a thatched roof over your head.

**Boomerang Creek Resort** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 40358; www.boomerangcreek.ws; Main South Coast Rd, Saleapaga; fale s ST25-50, d ST40-75) The name is a tribute to Australia, but the beachfront setting with a backdrop of greenery-cloaked cliffs is pure Samoa. *Fale* up on the hillside terraces are cheaper (and feel more private) than those anchored on the beach. Vegetarians will be pleased to find several options on the menu of the Kangarama Restaurant (meals ST10 to ST40; open breakfast, lunch and dinner). This low-key resort also offers snorkel hire (ST5), Samoan massages (ST20) and a Saturday night *fiafia* (ST10/30 without/with food).

## Southern 'Upolu

**Salani Surf Resort** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 41069; www.surf.samo.com; Salani; surfer package ST350, nonsurfer package ST275, B&B d ST150; ☒) This excellent resort at the mouth of the Fupisia River caters primarily to experienced surfers and emphasises respect for Samoan culture. Numbers are limited to a maximum of 12 at any one time and the main package includes transfers, accommodation (in enclosed *fale*), meals, tours and guided surfing; nonsurfer packages include accommodation and meals only.

**Sinalei Reef Resort** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 25191; www.sinalei.com; off Main South Coast Rd; r US\$190-600; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) This resort occupies a large, nicely landscaped plot by the ocean. Squeezed in between the well-appointed, stand-alone units are tennis courts, a swimming pool and a restaurant (lunch ST18 to ST30, dinner ST25 to ST50; open lunch and dinner; nonsmoking) with an eclectic menu of seafood paella, Thai curries and pizzas; nonguests are also welcome to eat here. Establish where your unit is sited, as those opposite the resort's golf course are not as appealing locationwise as those near the pool. There's a Wednesday night *fiafia* (ST65 for dinner and show).

**Vava'u Beach Fales** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 41306; Vava'u; fale ST180, each extra adult/child ST20/10; ☒) You'll find these upmarket *fale* well off the main coast road on peaceful Vava'u Beach. *Fale* at the property's western end have ready access to the most desirable slice of beach. After a swim, try some authentic *oka* (marinated raw fish) in the on-site restaurant (mains ST14 to ST28; open breakfast, lunch and dinner).

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Virgin Cove Resort** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 777 5000; Sa'anapu; fale per person ST70-90) Turn right once you reach the beach at Sa'anapu to find this superb, purpose-built resort. Its waterfront setting is magnificent – a beautiful strip of sand bordering a gentle cove – and its environmentally friendly facilities ensure minimal impact on the surrounding nature. The large *fale* at the cove's western end offer more privacy than those nearest the car park. Prices include breakfast and dinner; vegetarians are catered for with advance notice.

**Tautua & Sauaso Hunt's Fale** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 778 3186, 779 6056; Aganoa Black Sand Beach; fale per person incl meals ST60) At the time of research there was only one *fale* at this secluded, family-run place, with more roomed to be on the way. The *fale* has a couple of beds and a mattress. Aganoa is one of the few beaches in Samoa where the water is deep enough for a satisfying swim.

**Mataveva Beach Fales** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 35139; Mataveva Beach; fale per person ST40, with all meals ST70) The water off Mataveva Beach is a beautiful turquoise colour and numerous rock pools line a serene swimming area, so it's a great spot to overnight. These attributes also make the beach very popular with locals.

## Northwestern 'Upolu

**Aggie Grey's Lagoon & Beach Resort** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 22880; www.aggiegreys.com; Main West Coast Rd; s/d/st US\$180/190/400; ☒ ☕ ☺ ☺) This sibling property to the Aggie Grey hotel in Apia opened to great fanfare in 2005, even though the resort was still being landscaped and more rooms were being added. The facilities are what you'd expect from a five-star property and the location near the airport will suit those with early morning or late evening flight times. Book well in advance of your visit.

**Airport Lodge** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 45584; www.samoahotels.ws/airportlodge.htm; Main West Coast Rd; s ST110-140, d ST125-170; ☕ ☺) The bathroom-equipped bungalows at Airport Lodge are light, breezy affairs, but are otherwise undistinguished. This accommodation will suit those who want to stay relatively near the airport or Mulifanua Wharf (for boats to Savai'i). Breakfast costs an extra ST18, while a set-menu dinner costs ST35.

## Manono

**Sunset View Fales** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 45640; Lepuia'i; fale per person ST90) Rustic but bright and comfortable little beach shacks are on offer here in Lepuia'i village. The owner, Leota, provides lessons in traditional Samoan cookery and will run you out to the nearby reef for snorkelling stints. Price includes all meals and boat transfers.

**Vaotu'ua Beach Resort** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 46077; Faleu; fale per person ST45, with all meals ST90) Vaotu'ua is located in Faleu village on the eastern shore of Manono. As resorts go, this is a low-key affair comprising a small, shady

compound with a half-dozen simple *fale*. Meals are eaten at a communal table and can each be purchased separately for ST15. Boat transfers are included in the price. There's a well-stocked shop opposite the resort.

## EATING

Café society types will only find a few places in Apia that meet their expectations. Visitors generally make do choosing between formal restaurants in high-profile hotels and along Apia's waterfront, informal cafés where fried foods rule, and the several places devoted to international cuisines.

The places reviewed here are all located in Apia. Outside of the Samoan capital, only a handful of accommodation offers menu-based restaurants; most places to stay, particularly those involving *fale*, include at least some meals in the price of an overnight stay. Details of all such arrangements are given in the reviews of the preceding Sleeping section.

## Cafés & Quick Eats

**Sydney Side Café** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 779 0495; Gold Star Bldg, Convent St; meals ST10-22; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) If the strength and quality of your morning coffee are essential to how you cope with the rest of your day, head down to this café for a wake-up call. While enjoying the taste of imported beans, you can also enjoy some excellent gourmet sandwiches and salads.

**Gourmet Seafood** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 24625; Togafu'afu'a Rd; meals ST5-8; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) This place is a bit of a local institution and is favoured by Samoans and expats alike for its no-frills but tasty seafood meals. The open-air eating area is usually

packed with customers at lunchtime, discussing their day between mouthfuls of burgers and assorted fish food.

**Cappuccino Vineyard** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22049; ACB Bldg; meals ST7-16; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) Set up at one end of a busy pedestrian mall, Cappuccino Vineyard does a busy trade in filling breakfasts and lunches before transforming its compact floor space into a night-time wine bar (see p502). The good food is augmented by decent coffee and smoothies.

**Curry House** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 26815; The Cross Island Rd; meals ST4-20; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) On the way to or from the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum, drop by this small, pleasant eatery for some delicious Indian fare. Its deck offers long-range views and is a nice place on which to spoon-feed yourself some curry and slurp a lassi or two. All the food is available for takeaway.

**Le Moana Café** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 24828; Lotemau Centre, cnr Convent & Mt Vaea Sts; meals ST7-18; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) Le Moana is another breakfast- and lunchtime favourite of Apian workers, who crowd its small interior and courtyard to devour pancakes, burgers and steaks. Every Wednesday night it dusts off a Weber and cooks up an all-you-can-eat barbecue (ST37), accompanied by live music.

**Pinati's** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 24248; Convent St; mains ST2-5; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) Pinati's is one of the few remaining places in town selling cheap Samoan nosh. It's a cavernous, unsigned eatery that's always full of Samoan workers and it serves up huge meals.

**Mari's Bakehouse & Café** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 30658; Beach Rd; meals ST12-19; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) Mari's can plug the empty spaces in any stomach, no matter how big they are. Just don't overeat when sampling the hearty burritos, burgers and egg dishes, or you'll find that you'll spend the rest of the day regretting it (trust us).

## Restaurants

**Sails** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20628; Beach Rd; breakfast & lunch ST15-25, dinner ST30-45; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) The broad balcony of this accomplished restaurant, set in a historic building, is the perfect place to enjoy a big breakfast while watching the Police Band march by early on weekday mornings. Alternatively, come here for dinner

and watch the sun sink into the harbour. The excellent menu will delight seafood-lovers, but vegetarians may feel cheated by having to make a special request for their preferred meal.

**Bistro Tatau** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22727; Beach Rd; mains ST25-50; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) This classy fine-dining establishment is sited across the road from the Flea Market, as if in counterpoint to the latter's greasy food stalls. You'd be hard-pressed to find another menu as innovative as Tatau's in Samoa – the local appetite for soufflés, laksa and vegetable crepes just isn't that great. The interior is crisp chic, all polished floorboards and white tablecloths.

**Seaview Villa Restaurant** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21122; Hotel Kitano Tuisitala, Mulinu'u Rd; mains ST30-45; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) This well-established restaurant in the grounds of the Hotel Kitano Tuisitala is touted as one of country's best. Its reputation is staked on a variety of expertly prepared Japanese dishes and superfresh seafood, no doubt collected from the nearby fish market while most people are still asleep. It's located upstairs in a building adjacent to the hotel's access road. Book well ahead to nab a table on the sea-facing balcony.

**Paddles** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20194; Beach Rd; mains ST16-38; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) Though considered by many as simply a good place for a late-afternoon drink, Paddles also prepares some tempting main meals, from seafood crepes to creamy pastas. Turn up early on weekend nights if you want a table on the balcony overlooking the harbour.

**Treasure Garden Restaurant** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22586; Fugalei St; mains ST13-30; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) Occupying the ground floor of the Treasure Garden Hotel, this restaurant has an enormous menu of Chinese dishes – you'd need several weeks to try them all. Meals are competently prepared and the chef doesn't skimp on the servings. There are about a dozen vegetarian selections.

**Rainforest Café & Restaurant** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 25736; Beach Rd; lunch ST8-16, dinner ST14-26; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) This BYO eatery couldn't find much backwoods flora on Beach Rd, so it provided its own. The interior walls are screened by a myriad plants, and wood shavings crunch under the feet of guests. Curries and other hearty meals are the specialities here, and vegetarians are catered for.

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Italiano Pizza Bar** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 24330; Beach Rd, Apia; small/medium/large pizzas from ST15/25/27; ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕ ☕) Locals and foreigners converge on this humble waterfront pizzeria to talk, drink jugs of lurid alcoholic mixtures, and break into the occasional burst of spontaneous song. If you object to cigarette smoke, you should probably steer clear of the patio. They do free deliveries to hotels in central Apia. And yes, the pizzas are great.

Also recommended:

**Fale Restaurant** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22880; Aggie Grey's Hotel, Beach Rd; breakfast & lunch from ST15, dinner from ST19; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☒) This informal restaurant sits within an enormous *fale* beside Aggie Grey's pool and serves up lots of Western-style meals.

**Le Tamarina** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22880; lunch/dinner from ST35/50; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Mon; ☒) Also in Aggie Grey's, off the foyer, is this stiffly formal place.

### Self-Catering

There's an abundance of fresh produce at the **Maketi Fou** (p489) and the **fish market** (p489). Central supermarkets with reasonable selections include **Chan Mow's** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22616; Beach Rd; ☺ 8am-5pm), **Molesi's** (Map pp490-1; Beach Rd; ☺ 6am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) and **MH Super Fresh** (Map pp490-1; Beach Rd; ☺ 6am-7pm), while the ramshackle **Pelerosa Mini Mart** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 26042; Beach Rd; ☺ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) has a bakery selling bread, pies and doughnuts.

### DRINKING

Apia's waterfront is crammed with drinking options, though few open their doors on a Sunday. Elsewhere on 'Upolu, the only commercial establishments where you can slake your thirst are the bars at hotels and resorts.

**Cocktails on the Rocks** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20736; Beach Rd, Apia) For some reason, this small, unassuming bar is almost always full. It's a favourite haunt of expats and newly arrived *palagi*, who crowd around the tables out front and send up clouds of smoke while ordering cocktail refills (ST8/20 per glass/jug).

**RSA Club** (Returned Services Association; Map pp490-1; ☎ 20171; Beach Rd, Apia) Don't be fooled by the billboard advertising Wondersoft toilet paper at the entrance. Nicknamed 'The Rosa', this place is anything but soft: the

standard drink is a 750mL Vailima beer, the floor has possibly the oldest, most scarred linoleum on the planet, and you don't want to be here when a fight breaks out (usually around the pool tables at closing time). The atmosphere is always lively, especially when bands play (see opposite).

**Apia Yacht Club** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21313; Mulinu'u Rd, Apia; ☺ 4pm-midnight Tue-Sat, 2pm-midnight Sun) It's worth heading up Mulinu'u Peninsula for a drink at this laid-back yacht club. The sea views merely reinforce the relaxing effects of a cold Vailima, and it's also one of the few places in town that's open on a Sunday.

**Bad Billy's** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 30298; Beach Rd, Apia) Billy's really isn't that bad. Things can sometimes get a little out of hand in this raucous saloon-style bar, but it's mostly just a lively place for a drink and a game of pool – that's assuming you can win a table off one of the local lads.

**Lighthouse Café & Bar** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 26669; Beach Rd, Apia; admission Mon & Tue nights free, Wed-Sat nights ST5; ☺ noon-midnight Mon-Sat) This enormous venue is mostly devoted to pool players early in the evening, but really fires up when guest DJs take their place at the turntable. A breeze occasionally blows in from the harbour across the road to cool sweaty bodies.

**Sieni's 3-Stool Bar & Restaurant** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 24849; Coconuts Beach Club & Resort, Maninoa) This affable bar is situated in Coconuts Beach Club & Resort on 'Upolu's southern coast, close to where The Cross Island Rd terminates. Contrary to its name, there's plenty of seating up at the hefty wooden bar, though some of it may be taken up by the resident cat.

### ENTERTAINMENT

Nondrinkers and those who don't want to spend their entire 'Upolu visit slumped over an empty glass will find alternative entertainment in the form of live music, traditional dances and movies.

### Live Music

**Cappuccino Vineyard** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22049; ACB Bldg, Apia) Several evenings a week, this casual café spreads its tables across a pedestrian mall and provides Samoan musicians to serenade wine- and beer-sipping patrons. It's a great way to end another busy day in the tropics.

**RSA Club** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20171; Beach Rd, Apia) Samoan bands regularly brave the large stage at the Rosa. Gigs are often free but occasionally there's a cover charge (around ST4 to ST5), particularly if two bands are playing on the same night.

### Fiafia

Spectacular Samoan dance performances called *fiafia* are staged regularly at various hotels. They're popular so it's best to book ahead. A buffet dinner usually accompanies the show, though you can choose to see the show only. There's a *fiafia* at **Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22880; Beach Rd, Apia; show ST15, dinner & show ST55) every Wednesday night and an equally lavish production at **Aggie Grey's Lagoon & Beach Resort** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 22880; Main West Coast Rd; show ST15, dinner & show ST55) every Thursday. The **Hotel Kitano Tusitala** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21122; Mulinu'u Rd, Apia; show ST15, dinner & show ST50) has a *fiafia* on Friday night.

### Cinemas

**Magik Cinemas** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 28126; Convent St, Apia; adult/child ST5/3.50) The pair of theatres here is devoted to mainstream movie magik and gets insanely busy on the weekend of a first release.

### SHOPPING

Memorable souvenirs can be bought at various shops around Apia, including *siapo*, the intricate *ie toga*, and finely made, multilegged *'ava* bowls. A treasure trove of such

crafts is available from the Maketi Fou (p489) and the Flea Market (p489).

**Elaine MAR Enterprises** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 25891; Saleufi St, Apia) Here you can buy colourful *lava-lava* machine-printed with traditional designs for ST9, or else have one made up for you – the hand-printed material costs around ST10 per metre.

**Plantation House** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22839; Lotopa Rd, Apia) Beautiful Samoan-made *lava-lava*, prints, tailored shirts, jewellery, lacquerware and other crafts line the walls of this fine boutique, which is situated on the southern outskirts of Apia.

## SAVAI'

pop 42,824 / area 1700 sq km

Sava'i'i is 'Upolu's wilder relative, a spectacular combination of overgrown plantations, lush jungle, sea-smashed coastal cliffs, pristine waterfalls and ragged volcanic cones (around 450 of them). The volcanic nature of the largest island in Polynesia outside NZ and Hawai'i has resulted in some gargantuan lava overflows in Sava'i'i's northern reaches. The island also has a prominent role in Samoan mythology and its rough landscape yields numerous legendary formations and enigmatic archaeological sites. Scattered around the coastline are typical Samoan villages, where children sit atop the tombs of ancestors, men walk along the road-side idly swinging their bush knives, and weather-beaten churches resound with the melodies of Sunday services.

### INFORMATION

**ANZ Bank** (☎ 51213; Salelologa) Beside the market. Has a 24-hour ATM.

**Internet access** (Salelologa; per 30min ST14) In the same building as Sava'i'i Travel Centre.

**Main post office** (Blue Bird Mall, Salelologa) Doubles as a call centre (using phonecards).

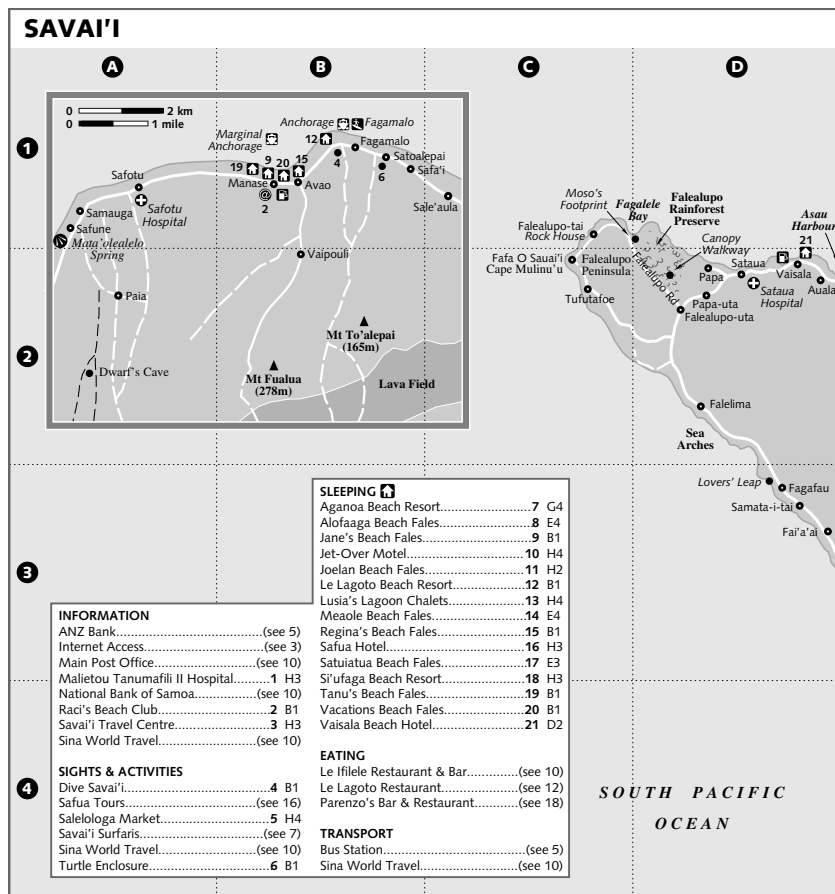
**Malielou Tanumafili II Hospital** (☎ 53511; Main North Coast Rd, Tuasivi) Doctors are on call around the clock. There are other basic hospitals at Safotu, Sataua and Foailalo.

**National Bank of Samoa** (☎ 51398; Blue Bird Mall, Salelologa)

**Raci's Beach Club** (☎ 54003; Main North Coast Rd, Manase; 1st 10min ST10, each subsequent min ST0.50) Another Internet-access provider.

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Hennie's Sports Bar** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22221; Fugalei St, Apia) Formerly known as JT's Sports Bar, this is a great place for a beer or a game of pool or darts. There are no pretensions here, just a boisterous crowd of drinkers who all seem to know each other and who seem more than happy to welcome newcomers. You can order snacks to soak up some of the booze.



**Savai'i Travel Centre** (☎ 51206; savaiitravelcentre@lesamoa.net; Salelologa) Arranges travel around the island. It's also an agent for Polynesian Airlines (☎ 22737/8).

**Sina World Travel** (☎ 51499; Blue Bird Mall, Salelologa) Arranges Savai'i tours.

## TRANSPORT

### Getting There & Away

#### AIR

For details of Polynesian Airlines flights between 'Upolu and Savai'i, see p517.

#### BOAT

For information on the ferries that chug across Apolima Strait between Samoa's two main islands, see p517. Boats heading to/ from 'Upolu use the wharf at Salelologa.

### Getting Around

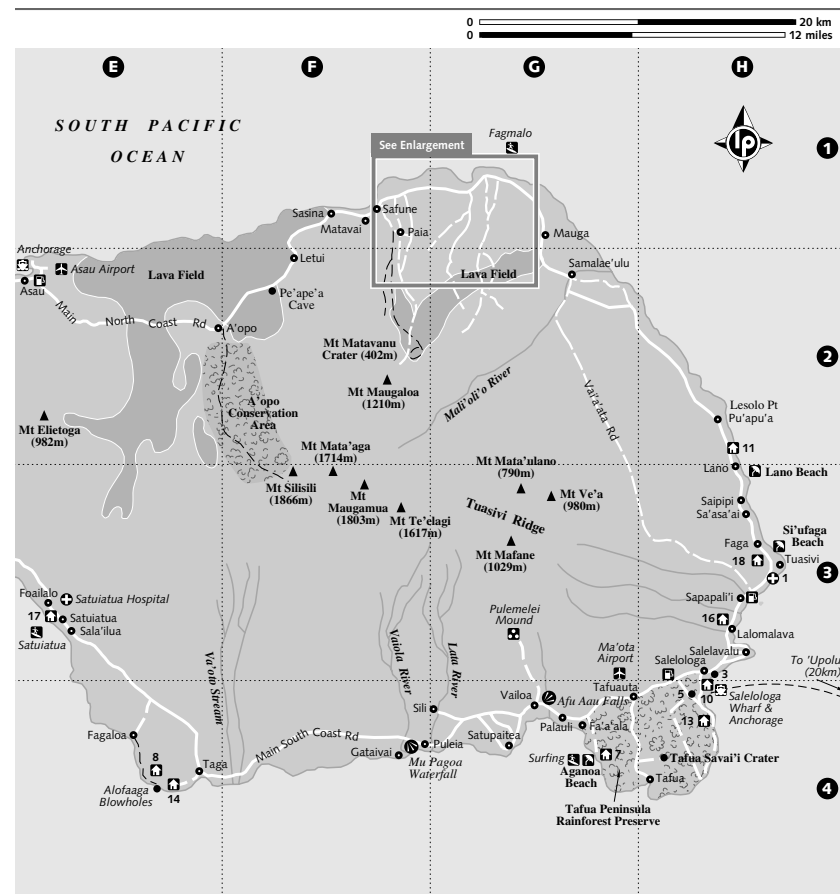
#### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT & WHARF

Whenever a plane arrives from 'Upolu at Ma'ota Airport, nearly every taxi on Savai'i is waiting for it, so there's no problem finding transport. To Salelologa, the fare is ST7.80 and to Tuasivi (about 13km) it's ST22. Public buses are convenient (and much cheaper) for getting to Salelologa from the airport, but if you're travelling to Tuasivi or further north, you'll have to change buses at Salelologa.

Buses and taxis also greet every ferry arrival.

#### BUS

The colourful, crowded, personalised buses of Savai'i will be familiar to anyone who



has taken a bus ride on 'Upolu. Salelologa's market is the main terminal for Savai'i buses.

To head north to the Lava Field (ST2.50), take the Lava Field Express, which goes to Fagalamo. To go a little further west to Manase (ST3.10), take the Manase or Sasina bus. The Falealupo bus will take you up around the Falealupo Peninsula (ST4.50), while the Salega or Fagagau buses trundle past the Alofaaga Blowholes (ST2) and Satuaitua Beach (ST3). The most you'll pay is for the bus ride to Asau (ST5). Ferry passengers will have the most luck connecting with buses to out-of-the-way destinations – that is, beyond the cluster of villages along the southeast coast – as such

buses mostly depart as soon as the ferry comes in.

#### CAR

It's a joy to motor along the sealed Main Coast Rd that winds around the island, but keep an eye out for stray children, pigs, dogs and chickens. Off the main road you'll encounter a few bumpy tracks where at the very least you'll need a high-clearance 2WD (if not a 4WD if there's been heavy rain). These tracks include the steep, rocky climb up Mt Matavanu and the plantation tracks leading to Pulemelei Mound and through the Tafua Peninsula Rainforest Preserve.

There are several petrol stations along the east and north coasts.

Cars can be rented in Salelologa from several operators, including **Sina World Travel** (☎ 51499; Blue Bird Mall, Salelologa), from about ST150 per day.

#### TAXI

Taxis are relatively expensive on Savai'i and useful only for short trips.

#### SALELOLOGA

There's not much to see in this rundown settlement except for assorted handicrafts on sale in the **market** (☎ early-late Mon-Sat). Otherwise, your main engagement with Savai'i's main town will be to stock up on supplies before heading further afield.

#### EAST COAST BEACHES

Along the east coast between Salelologa and Pu'apu'a there are nice beaches and good snorkelling. Many of the villages charge beach-access fees of ST2/5 per person/car. The best beaches are at **S'ufaga**, which boasts a brilliant turquoise-coloured lagoon, and **Lano**. The area also has numerous freshwater pools and springs for bathing.

#### LAVA FIELD

The Mt Matavanu eruptions between 1905 and 1911 created a moonscape in Savai'i's northeastern corner as a flow of hot lava 10m to 150m thick rolled over the top of plantations and villages. The Main North Coast Rd between Samalae'ulu and Sale'aula crosses this dark, fractured lava field and provides access to several fascinating sites. You might be tempted to race through this desolate landscape after snapping off a few quick photos, but it's worth lingering and letting your imagination try to re-create the fiery events that occurred here.

The modern, iron-roofed *fale* of the village of **Mauga** encircle a shallow, almost perfectly circular crater populated by banana palms. The access road is guarded by an enormous **Catholic church**. Approach a villager if you'd like to be shown around.

In Sale'aula, 5km north of Mauga, are several **lava-ruined churches** (admission ST3). On the western side of the 'Information Fale' is a trail leading to the **LMS Church**, where 2m of lava flowed through the front door and was eerily imprinted by corrugated iron when the roof collapsed. Beside the church is an old **cemetery**, while behind it a

short trail leads to the **Lava Field** proper, an expanse of twisted black rock stretching to the sea. North of the church is the **Virgin's Grave**, which purportedly marks the burial place of a girl so pure that the lava flowed around her grave, leaving it untouched.

#### TURTLES

In the village of Satoalepai is a small, man-made lagoon stocked with more than a dozen **turtles** (Satoalepai; admission ST10; ☎ 8am-5pm). You can swim with these wonderful creatures in the lagoon's clear waters; snorkels can be hired (ST5) to enhance the experience.

For some issues you might want to consider before visiting this and similar places, see the boxed text, below.

#### MT MATAVANU CRATER & DWARF'S CAVE

The crater of the volcano responsible for the devastation visited upon northeastern Savai'i a century ago is one of the highlights of a trip to the island. From Safotu take the turn-off to Paia village and from there the signposted track up the mountain; you can walk the 8km route from Paia, or drive up in a high-clearance 2WD (though a 4WD

is recommended). After a lengthy stint of bouncing over the old lava flow you'll reach the *fale* that serves as the headquarters of 'Da Craterman', who maintains the **crater track** (admission ST15; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat). He'll lead you the last 1km to the crater rim, where you can contemplate this extraordinary hole in the earth. If he's not around, just head up the track and you'll doubtless find him; the final climb to the crater begins at the sign reading 'Lemalola Aimasi Park'.

From Paia, you can also visit the **Dwarf's Cave** (Paia; guide per group ST20; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat), an intriguing subterranean lava tube. It's signposted off the Main North Coast Rd, just west of the Mt Matavanu turn-off. In Paia, look for the faded red signpost on the right and wait outside the blue *fale* at this intersection; someone should appear to guide you to the cave. Bring your own torch and reliable footwear.

#### MATA'OLEALELE SPRING

This **freshwater spring** (Safune; admission per car ST5; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Sat) is officially claimed by Safune village, although it lies opposite the sign for Matavai village. From the road, head across the *kirikiti* pitch to indulge in a refreshing swim.

#### PE'APE'A CAVE

This **cave** (Main North Coast Rd; adult/child ST5/1; ☎ 8am-5pm) sits beside the coast road just south of Letui. A guided exploration of this small lava tube takes only 10 minutes, but you'll see white-rumped Polynesian swiftlets and their nests up close. Bring your own torch.

#### A'OPO CONSERVATION AREA & MT SILISILI

The two- to three-day return trip involved in a climb of Mt Silisili (1866m), the highest point in Samoa, exposes you to some wonderful rainforested sections of the A'opo Conservation Area and to Savai'i's mountainous backbone: the Tuasivi Ridge. To organise a guide for this trek, speak to the *pulenu'u* of A'opo (ask in the town's small shop for directions). You'll pay in the vicinity of ST40 per person per day for the guide and will need to supply food and water and all the requisite camping and hiking equipment.

#### FALEALUPO PENINSULA

Jutting out from the western end of Savai'i is the beautiful knob of land known as Falealupo Peninsula. Arrayed along it is a lovely, protected swathe of rainforest, complete with its own tree-top walkway, and several sites associated with significant Samoan legends. The peninsula's remoteness lends it an almost unnerving calm.

#### Falealupo Rainforest Preserve

Considered sacred by the villagers of Falealupo, the 1200-hectare area of lowland rainforest on the peninsula's northern side became the first customary-owned conservation area in Samoa in 1989. This was achieved thanks to the assistance of Dr Paul Alan Cox, an American ethnobotanist and founder of the conservation foundation Seacology. Dr Cox was working with indigenous healers in Falealupo when he discovered that the area's *matai* had reluctantly signed a contract with a Japanese logging firm in order to pay for the construction of a primary school. After watching the whole village weeping over the loss of their rainforest, Dr Cox personally guaranteed the money for the school. On learning of this, chief Fuiono Senioran ran 9km through the forest to stop the bulldozers in their tracks. Unfortunately, the reserve suffered serious damage during the cyclones of the early '90s, but it is slowly and surely recovering.

#### Canopy Walkway

The 24m jerry-built bridge that is the centrepiece of this **walkway** (Falealupo Rd; admission ST20; ☎ 7am-6pm) is strung 9m above the rainforest floor and has quite a lurch to it, but it's perfectly safe. It's attached at one end to a magical 225-year-old banyan tree; you can climb to the top of it via a narrow stairway and can also spend the night here; see p511 for info on this unique accommodation option. The admission fee also covers entry to the Rock House and Moso's Footprint (keep the receipt as proof) and is payable at the *fale*-kiosk off Falealupo Rd, beside the primary school.

#### Moso's Footprint & Rock House

The ancient 1m by 3m rock enclosure called **Moso's Footprint** (Falealupo Rd; admission incl in Canopy Walkway ticket; ☎ 7am-6pm) is signposted beside

#### RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

Savai'i has many conservation initiatives that are genuine efforts to protect fragile environments. But some ventures are primarily money-raising schemes. It's hard to blame villagers for wanting to make more tala, but travellers should at least be aware of what they're supporting.

The turtle enclosure at Satoalepai (above), for instance, is a pleasant, well-maintained spot. But the family running it admit it's a business rather than a conservation effort. This, and the fact that the turtles have been removed from their natural environment, is worth remembering when deciding whether or not to visit it. We saw no sign of manhandling when we visited, but this would be something to watch out for.

In contrast, the so-called turtle pond in the neighbouring village of Safa'i comprises three turtles trapped in a murky, wire-enclosed pool. We saw the animals being badly manhandled and, in the interests of animal welfare, urge you not to support it.



### GATEWAY TO THE UNDERWORLD

The natural beauty of the Falealupo Peninsula belies the dark significance it holds for Samoans, who believe that the gateway to the underworld of the *aitu* (spirits) is located here: the place where the sun sets in the sea. According to tradition, there are two entrances to the underworld, one for chiefs and another for commoners. One entrance is through a cave near Cape Mulinu'u and the other is on the trail made by the setting sun over the sea. During the night, these spirits wander abroad, but at day-break they must return to their hellish home or suffer the unpleasant consequences of being caught out by daylight.

a large white church. Legend has it that the giant Moso made the footprint when he stepped from Fiji to Samoa, but science holds that the 'footprint' was formed by the contraction and cooling of lava into a block that may then have been indented during a cyclone.

About 300m southwest of the ruins of an old Catholic church are the two lava tubes collectively known as the **Rock House** (Falealupo Rd; admission included in Canopy Walkway ticket; ☎ 7am-6pm). Legend says that the Rock House is the result of a house-building competition between Falealupo's men and women, a contest the women eventually won. Inside is a very crude stone armchair and stone benches around the sides.

### Fafa O Sauai'i

At Cape Mulinu'u you'll find **Fafa O Sauai'i** (Falealupo Rd; admission per car ST10; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat), where you can stand at the end of the earth – conveniently indicated by a white cross – and look into tomorrow. Don't pass up a swim in the large rock pool created by the lava flow. The admission price is steep for solo travellers, but worthwhile for a group.

### ALOFAAGA BLOWHOLES

These **blowholes** (Taga; adult/child ST5/2.50; ☎ 7am-6pm), in the south of the island, are close to their spectacular best at high tide, when they blast seawater tens of metres into the air. The full power of the blowholes is demonstrated on stormy days, when waves

crash into the rocky coast and water surges through the narrow lava chasms before being vented upwards. Pay admission at the first *fale* and park your car at the second *fale*, near the main blowhole; if you drive into the accommodation compound you'll be charged ST5 to park there. Don't get too close to the blowholes as huge freak waves occasionally break over the rocks.

### AFU AAU FALLS

The gorgeous **Afu Aau Falls** (off Main South Coast Rd; admission per person/car ST2/10; ☎ 7am-5pm), also known as Olemoe Falls, reward visitors with a dreamy tropical seclusion and a refreshing swim in a snug, 3m-deep waterhole. Head down the track flanked by iron poles that starts about 300m beyond the iron-girder bridge located west of Vailoa village. Pay admission at the *fale* (also covers entry to Pulemelei Mound), then continue for 500m to the waterfall sign and follow the side trail on foot across an idyllic little valley. You can normally negotiate the bumpy plantation track in a high-clearance 2WD, except after heavy rain.

### PULEMELEI MOUND

Polynesia's largest ancient structure is the wondrous, pyramidal **Pulemelei Mound** (off Main South Coast Rd; admission incl in Afu Aau Falls ticket; ☎ 7am-5pm), marked on some local maps as Tia Seu Ancient Mound. It measures 61m by 50m at its base and rises up commandingly to a height of more than 12m. It's a stirring place, with views from its stony summit both to the ocean and into thick, primordial jungle. On sunny days, butterflies of all colours swarm across it.

To get here, follow the directions to Afu Aau Falls given in the previous section. Continue past the waterfall sign and follow the main track as it veers left (ignore the other track that continues ahead). You'll soon reach the short signposted walking trail to the mound. You can drive all the way to the start of this trail, but the hike through the lush heartland of Letelo Plantation is well worth it.

### TAFUA PENINSULA RAINFOREST PRESERVE

This **preserve** (admission ST2) on Tafua Peninsula contains superb stands of rainforest and rugged stretches of lava coast studded with cliffs

and sea arches. A highlight of the preserve is the extinct Tafua Savai'i crater, which rises above the village of Tafua. The crater is choked with vegetation and has a lost-world feel to it, which is enhanced by glimpses of the relatively rare Samoan flying fox circling the tree tops.

To get here, take the side road signposted opposite Ma'ota Airport and pay the custom fee about 50m along. About 2.6km from the main road turn left on to a pair of ruts (if you reach the Tafua village sign, you've gone too far) and drive for 650m along this bumpy track to where there's a small, car-sized clearing on the right, opposite a large tree (if the road starts sloping downwards, you've gone too far). The trail to the crater (15 minutes) is easy to follow from here. You can also approach a Tafua villager to guide you to this trail.

At the western end of Fa'a'ala village, a track leads to lovely **Aganoa Beach** (per person/surfer ST5/20). There are strong currents here so swim with care. Pay fees at Kahuna Bar & Grill (p510) at the Aganoa Beach Resort.

### ACTIVITIES

Scuba divers should contact **Dive Savai'i** (☎ 59622; www.divesavaii.com; Main North Coast Rd, Fagamalo), located just west of Fagamalo, which conducts four-day PADI open-water courses (ST1000) and organises regional dives (one/two dives ST150/220). The waters off Fagamalo also generate fine **surf** when swells arrive from the north (usually between December and April). Surfers will also find an excellent left-hand surf-break at **Satuiatua**; a ST10 fee is levied, which is used to support the local school.

Surf tours of the 'big island' are conducted by **Savai'i Surfaris** (☎ 58248; for local inquiries fax 58007), based at Aganoa Beach. Bookings are through **Atoll Travel** (☎ 03-5682 1088; www.atolltravel.com) in Australia. Seven-night surfer packages, excluding airfares, cost around A\$960 per person (A\$870 per person for twin share), which includes two daily meals, transfers and *fale* accommodation.

Keen walkers can follow an old track around the coast from Alofaaga Blowholes to the now deserted village of **Fagaloa** (three to four hours return). They can also walk up Mt Matavanu (p506), stride across what was once the island's biggest plantation to Afu Aau Falls (opposite) and Pulemelei

Mound (opposite), and, for an encore, scale Mt Silisili (p507).

### TOURS

**Green Turtle Tours** (☎ 22144, 29229; www.greenturtle.com) Apia-based company operating a daily hop-on, hop-off bus service around Savai'i, and also offering day tours of the island. For more information, see p497.

**Safua Tours** (☎ 51271; Safua Hotel, Main South Coast Rd, Lalomalava) Based at the Safua Hotel (p510), this outfit conducts knowledgeable day tours (ST125) of Savai'i's south and north coasts, visiting unforgettable places such as Afu Aau Falls and the Alofaaga Blowholes. It also organises village stays for around ST60 per person (including transport and meals).

**Sina World Travel** (☎ 51499; Blue Bird Mall, Salelologa) Offers everything from laid-back beach tours to hikes up Mt Silisili. Half-/full-day tours cost ST75/150; a minimum of three people is usually required.

### SLEEPING

There are a couple of places to stay in Salelologa, but it's only once you head out of town that you really start to experience the restful charms of Savai'i. There's a bottleneck of accommodation at lovely Manase, where numerous *fale* providers compete for the beachfront business.

### Salelologa & Around

**Aganoa Beach Resort** (☎ 50180; www.atolltravel.com/samoa/samoasavaii.htm; Fa'a'ala; nonsurfer/surfer ST80/100) This resort exploits the beauty of

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Lusia's Lagoon Chalets** (☎ 51487, 25018; www.lusiaslagoonchalets.ws; fale per person ST35-45; ☎) Lusia's is an excellent place to stay. For starters, it's only 1km southwest of Salelologa's wharf and so provides easy access to the island's main arrival/departure point. But its main attraction is its setting of raised *fale* amid jungle foliage on the edge of a sublime little bay. When you head to your *fale* at night after enjoying one of the creative meals at the on-site restaurant (mains ST8 to ST25; open breakfast, lunch and dinner), you feel like you're disappearing into your own private retreat. There's a rock pool here that's sometimes visited by a sea turtle, and you can swim, snorkel (hire ST5) or canoe (hire ST10) straight off the waterfront deck.

a fine little beach and some excellent associated surf-breaks on the western edge of Tafua Peninsula. Nonsurfers can snuggle down in the bed-equipped *fale* (breakfast and dinner included in the price) after a long day of inactivity. Day visitors pay ST5 and day surfers ST20. Basic lunches are served up at the resort's Kahuna Bar & Grill (meals ST6 to ST15).

**Joelan Beach Fales** (☎ 778 1956; Main North Coast Rd, Lano; *fale* per person incl breakfast & dinner ST50) Joelan's is a basic *fale* setup that has tons of beachy character. Swimming and snorkelling are popular pastimes here, or you can just wander through Lano village and occasionally glance at the silhouette of 'Upolu across Apolima Strait. **Si'ufaga Beach Resort** (☎ 53518; www.siufaga.com; Main North Coast Rd, Tuasivi; s ST70-320, d ST90-350; ☒ ☒) Long, languid Si'ufaga Beach easily rates as one of the best strips of sand on Savai'i, and the resort set up across the road from the palm trees and the turquoise water is fully aware of this. Units closest to the beach have enough facilities – bathroom, fridge and cable TV – to tempt you to stay awhile, while Parenzo's Bar & Restaurant (opposite) is a decent place to gorge yourself on pasta.

**Jet-Over Motel** (☎ 51565; Blue Bird Mall, Salelologa; r ST110-120; ☒ ☒) You'll find this curious little motel at the back of the Blue Bird Mall in downtown Salelologa. Your money gets you little in the way of character or views, but you do get large, modern and well-equipped rooms.

**Safua Hotel** (☎ 51271; safuahotel@yahoo.com; Main South Coast Rd, Lalomalava; *fale* s/d/f incl breakfast ST80/110/140) The Safua Hotel is not as attractive or well-maintained as it was in its heyday, and is situated well away from the oceanfront. But beds are reasonably priced, there's a nightly dinner buffet (ST38), and you can arrange worthwhile excursions through the in-house Safua Tours (p509).

### Northeastern Savai'i

**Regina's Beach Fales** (☎ 596026; Main North Coast Rd, Manase; *fale* per person incl meals ST50) Regina's consistently gets high marks from visitors for its generous hospitality, which includes a no-fuss approach to guests and well-maintained, colourful *fale* arrayed along the beach. Mealtimes are more like low-key social events, with the excellent food served up at a communal dining table. We

met several travellers who had stayed here before and couldn't stay away.

**Jane's Beach Fales** (☎ 54066; Main North Coast Rd, Manase; *fale* per person incl breakfast & dinner ST50) Jane's is another well-rated accommodation provider on the crowded Manase strip. There's little to get worked up about here, except maybe the dazzling waters off the beach and the convivial atmosphere. There's also a bar, and canoes can be hired for ST10.

**Le Lagoto Beach Resort** (☎ 58189; lelagoto@samoa.ws; Main North Coast Rd, Fagamalo; s & d ST250-450, each extra person ST22; ☒) If you'd prefer a self-contained bungalow to another *fale*, check out the impressive options at Le Lagoto. Each of the units has a bathroom, TV and kitchenette, plus easy access to a delightful little cove. Le Lagoto Restaurant (opposite) is also worth a look.

**Vacations Beach Fales** (☎ 54024; www.savaiivacations.com; Main North Coast Rd, Manase; *fale* per person ST70) Vacations is pricier than most of its neighbours, but the *fale* here are bigger and the mattresses more cushy than at other places. You could also do worse than spend an afternoon or two sampling the stock at the beachfront Jetty Bar.

**Tanu's Beach Fales** (☎ /fax 54050; Main North Coast Rd, Manase; *fale* per person incl breakfast & dinner ST50) Tanu's has traded off a well-deserved reputation for many years, and its success is obvious from the sheer number of *fale* dotting the sand here. But it's arguably getting too big to maintain the personal nature that travellers previously found so appealing. Rates include breakfast and dinner.

### Northwestern Savai'i

**Vaisala Beach Hotel** (☎ 58016; fax 58017; off Main North Coast Rd, Vaisala; s/d/tr/q/f from ST90/105/115/125/140; ☒) This hotel faces a peaceful little beach that it has all to itself. Upper-level rooms (breakfast included in the price) have balconies where you can contemplate the horizon or the antics of day-trippers on the sand below. The hotel's restaurant (lunch ST6 to ST15, dinner ST38; open lunch and dinner) also has an outdoor deck and does satisfying set-menu dinners occasionally attended by local musicians.

**Satuiatua Beach Fales** (☎ /fax 56026; Main South Coast Rd, Satuiatua; *fale* per person incl breakfast & dinner ST65) The beach here is good for snorkelling and surfing, but it will be up to you to decide if this justifies the unusually high

accommodation rate. The restaurant (lunch ST6 to ST12, dinner ST25; open lunch and dinner) is set up on a spacious outdoor deck and does good dinners.

The Canopy Walkway (p507) in the Falealupo Rainforest Preserve offers accommodation in the top of a **banyan tree** (per person ST50). This roofless treehouse sleeps up to six people and mattresses and mosquito nets are provided. Breakfast and dinner are included in the price and are served down on terra firma. There's no telephone number for bookings; if you're interested, just turn up.

### Southern Savai'i

**Alofaaga Beach Fales** (☎ 594406; Taga; *fale* per person incl breakfast & dinner ST60) This grouping of sturdy *fale* lies in its own compound opposite the spectacular antics of the Alofaaga Blowholes and is ideal for those who want lengthy exposure to this restless stretch of coastline. The phone number belongs to the 3-Corner Store in Taga; ask for Juna.

**Meale Beach Fales** (Taga; *fale* per person incl meals ST70) Meale lies just east of the Alofaaga Blowholes in a distinctive tropical setting, planted on black volcanic sand on the edge of a rough and rocky beach. The price is relatively expensive for what's on offer.

### EATING & DRINKING

Most *fale* providers include at least breakfast and dinner in the price of an overnight stay; for details of these deals, and of the generic eateries (and bars) associated with many local hotels and resorts, see the reviews in the previous Sleeping section. Following are reviews for a handful of places worth visiting purely for their menus and drink selections.

**Le Ifilele Restaurant & Bar** (☎ 51299; behind Blue Bird Mall, Salelologa; meals ST9-40; ☒) breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) Le Ifilele is spread out on a small terrace at the back of the Blue Bird Mall in Salelologa. Diners and drinkers crowd around the tiny bar or nab one of the waterfront dining *fale*.

**Le Lagoto Restaurant** (☎ 58189; Main North Coast Rd, Fagamalo; breakfast & lunch ST15, dinner ST30-40; ☒) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Situated in the Le Lagoto Beach Resort in Fagamalo, this restaurant-bar uses its tranquil setting on a crisp, little-used beach to good effect. Curries, pastas and several vegetarian options highlight the eclectic menu.

**Parenzo's Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 53518; Si'ufaga Beach Resort, Main North Coast Rd, Tuasivi; pasta around ST21) Parenzo's commands the top floor of the reception building at Si'ufaga Beach Resort. Eat pasta dishes and seafood on the balcony overlooking the palm-fringed sea.

Another excellent option is the restaurant at Lusia's Lagoon Chalets (p509).

## SAMOA DIRECTORY

### ACCOMMODATION

It's fair to say that accommodation options in Samoa are fairly limited. There's little budget accommodation outside the ubiquitous *fale*, and at the other end of the scale only Aggie Grey's hotels on 'Upolu qualify as truly luxurious. In between is a mishmash of upmarket resorts and midrange hotels (a few of them overpriced) and motels. That said, much of the country's accommodation occupies idyllic settings on the beautiful sands that border 'Upolu and Savai'i – this meets the minimum requirements for most visitors.

The accommodation listed in this chapter appears in order of author preference; leading each section are the places our author recommends the most. In Samoa, we generally treat any place that charges up

### PRACTICALITIES

- Samoa's main newspaper is the *Samoa Observer* (ST2), published daily except Monday. The monthly magazine *Tapu* (ST5) declares itself the 'magazine from the Samoas, Niue and Tokelau' and has an interesting mix of current affairs, culture, sports and business.
- Listen to popular music on Magik 98FM or the government-run AM station Radio 2AP. TV Samoa broadcasts mainly overseas programmes.
- The video format used is NTSC.
- Use Australian-style three-blade plugs to access Samoan electricity (240V, 50Hz AC).
- Samoa uses the standard metric system. See the Quick Reference page for conversions.

to ST100 as budget accommodation. Mid-range places usually cost between ST100 and ST250, while we regard anywhere charging over ST250 as top-end accommodation.

An excellent source of information on accommodation around 'Upolu and Savai'i in Samoa is the **Samoa Hotels Association** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 30160; Beach Rd, Apia).

The thatch-roofed shelters called *fale* are sometimes enclosed but are usually open-sided. Sleeping mats and mosquito nets are always supplied. *Fale* can cost anywhere from ST30 to ST90 per person. The more expensive ones come with oil lamps and occasionally electric lights, a table and chairs, and sometimes a bed as opposed to a mat. Bathroom facilities are usually basic, with cold water being the norm. The price usually includes at least breakfast and dinner.

Hotel, motel and resort accommodation ranges from rooms in slightly dilapidated buildings to well-maintained rooms with air-conditioning, a fridge, TV and a bathroom. There's often access to a shared kitchen. Smaller resorts tend to offer self-contained accommodation in cabins. Big, upmarket resorts prefer to reside on 'Upolu, where they provide swim-up cocktail bars and lavish meals.

Stays with families in local villages can be organised through Safua Tours (p509).

## ACTIVITIES

For full details of where you can undertake the following activities (as well as golfing and kayaking) and which organisations can help you on your way, please see the Activities sections for 'Upolu (p496) and Savai'i (p509).

### Diving

Outside the lagoons that encircle Samoa's main islands are some fantastic diving sites. Many of the most popular sites are close to the villages of Maninoa and Si'umu on the south coast of 'Upolu.

These include 'The Aquarium', which sports a variety of outcrops and bommies at 10m to 15m depth, cloaked with a wide variety of lettuce, brain and other coral; 'Christmas Tree Rock', atop which is a giant pink gorgonian sea fan with a sprinkling of black coral at its base; 'Garden Wall', which is a densely packed wall of colourful hard

coral ranging from 6m down to 30m; and 'The Terraces', where large sea anemones, their attendant clown fish, schooling tropical fish and, occasionally, dolphins and turtles can be seen.

See p73 for further details of dive sites in Samoa.

### Fishing

Samoa reefs and their fishing rights are owned by villagers, so you can't just drop a line anywhere; seek permission first. If you'd like to go fishing with locals, inquire at your hotel or beach *fale*, or speak to the *pulenu'u* of the village concerned.

Game fishing is becoming increasingly popular in the islands – in fact, Samoa has been rated one of the top 10 game fishing destinations in the world. The Samoa International Game Fishing Tournament takes place around 'Upolu during the second week of May.

### Hiking

Samoa's rugged coastal areas, sandy beaches, lush rainforests and volcanoes all invite explorations on foot. However, trails can quickly become obscured because of the lush tropical environment and some half-hearted track maintenance. Combine this with the effects of heavy rain and there's often a good chance of getting lost (or at least covering yourself in mud). For more remote treks, it pays to take a guide with you.

Guiding costs vary enormously. Sometimes villagers will be happy to accompany you for nothing and at other times they'll be seeking goods as a reward (ie cigarettes), but mostly they'll be interested in cash.

Even on short walks, the sun and the almost perpetually hot and humid conditions can take their toll. Be sure to carry insect repellent to ward off mosquitoes, antihistamines to counter wasp stings if you're allergic to them, sufficient water and salty snacks to replenish body elements lost to heavy sweating, and always protect yourself from the sun with a hat and sunblock. Good walking shoes are also essential.

### Snorkelling & Swimming

Samoa offers abundant snorkelling and swimming opportunities, most of which involve walking into reef-sheltered waters

straight from a beach. Always ask permission from local villagers before using their beach. More and more places are hiring out snorkelling gear, but it's still well worth bringing your own mask and snorkel with you.

### Surfing

Powerful conditions, sharp reefs, and off-shore breaks that are difficult to access mean that surfing in Samoa is challenging, to say the very least, and probably one of the worst places in the world to learn the sport! While the surf can be unbelievable at times, offering waves of a lifetime in glorious surroundings, conditions are generally difficult to assess, with some very dangerous situations awaiting the inexperienced or reckless. Despite all this, the islands have become an increasingly popular destination for experienced surfers. The wet season (November to April) brings swells from the north; the dry season (May to November) brings big swells from the south.

It's best to hook up with a surfing outfit. They know all the best spots and provide boat transport to them, and, perhaps more importantly, they have established relationships with local villagers and understand the culture – they know where it is and isn't OK to surf.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Banks are usually open from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday (some branches open Saturday between 8.30am and 12.30pm). Shops usually operate from 8am to 4.30pm on weekdays and from 8am to noon on Saturday, though kiosks and convenience stores keep longer hours. Eateries serve breakfast and lunch between 8am and 4pm, and dinner from 6pm to around 10pm. Bars in the main towns often open for drinking around lunchtime and tend to point patrons to the front door at midnight. Government offices open from 8am to 4.30pm.

On Sunday, almost everything is closed, although ripples of activity appear in the evening. Markets normally get under way by about 6am; the Maketi Fou in Apia is active more or less 24 hours a day.

We don't give opening hours for establishments mentioned in the text unless they differ greatly from the standard hours outlined above.

For information about Samoan public holidays, see p829.

## CHILDREN

The Samoan climate (excepting the long periods of heavy rain or the odd cyclone of course), warm waters and dearth of poisonous creatures make the islands a paradise for children. You'll find that Samoans tend to lavish attention on very young children, which means that foreign toddlers will not by any means be starved for attention or affection while visiting the islands.

Never leave your child unsupervised near beaches, reefs or on walking tracks, particularly those running along coastal cliffs (these are never fenced). Lonely Planet's *Travel With Children* has useful advice on family travel.

For favoured childish activities on 'Upolu, see the 'Upolu for Children section (p497). For details of the practicalities concerning children visiting the South Pacific, see p826.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

### Samoa Embassies & Consulates

In countries without Samoan diplomatic posts, Samoa is represented by New Zealand and British diplomatic missions. Samoa has its own diplomatic representation in the following countries:

**Australia** (☎ 02-6286 5505; fax 02-6286 5678;

13 Culgoa Circuit, O'Malley, ACT 2606)

**Belgium** (☎ 322-675 0336; fax 322-675 0336; 123 Ave Franklin Roosevelt, 1050 Brussels)

**New Zealand** (High Commission; ☎ 04-472 0953; fax 04-471 2479; 1A Wesley Rd, Kelburn, PO Box 1430, Wellington)

**USA** (☎ 212-599 0797; fax 212-599 0797; 800 2nd Avenue, Suite 400D, New York, NY 10017) UN Mission.

### Embassies & Consulates in Samoa

Following is a list of countries with diplomatic missions based in Apia.

**Australia** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 23411; [www.embassy.gov.au/ws.html](http://www.embassy.gov.au/ws.html); Beach Rd; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Canadian consular services are also provided here.

**China** (Map pp486-7; ☎ 22474; [www.china-embassy.ch](http://www.china-embassy.ch); Cross Island Rd, Vaillima)

**New Zealand** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21711; Beach Rd;

☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, to 1pm Fri)

**USA** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21631; 5th fl, ACB Bldg, Apia;

☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

### WORMS RISE AT MIDNIGHT

Sometime in October or November, on the seventh day after the full moon, the palolo reefworm or, more technically, a polychaete worm of the *Eunicidae* family (*Eunice viridis*) emerges from the coral reefs to mate. The blue-green vermicelli-shaped worms, rich in calcium, iron and protein, are a prized delicacy in much of the South Pacific. The worms are said to taste like creamy caviar and, according to some, are a great aphrodisiac. Parties take place on beaches throughout Samoa while villagers anxiously anticipate the big event (and, of course, after the big event itself). When the worms finally appear at around midnight, crowds carrying nets and lanterns hurriedly wade into the sea to scoop them up.

### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The main causes of celebration across Samoa include the country's independence celebrations over the first three days of June; the Teuila Festival in Apia in September, when Samoa's capital reels in the tourists with canoe races, food and craft stalls, traditional dancing and a beauty pageant; and White Sunday, the day that Samoan children rule the roost, which is held on the second Sunday in October.

In August/September 2007, Apia will again host the **South Pacific Games** ([www.internationalgames.net/southpac.htm](http://www.internationalgames.net/southpac.htm)). Another event to look out for is the Rise of Palolo celebrations in October; see the boxed text, above.

### INTERNET ACCESS

It's usually only top-end hotels and resorts that can help those who have brought their own computers to Samoa and want to connect to the Internet. Otherwise, your only option for accessing the Web (assuming your accommodation provider doesn't have any terminals for guests' use) is an Internet café. Note that Web connections can drop out with frustrating frequency on these remote islands. There are several Internet cafés scattered around Apia; see p485 for more details. On Savai'i, get connected in Salelologa and Manase; see p503. On 'Upolu, expect to pay up to ST4 per 15 minutes of access; on Savai'i you pay up to ST10 for the same amount of access.

### INTERNET RESOURCES

**Samoa Observer** ([www.samoaoobserver.ws](http://www.samoaoobserver.ws)) The website of the country's main newspaper is a good resource for news and current affairs relating to Samoa, as well as the Pacific region as a whole.

**Samoa Tourism Authority** ([www.visitsamoa.ws](http://www.visitsamoa.ws)) A comprehensive site for independent Samoa, with an

up-to-date events calendar and easy-to-browse information on activities, attractions and useful organisations.

**Samoa Hotels Association** ([www.samoahotels.ws](http://www.samoahotels.ws)) This is an extensive, regularly updated listing of Samoan places to stay, and includes photos of many of the properties.

**Samoa Sensation** ([www.samoa.co.uk](http://www.samoa.co.uk)) Good general site with many useful links, a question-and-answer forum, and a good selection of Samoa-centric books that can be ordered online.

### MAPS

The Tourism Authority in Apia (see p486) distributes the free, superbasic *Jasons Samoa Visitor Map*. It also sells the much more detailed 1:200,000 *Samoa* map published by Hema (ST10), but it's woefully out of date.

The **Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 23800; Beach Rd) in Apia sells 1:50,000 topographic sheet maps of 'Upolu (two sheets) and Savai'i (four sheets) for ST30 per sheet. Unfortunately, they haven't been updated since 2000. Pay for the maps at the ministry office beside the NZ High Commission and then pick them up from a second office near the deep sea wharf.

The University of Hawai'i's *Islands of Samoa* map (US\$4) contains topographic detail of Samoa, comprehensive labelling of geographic names and a useful index. On the down side, it was last updated in 1990. In Apia it's usually available from **Aggie Grey's Gift Shop** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 22880; Beach Rd).

### MONEY

The tala (dollar), which is divided into 100 sene (cents), is the unit of currency in use in Samoa. In this book, unless otherwise stated, all prices given are in tala. Exchange rates are given in the following table.

Country	Unit	Tala
Australia	A\$1	ST2.18
Canada	C\$1	ST2.59
CFP zone	100 CFP	ST3.04
Easter Island	Ch\$1000	ST5.59
euro zone	€1	ST3.64
Fiji	F\$1	ST1.68
Japan	¥100	ST2.54
NZ	NZ\$1	ST1.83
Solomon Islands	S\$1	40 sene
Tonga	T\$1	ST1.44
UK	£1	ST5.27
USA	US\$1	ST2.89
Vanuatu	100Vt	ST2.64

### ATMs

Branches of the ANZ, Westpac and several local banks in the main towns of Samoa are equipped with ATMs. Be aware that ATMs don't always operate 24 hours, and that they can be prone to running out of bills at the start of the weekend. Take plenty of cash with you (in small denominations) when you're heading outside the bigger settlements.

### Tipping

Tipping is not expected or encouraged in Samoa. It is, however, deemed acceptable for exceptional service at finer restaurants.

### HOW MUCH?

- **Meal in a fine-dining restaurant:** from about ST25
- **Female accommodation:** from ST35 per night
- **Admission to Afu Aau Falls:** ST2 per person
- **Day tour of 'Upolu:** ST90
- **Car hire:** about ST150 per day

### LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of unleaded petrol:** ST2.15
- **1L of bottled water:** ST3.50 to ST5
- **355mL bottle of Vailima beer:** ST3 to ST4
- **Souvenir T-shirt:** ST12
- **Palusami:** ST1

### TELEPHONE

The telecommunications provider in Samoa is **SamoaTel** (Map pp490-1; [www.samoatel.ws](http://www.samoatel.ws); Beach Rd, Apia). A three-minute local call costs ST0.50. International calls from Samoa to Australia or New Zealand cost around ST3 per minute and calls to the USA ST4.50 per minute. Collect and credit-card international calls can be made from public phones by dialling ☎ 957.

### Mobile Phones

Samoa runs on an analogue system. You can organise for a local number to be allocated to your phone (if compatible) through **Telecom Samoa Cellular** (☎ 26081). Charges will be deducted from your credit card.

### Phone Codes

The country code for Samoa is ☎ 685. The nation does not use area codes.

### Phonecards

Phonecards are available for ST5, ST10, ST20 and ST50, and can be used in around 75 cardphones around 'Upolu and Savai'i.

### TIME

Samoa is just east of the International Date Line, which means its dates are the same as those of North America. Local time is Greenwich Mean Time/Coordinated Universal Time (GMT/UTC) minus 11 hours. Therefore, when it's noon in Samoa, it's 11pm the same day in London, 3pm the same day in Los Angeles, and 9am the following day in Sydney.

### VISAS

A free, 60-day visitor permit is granted to all visitors on arrival in Samoa – except for nationals of China who must obtain a visa beforehand – provided they have an onward ticket and a passport valid for at least another six months. You'll also be required to provide a contact address within the country, so have the name of a hotel ready upon arrival. Vaccinations for yellow fever may be required if you are coming from an infected area.

Samoa visitor permits may be extended by several weeks at a time by the country's **Immigration Office** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20291; [www.samoaimmigration.gov.ws](http://www.samoaimmigration.gov.ws); Convent St, Apia; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri). Take along your passport,

wallet, two passport-sized photos and don't make any other plans for the rest of the day. You may also need to have proof of hotel accommodation, onward transport and sufficient funds for your requested period of stay.

## TRANSPORT IN SAMOA

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Air

While Samoa isn't as remote or obscure a destination as Tuvalu or Kiribati, it's not as popular as Fiji or Tahiti either (not yet anyway), and airfares often reflect this. Access to the island group is fairly straightforward from New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Hawai'i or Los Angeles. From anywhere else, however, travelling there will almost always entail reaching one of these connecting points first. Auckland and Nadi/Suva seem to be the most convenient and best-served runs, and there are often some good discount fares on these routes. Samoa is also popular as a stopover or cheap 'optional extra' on some tickets and round-the-world fares between Europe or North America and New Zealand.

You can fly direct between Samoa and American Samoa with Inter-Island Airways and Polynesian Airlines for around US\$180 one way. Polynesian Blue fares to Apia from Sydney, Australia, start around A\$450, though keep in mind that this was an introductory fare at the time of writing and prices may rise (probably not by much though) if the route proves popular. One-way fares from Auckland, New Zealand, to Apia start from NZ\$570. An Air New Zealand flight from London to Apia, via Los Angeles, is the most straightforward option for travel from Europe to Samoa; high-season fares from London start from UK£1500. Air New Zealand also offers direct Los Angeles–Apia flights (from US\$620 one way).

Visitors to Samoa jet in to Faleolo Airport, located 35km west of Apia. Airlines that service the region include the following (all phone numbers mentioned here are for dialling from within Samoa):

**Air New Zealand** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20825; www.airnz.com; Lotemau Centre, cnr Convent & Mt Vaea Sts, Apia)

**Air Pacific** (☎ 22738; www.airpacific.com)

**Inter-Island Airways** (www.interislandair.com)

**Pacific Blue** (www.flypacificblue.com)

**Polynesian Airlines** (☎ 22737; www.polynesianairlines.com)

**Polynesian Blue** (www.polynesianblue.com)

**Qantas** (☎ 21261; www.qantas.com.au)

#### Sea

##### CARGO SHIP

Three cargo ships sail between Apia in Samoa and the remote Tokelau Islands. Bookings for the 20-hour trip can be made in Apia at the **Tokelau Apia Liaison Office** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20822; Fugalei St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri). You must obtain a permit to visit Tokelau before booking. Sailings are usually fortnightly but occasionally more frequent sailings are arranged. Return deck fares are NZ\$290/145 per adult/child; return cabin fares are NZ\$530/270.

##### FERRY

The **Samoa Shipping Corporation** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 20935/6; reservations@samoashipping.com; Beach Rd, Apia) runs a car ferry called *Lady Naomi* between Apia and Pago Pago (American Samoa) once a week. It departs Apia on Wednesday at midnight and returns on Thursday at 4.30pm. The trip takes seven hours each way. The return deck/cabin fare from Apia to Pago Pago is ST100/140. Note that American passport holders can only buy one-way tickets from Apia.

##### YACHT

Between May and October (outside the cyclone season) the harbours of the South Pacific swarm with cruising yachts from around the world, many following the favourable winds west from the Americas, while others come north from New Zealand. Apia serves as the official entry points for private yacht owners visiting Samoa. In Savai'i, there are also anchorages at Fagamalo, Salelologa Wharf and Asau Harbour.

Visiting yachts must apply for clearance from the **Prime Minister's Department** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21339; 5th fl, Government Office Bldg, Beach Rd) in Apia; bear left as you exit the elevator and take the unmarked door straight through the

##### DEPARTURE TAX

An international departure tax of ST40 is payable when flying out of Samoa.

archway. The captain will need to present crew passports and the boat's registration papers.

### GETTING AROUND

#### Air

**Polynesian Airlines** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21261; www.polynesianairlines.com; NPF Bldg, Beach Rd, Apia; ☎ 8am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) flies between Fagali'i Airport, just east of Apia on 'Upolu, and Ma'ota Airport, 5km west of Salelologa on Savai'i. There are usually two to three services a day and the fare is from ST50/95 one way/return.

#### Bicycle

Touring 'Upolu and Savai'i by bicycle is a scenic, mostly relaxed option for fit, experienced cyclists – we say 'mostly' because aggressive dogs are a prevalent problem. The roads are generally in good condition and traffic is minimal. The major roads encircling the islands are sealed, but you'd need a sturdy mountain bike to tackle most of the trails to beaches and other coastal attractions. You can transport a bike between Samoa's two main islands on the ferry that crosses Apolima Strait (see below).

A big challenge for cyclists is the heat. Even during the coolest months of the year (July, August and September), afternoon temperatures will still be high. Plan to avoid cycling long stretches in the heat of the day. Also bear in mind that buses are unlikely to be able to accommodate bicycles should you run out of leg power.

Bikes are a common form of local transport in Samoa, so it shouldn't be hard to track down a bike repairer if you really need one. But it's obviously best to bring your own comprehensive bike repair kit, a decent lock and heavy-duty panniers. Some accommodation providers rent bikes, but these are for day touring, not long-distance rides.

#### Boat

Ferries regularly plough the 22km across Apolima Strait between 'Upolu and Savai'i. Tickets cost ST9/65 per person/car. Large ferries officially depart the Mulifanua Wharf on 'Upolu and the Salelologa Wharf on Savai'i every two hours between 6am and 4pm Wednesday to Monday, while a smaller ferry services this route at less regular intervals on Tuesday. Sailing times are

thrown into turmoil, however, when big swells roll across the strait and slow the ferries down.

Vehicles should be prebooked through the **Samoa Shipping Corporation** (in Apia ☎ 20935, in Salelologa 51477) to ensure a place.

#### Bus

Travelling by public bus in Samoa is an experience that shouldn't be missed. The buses are vibrantly coloured, wooden-seated vehicles (prepare yourself for hard jolts) that blast music at volumes that, depending on your opinion of Samoan pop music, inspire you to either boogie while sitting down or become ill with a throbbing headache. But unique as the vehicles are, bus travel is also problematic because services operate at the whim of the drivers. If a driver feels like knocking off at 1pm, they do, and passengers counting on the service are left stranded. Never rely on catching a bus after about 2pm. Buses are also scarce on Saturday afternoon and often only cater to church services on Sunday.

All buses prominently display the name of their destination in the front window. To stop a bus, wave your hand and arm, palm down, as the bus approaches. To signal that you'd like to get off the bus, either knock on the ceiling or clap loudly. Fares are paid to the driver – try to have as near to the exact change as possible.

Although most visitors don't notice it at first, there is a seating hierarchy on Samoan buses. For example, unmarried women normally sit together, while foreigners and older people must have a seat and sit near the front of the bus. Don't worry about arranging this yourself – the Samoans will see to it that everything is sorted out. The way in which Samoans stack themselves on top of each other on crowded buses without losing any dignity is akin to a social miracle.

Details about specific routes and fares are provided under the Transport headings at the start of the 'Upolu (p488) and Savai'i (p504) sections.

#### Car

Getting around by car in Samoa is quite straightforward. The coastal roads on both main islands are sealed and the general condition of most other roads has improved markedly in recent years. A 4WD

will make trips down rough, unsealed side roads much more comfortable, but nearly all of these side routes can be tackled in a high-clearance 2WD. After heavy rain, however, some roads will be inaccessible to 2WD vehicles.

At the time of writing, motorcycles were not available for hire in Samoa.

#### DRIVING LICENCE

Visitors to Samoa need to obtain a temporary driving licence from the **Ministry of Works, Transport & Infrastructure** (Map pp490-1; ☎ 21611; Beach Rd; 🕒 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) in Apia. A licence valid for two/three months will cost ST10/50.

#### HIRE

For details of car-hire firms on 'Upolu, see p488; for details of car-hire possibilities on Savai'i, see p505.

When hiring a vehicle, check for any damage or scratches before you get into the car and note everything on the rental agreement, lest you be held liable for damage when the car is returned. Furthermore, fend off requests to leave your passport or a cash deposit against possible damages.

Note that you can take hire cars from 'Upolu over to Savai'i and back, but cars hired on Savai'i cannot be taken over to 'Upolu.

#### INSURANCE

It's essential to have your hire car covered by insurance, as repair costs are extremely high in Samoa. Insurance costs aren't always included in the price of a quote, so always double-check this. Hire cars are subject to a ST2500 insurance excess (non-reduceable) in the event of any accident that's your fault.

#### ROAD RULES

Vehicles drive on the right-hand side of the road. The speed limit within central Apia and through adjacent villages is 40km/h; outside populated areas it's 55km/h.

#### Local Transport

##### TAXI

On 'Upolu, taxis can be a useful transport option for day-tripping – see p488 for details of prices – but the same can't be said for taxis on Savai'i, which are only convenient for short trips.