

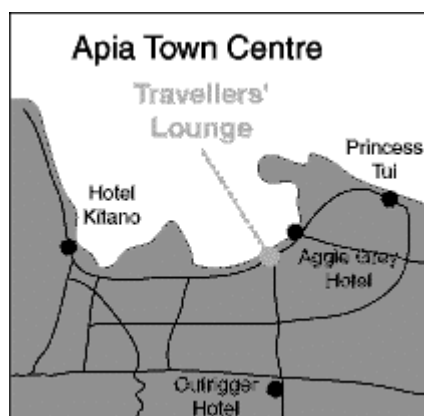
Go Samoa Travel Guide

in association with

Green Turtle Holidays

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Why Book with Green Turtle and the Travellers' Lounge?

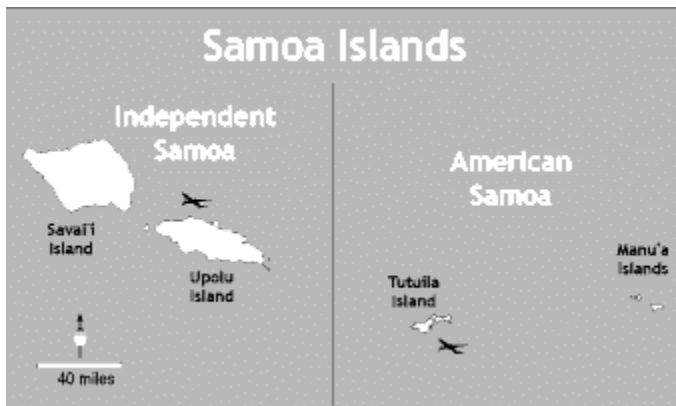
No where else in the world can you get such a unique Samoan holiday experience, and no where else in the world can you get all your Samoan travel advice and travel services all in one place. The Travellers' Lounge offers coffee, snacks, ice creams, internet café, travel information, tour booking desk, baggage storage, travel library, yachties bulletin board, restrooms, etc. all in a relaxed alfresco sidewalk/lounge atmosphere. Call in and make our warm friendly informative staff "green with envy" as you describe your imminent holiday intentions and expectations.

And to make things even more enjoyable for you, our Green Turtles are air-conditioned and new. To top it off, we have over 20 Green Turtle accredited "Nesting Site" accommodations on 4 islands: this is your home while in Samoa. Seek out the beach fales that suit you most, enjoy meeting our village chiefs and their families, visit tree houses and cliff top vantage points and relax in our growing list of B&Bs. You will be overwhelmed with the experiences, the hospitality, the cuisine, the impressions, the friendliness of your hosts and hostesses, the sheer beauty of the people: we don't call it Beautiful Samoa for nothing.

Introduction to Samoa

The Samoa Islands are made up of two separate and very different countries. [Western Samoa](#) (officially known as Independent Samoa) has the broadest holiday appeal with gorgeous beaches, lots of stunning waterfalls, volcanic craters and lava tubes, rain forest canopy walks, blowholes and some lovely traditional Polynesian villages with a truly laid back atmosphere. With so many scenic wonders, Samoa has a well developed tourist infrastructure. Upolu is the main island with the capital town of Apia, although it is smaller than neighbouring Savai'i, just 10 miles to the west. Both islands are volcanic in nature and covered in tropical rainforest, with lots of volcanic peaks rising in the interiors, the highest point on Upolu being Mt. Fito at 1158m and on Savai'i, My. Silisili rises to 1880m.

Neighbouring [America Samoa](#), has been a dependent State of the USA since 1899. Its largest island of Tutuila lies just 60 miles to the south east of Upolu, and is considerably smaller in size than either Upolu or Savaii. American Samoa has a surprisingly limited tourist infrastructure catering mostly to businessmen, Samoans visiting from abroad and the occasional eco-tourist enthusiast seeking out its rich tropical rain forest and archaeological sites. Tutuila boasts the beautiful harbour setting of its capital Pago Pago Town and a wild and beautiful coastline with virgin rain forest. There are three stunning islands in the Manu'a Group, 60 miles further east, with high sea cliffs and gorgeous beaches, and even more remote are the tiny Rose Atoll and Swains Island.



Approximately 160,000 Samoans live in Independent Samoa on the two main islands of Upolu (1115 sq. km - capital Apia) and Savai'i (1700 sq. km - main town Salelologa). Both are high volcanic islands, Savai'i having a distinct volcanic appearance - it's highest peak is Mt. Silisili at 1858m. Savai'i is in fact a dormant volcanic island with the last activity occurring between 1907-1911. Another 58,000 Samoans live on American Samoa, the majority on the main island of Tutuila (145 sq. km - capital Pago Pago), and just a handful on the outer Manu'a Islands. Like its neighbour, all islands are volcanic in nature, but these islands being geographically older than those on Western Samoa have had more years of erosion and its coast is extremely rugged. The highest point on American Samoa is Matafao Peak at 653m.

Compared to its South Pacific neighbours of Fiji, the Cook Islands and Tahiti, both [Samoa Islands](#) are extremely down-to-earth and you won't find commercial tourism large international hotels. There are just a handful of luxurious beach resorts but you'll find plenty of quaint beach bungalows (fales) with thatch roofs and coconut fronds as walls, most operated by local Samoan families on village land. Apia Town is the main centre of tourism and makes a good base for exploring Upolu and is the departure point for both Savai'i and Tutuila. This is where many holiday-makers spend at least their first few nights and there are several fine hotels and lots of budget bed and breakfast inns.

Life in both Samoas is very laid back and neither efficient nor technologically advanced making it difficult to organise a holiday itinerary from overseas without the help of local experts. Undoubtedly the most efficient and experienced travel operator is Green Turtle Holidays based at the [Travellers Lounge](#) in downtown Apia. Green Turtle specialize in providing visitors a unique Samoan experience and manage more than 20 accredited beach fales around the islands, most of them on an exclusive management scheme. Whether you want a week of luxury at a beach resort, an organized travel itinerary staying at traditional beach fales, or a mix of both luxury and tradition, Green Turtle will organize your tours and transfers, will arrange accommodation bookings with personalized travel planning and will provide meet and greet services on request.

Overall, Samoa is the ideal choice for both matured discerning travellers and young backpackers wanting to escape the more commercial South Pacific neighbours and experience a traditional culture, secluded beaches, stunning coastal scenery and lush tropical rain forests.

Samoa Islands Tourist Information

Independent Samoa offers excellent value for money and is one of the cheapest destinations in the South Pacific islands, although American Samoa is a lot more expensive. Budget travellers will get by comfortably on ST\$100 per day, about US\$30 (beer money extra), but in American Samoa you'll need almost US\$100 per day to survive. Most credit cards and travellers cheques are readily accepted in both countries and there are ATM cash withdrawal machines at Westpac and ANZ banks in Apia (Upolu),

Sale'aloa (Savai'i) and in Pago Pago Town (American Samoa). Currency is the Samoan Tala (ST\$) for Western Samoa and the US\$ in American Samoa.

Samoa has a distinctly tropical climate with plenty of sunshine and plenty of rain. The most comfortable time to visit is in winter, between May and October, when the temperature and humidity is not as fierce as the tropical summer months.

Getting to Samoa is straight-forward with direct flights between Los Angeles (Air New Zealand), New Zealand (Air New Zealand and Polynesian Airlines) and Fiji (Air Pacific, two flights per week) and connections to Australia via New Zealand or Fiji. 30-day visas are granted to all Nationals on arrival in Independent Samoa. American Samoa is governed by the same immigration regularities as the US so check with your nearest US Embassy...

English is widely spoken. Electricity is 240 volts in Western Samoa (same as UK and Australia) and 140volts in American Samoa (same as USA).

The main festival in Samoa is Teuila in early September. In American Samoa, Tourism Week in July is the best time to visit for cultural events and traditional displays.

Travel between the Samoa Islands is very straightforward - there are just two large islands to explore in Independent Samoa - Upolu and Savaii - and these are connected by a 20-minute scenic flight (five flights per day, Apia to Salelologa, South-East Savaii) or a 45-minute ferry crossing (4 ferries per day - Mulifanua, West Upolu to Salelologa, South-East Savaii).

To visit Manono Island, it's a 20-minute local ferry ride from the west coast of Upolu and these go on demand or by arrangement. There are six to eight flights each day between Apia and Pago Pago on American Samoa (35-minute flight), and two daily flights between Pago Pago and Ofu and Ta'u islands in the Manu'a Group (30-minute flight). There are also weekly ferries between Apia and Pago Pago, taking about 8 hours one way.

Once on an island, travelling around is a little less straight-forward. Public buses on Upolu and Savaii are uncomfortable and unreliable and are worth experiencing only for amusing sights and the local characters you might meet on-board. Car hire is more popular and there are several good companies based in Apia - call in at the Travellers' Lounge for the best deals. If you plan to travel to Savaii, it's worth hiring a car in Apia and taking it across by ferry. The other extremely popular alternative is to ride the [Green Turtle Bus](#). This comfortable 15-seater tourist bus enables travellers to hop-on and hop-off as many times as they like for a fixed fee per island. The Green Turtle Bus circles both Upolu and Savai'i each day, stopping at the main tourist attractions and at the accredited Green Turtle Beach Fales en-route.

Getting around American Samoa is more difficult - public buses are cheap but service only the main routes between Pago Pago and the airport on a regular basis. Unfortunately there are no tours on American Samoa so to get to the best sights around the island you will need to hire a car.

Samoa Activities

Samoa has some of the best scenery in the South Pacific with high mountains, secluded bays and vibrant tropical rain forest. Sightseeing opportunities are endless in both Independent Samoa and American Samoa. Excellent day trips are offered by Green Turtle Tours on Upolu Island and Savaii Island and for those looking for guided week long trips, then Eco Tour Samoa offers personalised itineraries throughout Samoa to match the clients interests. Unfortunately there are no organised day tours in American Samoa.

Surfing is excellent in Independent Samoa, with both summer and winter swells on the north and south shores of Upolu and Savaii. There are three beach fales dedicated to surfers - [Saoluafata Harbour](#) on the north coast of Upolu (no boat, surfers have to paddle out to surf), [Maninoa Beach Fales](#) on the south coast of Upolu (boat trips to several surf breaks) and [Ananoa Beach](#) on the south-east coast of Savai'i (offshore surf and boat trips to other surf breaks).

Kayaking is good around Upolu and there are some fantastic hiking trails in both Independent Samoa and American Samoa, including remote coastal trails, hikes to waterfalls and climbing the summits of the great mountain ranges.

Scuba diving is good for beginners, but enthusiasts will find the reefs to be limited and the challenges rather tame compared to Fiji, Solomons or Guam. [Maninoa Beach Fales](#) on the south coast of Upolu and [Janes Beach Fales](#) on the north coast of Savaii both offer scuba diving operators.

Sailing is also considered limited with just a few islands to explore but there are some lovely secluded bays in remote regions with good anchorages. Apia Harbour is a popular stop-over for yachties with its fun town and good amenities. Pago Pago harbour in American Samoa offers an excellent yachting base and the perfect protection against storms. Unfortunately there are no sailing charters or overnight.

Samoa beaches are amongst the most exquisite in the South Pacific, although few have any facilities, not even drinking water, and most are almost totally secluded except those alongside a local village. Don't be surprised if a local turns up asking for money for use of the beach - land in Samoa is family owned and although you won't find signs saying 'keep out' or 'private property', the local owner has the right to charge a 'custom fee', usually from ST\$2 to \$5. See our [Samoa beach fales](#) guide for more information about where to stay.

Samoa Accommodation

Most accommodation in Samoa is based in Apia Town - the hotel rooms that is (see [Apia](#) for review of hotels and guesthouses). There are only three small luxury resorts on the south coast of Upolu and a couple of small beach resorts on the north-east coast of Savaii. [Samoa Accommodation Search](#)

It would appear that accommodation in Samoa was very limited - and that's what most travel agents would have you believe. But this is far from the truth. There are over 40 tourist accommodation properties around Upolu and Savaii in the form of locally owned beach fales - handcrafted thatch bungalows aimed at discerning travellers, most with shared bathroom facilities but some having private facilities. Some are of a poor standard, with old mattresses, stained bed sheets, unhygienic bathrooms and awful food. But in recent years the standards and services of many have been raised considerably thanks to the accreditation scheme established by [Green Turtle Holidays](#).

Tourists staying at the most luxurious hotel in Samoa have stepped out of their comfort zone and stayed in these accredited beach fales and have taken home a memorable and unique experience. There are now over 20 accredited fales around the islands where you can enjoy five star hospitality, locally produced food including fish (sometimes even lobster is on the menu), clean bathrooms and fresh linen and all in truly outstanding locations. Staying in such beach fales (not all are on a beach - some are pitched over the lagoon like the US\$500 per night resorts in Tahiti) epitomises the romantic South Pacific experience and costs only US\$35 per night including 3 meals!

Most of the accredited beach fales are located in extremely scenic locations, and can even be found on

uninhabited Namua Island and the very traditional Manono Island. Beach fales are the very best way to experience genuine Samoan hospitality.

The most popular beach fales are on the south coast of Upolu at Lalomanu Beach, Vava'u Beach and Virgin Cove and on Savaii Island at Manase Beach and Aganoa. However, if you want to experience true Samoan hospitality and feel like you're exploring virgin territory, then there are many other excellent options.

Now for the exciting stuff - samoa beach fales a bit more unique, a bit more authentic and a bit more off the beaten track ... yet accredited by Green Turtle.

Uninhabited [Namua Island](#), 10 minutes by boat off the east coast of Upolu is unique. Set on a nice swimming beach with good snorkelling, there are just 10 traditional beach fales with views looking back towards the Upolu mountains.

One of the nicest over-water fales can be found at [Vaotu'ua](#) on traditional Manono Island. There's a small beach, a gorgeous swimming lagoon and plenty of solitude - come here for rest and relaxation (there are no cars or dogs), and for a little curiosity about traditional Samoan life.

One of the most original fales in Samoa is set on an inland lake on the north side of Savai'i. [Satoalepai Wetlands](#) offers three over-the-water fales with magnificent views of the mountains. The main attraction here is the fresh water ponds where you can swim with turtles. It's possible to explore the lakes by a traditional outrigger canoe provided by the local family who operate the premises. Also on Savaii, set beside a tranquil lagoon just outside of Salelologa Town, is [Lagoon Chalets](#) with its exquisite fales set over the water and backed by lovely forests. For one of the most peaceful and intimate settings, try [Mativa Treehouse](#) on the south coast of Upolu.

If you're looking to stay in a traditional village, [Parataiso Beach](#) and [Faofao Beach](#) on the south coast of Upolu are the best options. Both are set in lovely villages and the Samoan hospitality is genuine. The village at Parataiso is off the main road and more traditional, whilst Faofao, set right on the main road offers a nicer beach and traditional dancing on Saturday nights. For the more adventurous, try [Sina's Beach](#) which is set in a very remote region on the east coast of Upolu. The fales are built on stilts overlooking the beach and lagoon and the village here is very traditional and surrounded by stunning tropical mountains with good walking trails. Another charming village setting is at [Saoluafata Beach Faes](#) where three over water fales built over the water in a protected bay offer stunning coastal and sunset views.

[Satui'atua Beach](#) on the south coast of Savai'i is set on a lovely and quiet beach with great snorkelling and the nearby village is a great place to see artists making traditional tapa cloth designs. Satui'atua is also a popular spot for surfing.

Independent Samoa Travel Guide

The main island in Independent Samoa is Upolu with its picturesque capital Apia overlooking the harbour and tropical hills. Apia has an excellent selection of hotels and restaurants. Mountains, traditional villages and gorgeous beaches are found along the entire southern coastline of Upolu with refreshing waterfalls in the interior. It is possible to see the main attractions on Upolu on a circle island day tour with Green Turtle Tours although at least four days are needed to explore its hidden attractions.

The largest island is neighbouring Savai'i, an hour by ferry from the west tip of Upolu or a 20 minute flight from Apia. Several popular beach locations can be found on the north east tip at Manase and on the south west coast. Savai'i has an even more traditional village society and has some beautiful natural attractions including blowholes, virgin forests canopy walks, waterfalls and lava fields (the last eruption was in 1911) making this a geologists haven. It is possible to see the main attractions on Savai'i on a circle island day tour with Green Turtle Tours although at least three days are needed to explore the island at a relaxed pace.

Between the two main islands is tranquil Manono Island, just 10 minutes by boat from the west tip of Upolu, with its five small traditional villages, a pleasant coastal track around the island, interesting archaeological sites.

Upolu Island Introduction

Exploring Upolu is easy, with a good coastal road and several roads crossing the middle of Upolu connecting Apia with the south coast. It takes about 4 hours to drive around the island without stopping. Public buses operate to most locations, but the further you go from Apia, the more infrequent the service. Buses run around the south coast only several times a day and schedules are unreliable. Car hire is a better option. However, there are drawbacks: most car hire companies require your license to be endorsed at the courthouse in Apia before renting and insurance is seldom offered - hitting a child or pig will get you into serious trouble with the locals. The most popular way for tourists to get around is with [Green Turtle Tours](#). This Apia based company offers an excellent hop on hop off package which enables you to spend as many nights as you like at one of its 12 accredited beach fale locations along the way. The tour can also be taken as a day tour.



Faleolo International is situated on the north-west coast of Upolu. The new site of Aggie Grey's beach hotel is due to open in December 2004 to the west of the airport. Most tourists for the time being hop on the Airport Shuttle Bus for the 40-minute ride into Apia Town. This coastal road passes numerous traditional villages and is a good eye-opener to the Samoan way of life.

The capital of Samoa, Apia, sits in the heart of the north coast of Upolu. Apia is a charming town with a pleasant harbour setting and is the hub of tourist activity and accommodation. The local Fagali'i airport is 5km east of town for flights to Savai'i Island and American Samoa.

The road along the north east coast of Upolu meanders around bays and over ridges, hugging the mountainous coastline. The valleys and waterfalls in this region are spectacular and there are several nice beaches and beach fales and a few small villages. Off the main road is the spectacular and remote region of Fagaloa Bay with secluded valleys and very traditional villages - the ideal place to immerse yourself into the local culture.

The south east coast of Upolu is one of the most popular tourist locations for its numerous gorgeous beach settings, excellent swimming and snorkelling and razor sharp mountain views. There are lots of beach fales and small resorts along the coast. There are also four uninhabited offshore islands with

protected bird sanctuaries and rich in marine life, one with beach fale accommodation.

In the heart of the south coast there's a selection of remote and wild beaches, excellent surfing, waterfalls in tropical forest parks and the popular Maninoa Beach where there are two luxury beach resorts and a budget beach fale property.

The finest stretch of secluded beaches is on the south west coast from Sa'anapu to Lefaga. This stretch of coastline is off the main road but can be reached from either Sa'anapu where there are kayaking tours around mangrove forests, or from Salamumu, where a small luxury resort operates. The four mile walk from Sa'anapu to Return to Paradise beach is one of the finest in the South Pacific.

Apia Town Travel Guide

Apia is the charming capital of Samoa, situated on the north coast of Upolu. With a population of over 40,000, Apia is a fairly compact town with a central business district along the attractive Apia Harbour.

The pleasant beach road is the main stretch for shops, restaurants and hotels as well as the main tourist information centre at the [Travellers Lounge](#). Beach Road follows the harbour wall with its wide promenade. Before the wall was built, a beach lined the waterfront, but now little sand is left except on the harbour sea-bed which is a popular swimming spot with local kids. The only beach area is a ten minute stroll from central Apia at Vaiala which has several guest houses with ocean views but the main attraction here is not the beach but snorkelling at the Palolo Deep Marine Reserve with its deep blue hole and colourful fish.

Apia has a large selection of hotels, inns and motels. Quite a few are pretty ordinary hotels in out of the way locations and aimed more at visiting Samoans and businessmen than tourists. The best luxury hotel in Apia is [Aggie Grey's](#), a South Sea legend, located on Beach Road overlooking the harbour with excellent dining, cocktail bars and a culture show some nights. The alternative is the [Hotel Kitano](#) on Mulinu Peninsula, a slightly cheaper option and aimed more at families than couples. The [Millenia Hotel](#) is also located on Mulinu Peninsula and offers nice views across the harbour but its clientele is aimed more at businessmen than tourists and the rooms are efficient rather than homely.

The [Vaisala Beach Cottages](#) offers excellent value for money self contained bungalows in a spacious garden setting overlooking the sea at Vaisala, about 15-minutes walk into downtown and is a great option for families being able to sleep up to 5 people or couples looking for a little peace and quiet. For those on more of a budget, [Pasefika Inn](#) is a centrally located hotel with clean rooms and large restaurant and is a good choice being close to restaurants and tour offices. For those looking for more intimacy, [Aniva's Bed and Breakfast](#) offers clean rooms with shared bathroom about 10-minutes walk from downtown heading towards the hospital.

Backpackers have a good choice of accommodation, from the shared rooms and fales at Seipepa and Hidden Garden (both are in suburban areas about 15-minutes walk into downtown) and the elegant and extremely reasonably priced rooms of [Outrigger Hotel](#) (some even have air-conditioning), with its swimming pool and large decking area about 10 minute walk to downtown Apia near the hospital. [Princess Tui Inn](#) at Vaiala offers backpacker dorms and budget rooms, some with air-conditioning. The Palolo Deep Marine Reserve, which has great snorkelling, is just around the corner.

There are several distinct features about Apia, the Catholic church being the finest architectural building in town, but overall it has a laid back old world feeling and is swept meticulously clean every morning and afternoon. The small Samoa Museum on Beach Road has a fair introductory to Samoan culture and relics from the past. Markets are great places to meet the locals in a more sedate manner and to buy fresh

produce - Apia centre boasts three - the colourful fish market by the harbour, the fruit and veg market opposite the bus stand and the large flea market selling everything from fine crafts to tacky souvenirs and cheap Chinese clothes. Nightlife in Apia is thriving with lots of atmospheric fine dining restaurants and good drinking holes including a few exceptionally rowdy local bars and nightclubs and the infamous drag act put on at Margary-Ta's Beer Garden.

A few places of interest on the outskirts of Apia are the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum, the Papasee's natural sliding rock and pools, several excellent trails through rainforest around Tanumapua, and the new 18-hole championship golf course at Faleata. For those who love rainforest and a secluded cool mountain setting, [Cloud 9 Retreat](#) offers hiking trails, birdwatching and lovely views overlooking the valley and Apia Town.

North East Upolu

Heading east from Apia, the coast is tropical and rugged with pleasant mountain views and small villages along the rivers. The main highway hugs the coastline as it meanders from bay to bay. There are several picturesque beaches along this coast although few swimming beaches, the most picturesque being that facing tiny [Albatross Island](#). Further east is another attractive setting at [Saoluafata Harbour](#) where there is good surfing and snorkelling. A few km down the road is Piula Cave at Fatumea where a natural fresh water swimming pool sits right beside the sea and beneath a huge outcrop of rock upon which a Methodist church was built earlier this century.

From Piula, the coastal highway cuts inland. At the picturesque Falefa Falls, a small paved off-road follows the coast to Utulua Point passing some of the best accessible coastal scenery in Samoa. The paved road ends at the attractive village of Saletele, but you can walk right around Fagalua Bay along a rough dirt track to the village of Taelefaga where you can either rejoin the main highway or continue on to the wonderful village of Uafato. This is one of the most attractive coastal walks in Samoa but you'll need a full day to make it at a relaxed pace. Uafato Conservation Reserve has some of the last remaining natural tropical forests in Samoa and bird life thrives. This is also the home of the Samoan wood carvers and you can stay with Loi, one of the best woodcarvers at [Sina's Beach Fales](#). Uafato can also be reached by bus from Apia (Mon, Wed, Fri and Sat only).

The main highway by-passes this wonderful remote area and heads inland weaving up the mountains and over La Mafa Pass

South East Upolu

The highway rejoins the coast at the south-eastern point of Upolu. This stretch of coast is very traditional with pretty seaside villages, steep mountains and views of the Aleipata Islands which sit a few miles offshore. Lalomanu Village has a spectacular beach setting with fine white sand, excellent swimming and snorkelling in its shallow turquoise lagoon and lots of beach fale options. Facing this region are four offshore islands, all uninhabited, within the main reef about 10 minutes by boat off the Upolu coastline.

It's possible to kayak out to these islands on an organised tour with EcoTour Samoa or you can stay at [Namua Beach Fales](#) and have them ferry you out there.

On the south-eastern tip of Upolu facing Nuutele Island is the picturesque beach at Lalomanu. The fine white sand and turquoise waters make this one of the more popular spots for travellers and locals alike (can be crowded at weekends). There are several beach fale accommodations here, the most authentic being offered by Taufua Fales.

Lalomanu Beach is a truly spectacular setting on the south east tip of Upolu with stunning mountains, offshore islands and fine white sands. There are four separate beach fale properties here, strung out in a line along the beachfront, of which only one is recommended for the service they offer tourists and the good food served at their restaurant. The only way to tell them apart is from the style of the fale. Our pick is [Taufua Beach Fales](#) which offers traditional open sided beach bungalows right on the beach as well as several enclosed fale offering more privacy and more protection from unexpected heavy downpours. Taufua offers lovely views of the offshore islands. [Litia Sini's](#) is another popular choice and offers enclosed wooden boxes (painted in glaring blue) right on the beach but the food is not great and the public bar, which is popular with locals, can be quite noisy. Lalomanu is in a village setting with the main road cutting between it and the beach fale and can get crowded at weekends.

The coast between Lalomanu and Saleapaga is one of the most scenic in Samoa with views of the razor-back mountain ridges and of secluded wild beaches. The road between the two villages coast is the quietest stretch on Upolu and is a good place for walking, taking about an hour and a half. At Saleapaga Village is another excellent swimming beach and the popular [Faofao Beach Fales](#) with great views back to Nuutele Island.

One of the nicest beaches on Upolu is at Vava'u, a secluded beach down a small dirt track several miles beyond Saleapaga Village. [Vava'u Beach Fales](#) are a little more up-market but retaining a budget price tag. The fale are enclosed, of wooden walls and with corrugated iron roofs so are not "traditional" beach fale. However, the beach setting is truly wonderful and the fale, being self-contained and with veranda, give a sense of intimacy. The main feature here is the gorgeous beach setting, with good snorkelling and swimming in a protected bay enclosed by a limestone island. There's a restaurant serving good food and complimentary kayaks. This is a great option for couples and those looking for a bit more privacy.

Along the coast from Vavau off a seldom used side road is the attractive Utulaelae Village. This is a great place to experience the traditional Samoan way of life (Fa'a Samoa) and you can stay at the charming [Parataiso Beach Fales](#) for a mix of culture and sand.

South Upolu

Coming back towards the coast from Sopoaga Waterfall, the main road continues for almost 10-miles adjacent to the south coast of Upolu but half-a-mile or so inland passing lots of tracks leading to small traditional villages. Just before the O Le Pupu Pue National Park is a turn off to Ili'ili Village where you can stay at the tranquil [Mativa Treehouse](#). This secluded spot faces Nuusafee Island which can be accessed by kayak - Nuusafee is a tiny coral island with excellent snorkelling, white sand beaches and excellent surfing.

O le Pupu-Pue National Park has several lovely hiking trails that meander inland through the forest and towards the coast through low-lying vegetation and leading to more secluded beaches. The lovely setting at the Togitogiga waterfall - several small falls running into deep pools which are excellent for jumping into - is a popular picnic spot with shower and changing facilities (a rarity in Samoa). Just beyond the park is a rough 4WD track leading to Aganoa Black Sand Beach off which is the popular "Coconuts" surfing break.

The cross island road from Apia joins the south coast road at Siumu Village where you'll find an unusual red sand beach. A few miles to the west is Maninoa Beach, with its fine white sand and tropical palm fringed scenery with an exquisite shallow sandy bottom lagoon. There are two small luxury beach resorts

at Maninoa - [Coconuts Club](#) and [Sinalei Reef Resort](#) - with the budget [Maninoa Beach Fales](#) situated between the two.

South West Upolu

The south west coast of Upolu has a few small traditional fishing villages off the main road which are great places to experience traditional Samoan life. At Saanapu, there's a peaceful board walk across protected mangrove forests which can be extensively explored by kayak hired from the local villages. You can stay at [Saanapu Wetlands Retreat](#) to really explore this unique environment. The forest is an excellent place for bird watching and solitude.

Beyond Sa'anapu Village there is mile upon mile of gorgeous palm fringed sandy beaches and snorkelling lagoons. This coast is inaccessible by road (except for one small track to Salamumu Village and Sa'Moana Resort) and offers a truly pristine beach environment. [Virgin Cove](#) is an excellent set-up on a secluded beach along the south-west coast of Upolu. There is a rough track through the tropical forest leading to the beach fales, but most tourists get dropped at Sa'anapu and walk along the beach for ten minutes to reach Virgin Cove. There are just eight traditional fales here, ensuring intimacy, with an excellent restaurant serving local food and several nice touches like fresh ground coffee and sun (warm) showers. However, there's no village environment near-by so this is for beach lovers and naturalists only.

It's possible to walk from Virgin Cove to [Sa'Moana Resort](#) (an up-market resort offering the best surfing guides and equipment in Samoa) and on to the fine village setting at Salamumu, in a few scintillating hours.

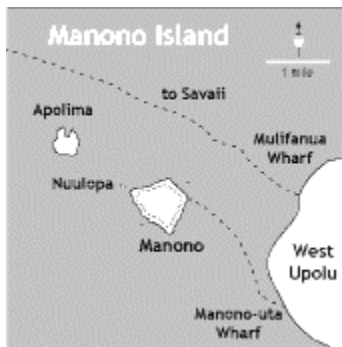
The beach extends from Salamumu for several more miles passing the exquisite [Matareva Beach](#) (road access) and culminating at the aptly named [Return to Paradise Beach](#) (road access). Basic beach fales are available at both beaches but all provisions must be taken including water for drinking and showering. Day trippers will have to pay a custom fee of about ST\$5 per person for access to these beaches.

The west coast of Upolu offers more coastal villages, splendid mountain and coastal views but few beaches and no accommodation. However, you can take a side trip to lovely Manono Island, just 20-minutes by boat. See Manono Chapter.

The ferries for Savaii depart from Mulifanua Wharf. A few minutes walk to the north is the [Samoan Village Beach Resort](#) with views of Manono Island and a small cove beach in protected harbour. The resort has spacious bungalows in a large coconut grove.

The north east coast of Upolu between Falealo Airport and Apia Town is the most densely populated region in Samoa with an almost endless parade of villages lining the coastal road. Here you'll find lots of large churches, natural swimming pools alongside the rocky coastline, outrigger canoes in the water, traditional village life, tattooing and touch rugby, but no tourist accommodation ... Samoans only.

Manono Island



Manono Island lies offshore from the west tip of Upolu Island, just 20 minutes by local ferry from the Manono-uta wharf. Manono is a small volcanic island, just 3 sq. km in size with four small traditional fishing villages and about 1000 residents. The island is the most laid back in all Samoa, with no cars, no dogs, a few small shops and one beautiful traditional accommodation making it truly peaceful and a great place to kick back..

[Vaotuua Beach Fales](#) are without doubt the most elegant budget over-the-water fale in Samoa, handcrafted from local timber with a private verandah and steps down into the turquoise lagoon. At high tide, you can hear the waves gently splashing beneath your fale. The small beach has fine white sand, there's a lovely swimming lagoon, and the views across the water to Upolu are stunning.

It takes a leisurely two hours to walk around the Manono Island coastal track, passing several palm fringed beaches with good snorkelling and the historical grave of 99 with its fascinating legend. On the far side of Manono, at the village of Apai is one of the most stunning views in Samoa - from here you can look down the coast of Manono across to the tiny island of Nuuulopa, silhouetted against the larger Apolima Island which is silhouetted by the even larger Savaii Island and its high mountain peaks. Inland trails lead to an ancient star mound on top of Mt. Tulimanuiva, the highest point on Manono at 110m. However, the islands greatest attraction is its simple lifestyle and the opportunity to interact with the locals and learn about their life of planting, weaving, fishing and kicking back.

Savai'i Island Introduction



Savai'i ranks as the largest Polynesian island outside of Hawaii or New Zealand. Five daily flights from Apia to Moata Airport (Salelologa on the south eastern point of Savai'i) take just 20 minutes. The airport at Asau on north western Savai'i is dysfunctional. Slow ferries depart from Mulifanua on the western side of Upolu 3-times per day and travel across the 18km straight separating the two islands arriving in Salelologa after one and a half hours at sea, costing just ST\$7 one way. The fast ferry takes 45-minutes and also departs Mulifanua Wharf three times a day. Buses on Savai'i are even more irregular than on Upolu making it unreliable to get about using public transport, and taxis are expensive and hard to find outside of Salelologa and Asau. The best bet is to take the [Green Turtle Tours](#) which offers a hop on hop off

package, or to hire a car and do it yourself.
Savai'i Travel Guide

All tourists arrive in Savai'i at Salelologa Town (wharf and airport) on the south-east coast. There are several nice places to stay just outside town with access to the stunning Taufua Crater Rainforest Preserve. The best surf in Savaii is on the east coast of the Taufua peninsula at Ananoa Beach, particular when the big winter swells arrive (Dec to Apr). The east coast of Savaii is the most populated with lots of villages, churches and the picturesque Lano beach which has good snorkelling and summer surfing. Manase in the north of the island is the premier beach hang out with a handful of independent beach fale to choose from and a couple of nice resorts and good for swimming and snorkelling. The western tip of Savai'i has several stunning beaches, notably at Falealupo-tai with its spectacular setting. Nearby is the popular Falealupo rainforest canopy walkway. This is a remote region where you can really escape from the world. The south coast has few villages and lots of open space. There's a nice beach at Satuiatua, the tapa cloth making village, and a little further along the coast is the "must-see" Taga blowholes and coastal walk.

Salelologa, Taufua and East Coast Savaii

The wharf and main airport at Savai'i are at Salelologa on the south east corner. Salelologa is a functional town for the islanders - a few bars, supermarkets and garages - but has little to offer tourists except for its colourful market. There are a few cheap restaurants and basic motel style accommodation in town as well as the lovely [Lagoon Chalet Fales](#) on a sheltered turquoise lagoon ideal just outside of town ideal for relaxing, kayaking and swimming. The Safua and Savaiian hotels can be found a few miles north of town although these are functional hotels with no beach.

The greatest attraction of the region is the Tafua Peninsula to the south of town with its huge accessible crater and splendid wild coastal views. The hike around Tafua Crater takes approximately an hour from its base. On the south-western side of the peninsula is the lovely Ananoa Beach with its excellent offshore surfing and the [Ananoa Beach Fales](#). A few miles on is the turn off for AfuAau Waterfall. This refreshing waterfall plummets from virgin forest into a deep natural and fresh swimming pool. The track is difficult to navigate unless you have 4-WD but from the main highway it's just a half hour walk inland. About 20 minutes drive further down this inland track is the fascinating Pulemelei Mound, the largest archaeological site in Polynesia, measuring more than 60 metres in length and rising to a height of 15 metres.

The east coast of Savaii is the most developed stretch with some lovely traditional villages and extraordinarily large churches, and several picturesque beaches and snorkelling lagoons - this is the place to visit to immerse yourself in Samoan village life, which comes alive at sun down. There are a couple of budget hotels just north of Salelologa Town. The [Savaiian Hotel](#) is a run down property facing the sea but the coastline here is dull. Slightly further north on the inland side of the road is the [Safua Hotel](#) offering duple and individual bungalows in an attractive garden setting. The nicest swimming beaches are between the villages of Faga and Lano about a 20-minute drive from Salelologa and here you can stay at the attractive [Siufaga Beach Resort](#) which faces a pretty beach but sits across the main road.

Manase Beach and North East Coast Savaii

The north east coast of Savaii has the regions most varied landscapes with fine white sand beaches at Manase and Lelepa and the dominating Saleaula Lava Fields to the south which spilled from Mt. Matavanu between 1906 and 1911. Here you can walk over the black lava fields and visit the old village of Saleaula with its church relics and legends.

At Satoalepai, there's a lovely inland lake and natural fresh-water pools where a local family has created a Turtle sanctuary. Here you can stay in the [Satoalepai Overwater Fales](#) and enjoy great views of the mountains, explore the lakes on a traditional outrigger canoe, and swim with turtles in the ponds.

The most popular beach location on Savai'i is between Lelepa and Manase villages, a few miles beyond Satoalepai. The swimming beach stretches for several miles and makes a great spot for strolling, interacting with the local villages along the shoreline and snorkelling. The only up-market resort is [Le Lagoto Resort](#), on the outskirts of Lelepa Village, and offers 5 self-contained bungalows, a great restaurant and views of Matautu Bay, one of the few places in Savai'i with good yacht anchorage. Across the bay is Manase Village where five families have set up beach fales aimed at backpackers. The pick of the bunch is [Samoa Vacations Beach Fales](#) (offering the most authentic style fales with excellent food and service), [Janes Beach Fales](#) (offering enclosed fales and scuba diving) and [Tanu's Beach Fales](#) (the largest property with the liveliest atmosphere but least intimacy). At the far end of Manase is [Stevenson's](#) which offers more up-market self contained beach villas and cheap rooms across the road.

North West Coast Savaii

Beyond Manase, another huge lava field has made the coast inaccessible. The coastal road cuts inland where you'll find several interesting lava tubes, the Peapea caves and trails to the summit of Mt. Silisili, the highest point in Samoa at 1,858m. This arduous hike takes 2 days round trip and requires an experienced guide and warm clothing.

The road rejoins the coast at Asau, a picturesque town with good anchorage in its bay (although large container ships have been unable to access it since the 1991 hurricane blew in huge rocks at its mouth) and a good place to spot turtles. Asau once had an airport, but this has been closed for almost ten years. A few miles beyond is Vaisala, a small village with lovely white sand and surfing - the [Vaisala Beach Hotel](#) offers affordable rooms and a restaurant overlooking the beach.

At the very western tip of Savai'i is one of the most scenic areas of the island. Falealupo Rainforest Preserve is a natural low lying tropical forest with peaceful trails and an amazing canopy walkway between two huge banyan trees with breath taking views overlooking the forest below. It's possible to spend a memorable night high up in one of the banyan trees although this needs to be prearranged (through [Green Turtle Tours](#)).

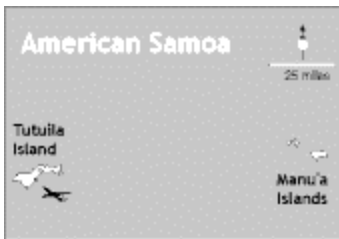
The coast around Cape Mulinu'u is wild yet peaceful with a couple of lovely beaches and attractive sea arches and cliffs. [Tanumatiu Beach Fales](#) offers a secluded place to overnight beside a gorgeous beach with swimming and snorkelling.

South Coast Savaii

The southern coast of Savai'i has excellent winter surfing particularly off Satui'atua. This peaceful spot has a lovely sandy beach backed by huge trees with some good snorkelling offshore. [Satuiatua Beach Fales](#) have some of the loveliest thatch fales in all of Samoa and provide excellent meals making it a popular choice with travellers and surfers. It's possible to walk from here to the magnificent blowholes near the village of Taga, but allow yourself a full day walk along undisturbed and uninhabited coastline. The Alofaaga Blowholes are one of the great sites in Samoa with plumes of water up to 30 metres high and wild coastal walks. You can stay about 10-minutes walk from the blowholes at [Meaole's Beach Fales](#) set alongside the rocky coastline with crashing surf. Nearby is the unusual Nu'u black sand beach although the currents here are treacherous making it a beach of beauty rather than practicality.

Heading back towards the main town of Salelologa keep an eye out for the Gataivai Falls which tumble 5 metres directly into the sea - the river is usually a hub of activity for the neighbouring village with kids playing and fishing and women washing clothes.

American Samoa Introduction



American Samoa is a collection of seven islands administered by the USA since 1899 and is situated about 100km to the south east of Independent Samoa with which it shares its history and culture.

There is little tourist infrastructure on American Samoa and the hotels in Pago Pago and along the south coast of Tutuila cater mostly to businessmen and the occasional discerning travellers in search of the islands pristine and hidden environment. It's as if the islands were hiding from the world. Even its reputation is unjustly soured. Unfortunately there are facets of the island that are rather crude - its fast food joints, large cars and cable television are typically American and the large tuna canning factories of Pago Pago have in the past created pollution and prostitution amongst its Asian workers. But these issues are easily outweighed by the stunning coastal scenery and mountain peaks between which remain virgin tropical forests and rich and important archeological sites.

Tutuila is by far the largest island. Its coast is rugged, with only the occasional secluded beach, and its mountains are steep and covered in lush tropical rain forest. The north coast of Tutuila is virtually inaccessible other than by boat. Pago Pago is the capital set against steep mountains of the National Park and a deep and extremely attractive harbour. Pago Pago is a 30-minute flight from the capital town of Apia in Western Samoa. The best beaches, most spectacular scenery and most important archaeological sites are found on the three outer islands of the Manu'a Group about 60 miles from Tutuila.

Tutuila Island Travel Guide



Pago Pago airport is situated on the south coast of Tutuila Island, about 25-minutes drive from Pago Town.

To cope with the shortage of rooms in Pago, [Quality Inn](#) have built a 100+ room hotel near the airport aimed primarily at the business market but offers an ideal base for tourists wishing to explore Tutuila by car. Also near the airport, opposite the Golf Club, is the intimate [Taalolo Lodge](#), a bed & breakfast with swimming pool and good views.

Pago Pago Town is the heartbeat of American Samoa with its stunning deep water harbour (a collapsed volcanic crater) and its huge Tuna canning factories. Pago retains its clapboard buildings and red light district so romantically written about by Somerset Maughan in his book *Rain*.

Pago Pago remains a small town with less than 4000 residents, a couple of banks, convenience stores, restaurants, the Haydon Museum with its fine collection of ancient Samoan artefacts and lots of government departments including the National Park Headquarters and the Tourist Office located next to the yacht club at Utulei.

There are several hotels and inns in downtown Pago Pago, all relatively expensive compared to Western Samoa, the most up-market being [Sadie Thompson Inn](#), and the cheapest being [Motu O Fiafaga Hotel](#) with budget rooms starting at US\$50 per night.

Slightly outside of town is the lovely [Le Falepule](#) bed and breakfast guest house in the hills overlooking the picturesque harbour. One of the icons of American Samoa is the [Rainmaker Hotel](#), the shabbiest hotel in the South Pacific and for those with a sense of humour, it's worth spending a night for its sheer haphazard appearance and the characters you are likely to encounter.

Pago Pago is hemmed in by towering mountains including Mt. Matafao, the highest point at 2,142 ft. and the impressive Mt. Alava which forms part of the National Park on the north coast - both mountains have trails leading to their summits and offer spectacular views. The scenic drive around the harbour passes several small beaches on the southern approach which have rocky islets protecting the lagoon making them good for swimming.

East Coast Tutuila

The highlights of Tutuila is exploring the scenic coastal highways that meander along the south coast and enjoying the virgin tropical rainforest.

The National Park of American Samoa encompasses 2470 acres north and east of Pago Pago. There are only two trails in the park. The Mt. Alava 3-mile trail is the most scenic and most strenuous and is accessible from Fagasa Pass west of Pago (allow 5 hours round-trip). The Pola Island trail starts from the end of the scenic road that leads into the Park five miles east of Pago at Afono Village and offers a gentle stroll meandering through lowland forest.

East of the National Park, the south coast highway continues through tropical rainforest passing a few small villages. There's a fine beach at Alega with good swimming and snorkelling as well as the famous Tisa's barefoot bar which is a thriving bar / nightspot from Thursday to Saturday and quiet the rest of the week. [Tisa's](#) offers two lodges overlooking the beach.

At Fagaitua Village a road leads inland to the villages of Masefau and Sailele on the north coast. Both offer splendid views of the wild north coast and Sailele has a gorgeous beach where you could easily spend a day doing nothing.

There's another fine beach at Amouli Village with its prominent volcanic islet shaped like a pyramid a stones throw from the beach. The lagoon here offers a safe place to swim. The coastal road offers nice views towards Aunu'u Island. The island has one sleepy village, the most authentic in American Samoa, and can be visited by local boat from Auasi Village, taking 15-minutes to cross. You can hike to the unusual Pala Lake with its quicksand and beyond to Red Lake, an extinct crater in the centre of the island.

Tula Village on the extreme eastern point of Tutuila is a sleepy village with nice sand beach. At the far end of the village is the Meteorological Centre on the tip of Cape Matatula. The trail to the Cape takes just 10-minutes where you'll find high cliffs and walking trails with great views along the coast and looking down into the sea where you might spot porpoise or sea turtles.

The road ends a few miles beyond at the village of Onenoa.

West Coast Tutuila

West of Pago Pago Town, the coastal highway winds its way around the harbour backed by sheer mountains. There are several nice beaches to stop at before you reach the south coast including Flower Pot Rock, an interesting islet just off from the beach. The road continues through suburban settlements along the south coast including the sprawling Nuuli and Tafuna Villages with fast food takeaways and shopping malls. Inland from the airport are several fine sites worth seeking out. Archaeology buffs should head to the ancient star mound that has been cleared near the catholic cathedral at Tafuna and here interpretation signs explaining the probably significance and use of the star mounds is explained. A little further inland past the Community College a small hiking trail leads for half an hour through rainforest to the impressive Virgin Falls, the most accessible of many waterfalls around the island. Unfortunately the trail is not well marked and requires local knowledge to find it.

The trail to Massacre Bay on the north coast of Tutuila starts from the inland village of A'oloaufou and takes almost two hours one way. The two and a half mile trail leads through pristine rainforest to the abandoned village of Aasu where there's a pleasant beach.

There are several nice beaches south of the airport. At Fogagogo there's fine white sand but swimming is not advisable and the surf crashes against the coast with vicious force. More secluded is the twin beaches in a protected bay at Turtle Shark, accessible only by walking trail from the [Turtle & Shark Lodge](#). This is a pleasant place to stay, set in secluded coastal rainforest with spectacular views of the rugged coastline beyond.

To the south is the beautiful Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Unfortunately there is no road access but if you like diving, this is one of the very best spots in all of Samoa, with boat access from Fogagogo. Humpback whales can be seen in the bay between July and October and sea turtles and other large marine species can be found in abundance. The rocky cliffs of this spectacular region are home to numerous seabirds.

The south coast highway cuts across the southern tip of Tutuila and heads towards the old whaling town of Leone. Inland from Leone is the interesting archaeological site of Tataga Matau which was an important quarry for making stone tools. On the coast towards Vailoatai beside the missionary is a collection of rounded holes where the stones from the quarry were ground to make tools.

Heading towards Vailoatai is the wild coastline and volcanic terraces known as Sliding Rock. The [Sliding Rock Lodge](#) offers budget rooms overlooking the ocean.

From Leone its a 20-minute drive to the beautiful Cape Taputapu turn-off where a 10-minute hiking trail leads to a gorgeous swimming beach with views offshore islands. Beyond is the winding and steep road to Fagamalo which marks the end of the road.

Manua Islands Travel Guide



The idyllic Manua Islands lie 60 miles to the east of Tutuila. This collection of three islands has superb scenery, some of the finest white sandy beaches in the region and is the traditional birth place of Samoa with lots of interesting archaeological sites (most of which are un-excavated), but has only a couple of basic guesthouse. The islands are serviced by two daily flights (return airfare about US\$90).

The largest island is Ta'u, 15 sq. miles in size half of which is administered by the National Park of Samoa. Ta'u has several sleepy villages, few cars and no tourist infrastructure. The Park offers dense rain forest, excellent bird life and incredible sea cliffs rising over 3000 feet from sea level.

However, most travellers head to the smaller islands of Ofu and Olosega which are connected by land bridge and are slightly closer to Tutuila than Ta'u (daily flights from Pago Pago except Sunday). Ofu has a stunning white sandy beach, over 2 miles in length, with excellent snorkelling offshore and a couple of basic guest houses.