

OCEANIA · BEACHES · ISLANDS · CULTURE · OFF THE BEATEN PATH



Samoa

Samoa is the Pacific at its least commercial: villages of open-sided fale houses, Sunday church singing and beaches such as Lalomanu where you sleep steps from the lagoon. The To Sua Ocean Trench, a swimming hole in collapsed lava, is the famous sight, and family-run beach fales offer a simple alternative to resorts.



Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Samoa and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 19 March 2026.

 CAPITAL Apia	 CURRENCY Samoan tālā (WST) £1 ≈ WST 3.66	 LANGUAGE Samoan, English	 BEST TIME May–Oct
 DAILY BUDGET £45–£230 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type I 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 30h via Singapore and Auckland, or Los Angeles and Nadi ~£1,400–£2,400 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+13 standard time

Samoa's two main islands make an easy loop. Upolu, home to Apia and the international airport, has the To Sua trench, the south-east coast beaches around Lalomanu and waterfalls in the green interior. A ferry of about an hour crosses to Savai'i, larger but far quieter, where lava fields, blowholes and villages that run largely on fa'a Samoa — the traditional way of life — set a slower pace. Most visitors spend a week to ten days, splitting nights between a beach fale on each island, perhaps adding a resort or a few days in Apia.

Samoa is one of the more affordable South Pacific destinations, and beach fales — simple huts with a mattress and mosquito net, usually including breakfast and dinner — put you in touch with the families who run them. Life follows church and village rules: Sundays are quiet, an evening prayer curfew (sa) is observed in many villages, and swimming spots belong to communities who charge small fees. The pace suits travellers who want to switch off; nightlife is minimal outside Apia. What surprises most visitors is how strongly traditional culture endures, from the full-body pe'a tattoo to the chiefly matai system.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

NATURE

To Sua Ocean Trench

A 30m-deep swimming hole in the lava coast at Lotofaga, connected to the ocean by an underwater tunnel. Climb down a steep wooden ladder to swim in the clear, tidal water, set in tropical gardens above the cliffs.
- 2

BEACH

Lalomanu Beach

On Upolu's south-east tip, a long arc of white sand faces a turquoise lagoon and the offshore island of Nu'utele. Stay in a family-run beach fale, snorkel at high tide and watch for strong currents beyond the reef.

3

HISTORY

Robert Louis Stevenson Museum

The Scottish author spent his last years at Villa Vailima above Apia, now a restored museum. Afterwards, climb the steep trail up Mount Vaea to his hilltop grave, inscribed with his poem 'Requiem'.

4

NATURE

Alofaaga Blowholes

On Savai'i's south coast near Taga, Pacific swells force seawater through lava tubes in roaring jets tens of metres high. Locals throw coconuts into the blowholes for visitors; pay the village fee and stay well back.

5

HISTORY

Saleaula Lava Fields

Eruptions of Mount Matavanu between 1905 and 1911 sent lava across northern Savai'i, burying villages. Walk across the black, rippled flows to the roofless walls of a church filled with lava, and a grave the flow left untouched.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Apia

≈ 36,000 people

Samoa's small, low-rise capital has the Maketi Fou produce market, an early-morning fish market and the Palolo Deep marine reserve for snorkelling just off the waterfront.

Apia is Samoa's only town. Almost everyone else lives in villages; the largest, such as Vaitete, are effectively Apia's suburbs, and Salelologa, Savai'i's ferry port, is the only other commercial centre.

When to go to Samoa

Best time: **May–Oct.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

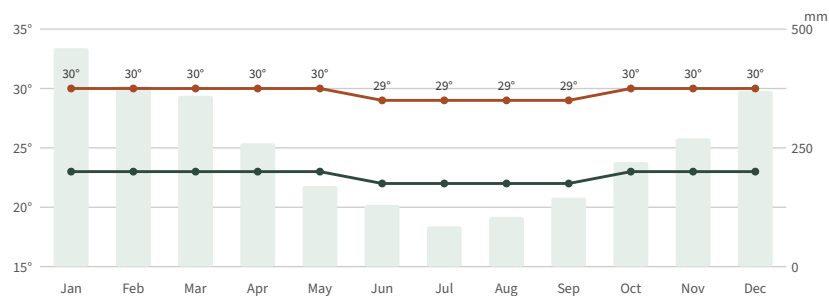
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Apia

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jun	Independence celebrations Although Samoa became independent on 1 January 1962, it celebrates on 1 June, with parades, fautasi longboat races in Apia harbour and cultural performances.
Sep	Teuila Festival Apia's week-long celebration of Samoan culture each September features fire-knife dancing, siva dance contests, tattooing demonstrations, food stalls and the Miss Samoa pageant.
Oct	White Sunday (Lotu Tamaiti) On the second Sunday of October, children dressed in white lead church services with songs and Bible readings, then are served first at the family feast.

How much does Samoa cost?

SHOESTRING £45 per person / day ≈ WST 164 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £100 per person / day ≈ WST 366 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £230 per person / day ≈ WST 841 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Oka i'a Raw fish marinated in lime or lemon juice, then mixed with coconut cream, onion, chilli and diced vegetables — Samoa's answer to ceviche.	Palusami Young taro leaves wrapped around thick coconut cream and onion, then baked in an umu, a hot-stone oven, until silky; a Sunday feast staple.	Koko Samoa A rich drink of locally grown cacao beans, roasted and ground into paste, then mixed with hot water and sugar and drunk at breakfast.
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Getting around

On Upolu, brightly painted wooden buses run from Apia's markets to most villages, though not to a fixed timetable and rarely on Sundays. Taxis are cheap but unmetered, so agree fares first. Hiring a car gives the most freedom; driving is on the left, and you need a temporary local licence, usually arranged by the hire company. Ferries cross from Mulifanua wharf to Salelologa on Savai'i in about an hour.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  I 230V — bring a UK-to-I adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 911 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +685	TIME ZONE UTC+13 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Varies — bottled or filtered is safer

DRIVING

On the left

TIPPING

Tipping is not part of Samoan custom and is not expected, though leaving something for the staff at a beach fale you enjoyed is appreciated.

ETIQUETTE

Dress modestly in villages, covering shoulders and knees. Respect the evening prayer curfew (sa) by stopping and staying quiet, avoid swimming at village beaches on Sundays, and ask before entering village land.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Faleolo International Airport (APW), Apia

Visas & entry for Samoa

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Samoa without a visa for up to 60 days. Border officials will issue a free visitor permit or business visitor permit using your arrival card. You may need to show: an onward or return ticket; sufficient funds – a bank statement is acceptable evidence; confirmed accommodation such as a hotel booking or letter of invitation.

To stay longer than 60 days, or for work, study or other reasons, apply for a Samoan entry permit.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Bat Lyssavirus

Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Samoa

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Boxing Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Sat 2 Jan 2027	The Day After New Year's Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sat 27 Mar 2027	Day After Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Mon 10 May 2027	Mother's Day
Tue 1 Jun 2027	Independence Day
Mon 9 Aug 2027	Father's Day
Mon 11 Oct 2027	White Sunday (Lotu a Tamaiti)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Samoan

ENGLISH	SAMOAN	SAY IT
Hello	Talofa	<i>tah-LOH-fah</i>
Thank you	Fa'afetai	<i>fah-ah-feh-TIE</i>
Please	Fa'amolemole	<i>fah-ah-moh-leh-MOH-leh</i>
Excuse me	Tulou	<i>too-LOH-oo</i>
How much is this?	E fia le tau?	<i>eh FEE-ah leh tow?</i>

Know before you go

Almost everything shuts on Sundays, including most shops and buses: stock up on Saturday, then join a church service for the extraordinary harmonies.

Beaches, pools and waterfalls usually belong to villages, which charge a small customary fee at the entrance; carry small tālā notes and coins.

Try at least a night or two in a traditional beach fale: the open-sided huts are family-run, usually include meals, and are the best way to meet Samoans.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.