

# BUSINESS TRAVEL GUIDE TO SAMOA

## VISAS

A free 60-day visa is granted to all visitors to Samoa (except Chinese nationals who require a visa in advance). However, you do need an onward ticket and a passport with at least six months validity.

## CURRENCY/MONEY

The local currency is the tala, currency code WST (or ST for short). It was worth AUD\$0.443, NZ\$0.541 or USD\$0.377 as at 3 September 2008. ATMs are relatively plentiful, both at Falelolo International Airport and in the Apia area.

## TRAVEL TO AND FROM SAMOA

Polynesian Blue, Air New Zealand, Air Pacific and Polynesian Airlines operate international flights to Samoa from New Zealand, Australia, United States of America, Tonga, American Samoa and Fiji.

Falelolo International Airport is 35km from Apia (about 40 mins drive, approximately ST60 by taxi).

When you depart Samoa, you will need to pay a ST\$40 departure tax.

## GETTING AROUND

**Taxis:** Taxis are abundant in Apia, although many are not in great condition. The most comfortable vehicles can be arranged through your hotel (we used Va'a, who is linked to Aggie Grey's Hotel: mobile +685 777 3991).

**Car hire:** Numerous car hire alternatives are also available. The roads on the main islands of Upolu and Savai'i vary from good to poor quality. You will need to acquire a Samoan

driving licence. These can be acquired from the Ministry of Transport, Works and Infrastructure or some car hire companies.

You should also ensure you take out adequate insurance. Beware that Samoans drive on the right hand side of the road in Samoa—at least until 1 September 2009.

**Ferries.** Most economic activity is on Upolu, but if you want to reach the larger island of Savai'i, a popular tourist spot, you can catch a ferry (see map on page 4).

## CLIMATE

Samoa lies close to the equator and therefore experiences relatively hot and humid conditions all year round. The dry season is from May to September, while the wettest months of the year are December and January. There is a high risk from cyclones during the wet season.

## TIME ZONE

Samoa is located just east of the international dateline, meaning that the time is 11 hours behind GMT/UTC. This is worth keeping in mind because it means that on Monday in Australia/New Zealand, it is still Sunday in Samoa (that's why no one is answering your call!). Interestingly, in neighbouring Tonga, for reasons we don't fully comprehend, the time is identical to Samoa—except one full day ahead!

## BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

Business attire is informal. Jackets and ties are dispensed with, and many executives can be seen sporting the lavalava (sarong), colourful island-style shirts and sandals.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Shops and government offices generally operate from 8am to 4.30pm. Samoa is a devout Christian country and so Sunday is a fairly quiet day, with many shops closed.

## ELECTRICITY

The current in Samoa is 240V AC 50Hz using Australian-style plugs.

## SAFETY

Samoa is considered very safe for visitors though the usual sensible precautions should be exercised. If walking outside of Apia's city centre, beware of aggressive stray dogs. Note also that—at least until 1 September 2009—cars drive on the right hand side of the road.

## HEALTH

Although there is no malaria in Samoa, dengue fever (a mosquito-borne disease nicknamed 'bone-fever') is a problem. Health facilities are quite good by Pacific standards and there is even a private hospital in Apia, Medcen Samoa. In any case, it is very important that you obtain comprehensive health cover prior to traveling.

## COMMUNICATIONS

**Internet:** Internet access, in Apia at least, is improving rapidly. Wireless broadband was recently introduced and will be improved significantly by the new international fibre-optic link next year. There are also a few internet cafés in Apia—we'd recommend the Computer Services Ltd one.

**Mobile:** International GSM phones can now roam in Samoa. Coverage is very good. If you are staying long enough, you can also

pick up a local SIM card from one of the two local providers and enjoy lower rates.

**Media:** The Samoa Observer ([www.samoobserver.ws](http://www.samoobserver.ws)) is the main newspaper read by the business community. It is published an impressive seven days a week.

## ACCOMMODATION

In Apia, most visiting business travellers stay at the iconic **Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows** ([www.aggiegreys.com](http://www.aggiegreys.com)), located on Beach Road, a few minutes walk from the main commercial area. It offers comfortable executive rooms, and amenities such as cable TV, room service, wireless internet, and a decent gym. But what makes staying here such a pleasure is the hotel's great atmosphere and warm-hearted staff.

Other options are the equally-central and Japanese-owned **Hotel Kitano Samoa** ([www.kitano.ws](http://www.kitano.ws)), and the new **Manumea Resort** ([www.manumearesort.com](http://www.manumearesort.com)). This 'all-suite' boutique property is a few minutes out of town, in the slightly cooler climate of the Vailima district (near both the brewery and the Yazaki plant).

About 40 minutes

away from Apia, very close to the international airport, is **Aggie Grey's Lagoon, Beach Resort & Spa**, Samoa's first large-scale resort.

## RESTAURANTS & ENTERTAINMENT

There is no shortage of great places to eat in Apia, with fish and seafood the highlights. *Business Advantage's* straw poll of local restaurants in Apia indicated that **Bistro Tatau, Sails, and Paddles**—spread out along Beach Road—are the current local favourites.

The **Apia Yacht Club** is a good informal option, whilst **Aggie Grey's Hotel** has an upmarket option, a great coffee shop, and a poolside fale restaurant.

The latter presents a Fia Fia cultural show on Wednesday nights, while the **Hotel Kitano** does likewise on Thursdays. These are worth the entrance fee for the fire dancing alone.

Other recommended lunchtime options include **Sydneyside Café**, which also has great coffee, and **Cappuccino Vineyard**. Both are located in the pedestrian precinct in the centre of town. ■



THE FAMOUS AGGIE GREY'S HOTEL IN APIA, FOUNDED IN 1933.

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# Pacific



Photo source: Samoa Ports Authority



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