

## NUKU'ALOFA: TONGA'S CAPITAL

### VISAS

Australian, New Zealand and EU citizens can obtain a visa on arrival valid for 30 days, but visitors must have an onward ticket and their passport must be valid for at least six months from arrival. Visas can be extended on a monthly basis for a small fee. Two-year business visas are also available and can be applied for before or after arrival.

### GETTING THERE AND AWAY

Pacific Blue flies directly from Sydney to Fua'amotu International Airport on the main island of Tongatapu twice a week and also via Auckland twice a week, while Air New Zealand flies direct from Auckland most days. In addition, Air New Zealand has a weekly flight from Los Angeles via Samoa and Air Pacific flies from Fiji most days. Tonga's domestic air services are provided by Chathams Pacific.

Fua'amotu International Airport is 21km from Nuku'alofa—half an hour by car.

### CURRENCY

Tonga's currency is the Pa'anga (TOP\$). As of August 2009, there was TOP\$1.66 to an Australian dollar and TOP\$1.97 to a US dollar. There are ATMs and currency exchange desks at the airport, as well as in Nuku'alofa. All main banks have branches in the CBD.

### GETTING AROUND

Vehicles drive on the left. Taxis are plentiful around the centre of Nuku'alofa and few destinations are more than 10 minutes by car. Taxis are inexpensive but negotiate your fare before departure (firms include Holiday Taxis, +676 25 655/25 169). Rental cars can be in short supply and should be booked well before you arrive in Tonga. Avis (+676 21 179) and Fab Signs & Rentals (+676 23 393) are two options.

### HEALTH

No vaccinations are required. You are advised to have adequate health and travel insurance.

### RELIGION

Christianity plays a central role in Tongan society, with several denominations present in the country. Tonga closes on Sundays, which are reserved for religious observance.

### SAFETY

The November 2006 civil disturbances in Nuku'alofa were something of an anomaly. Nuku'alofa is fairly safe by most standards, but note that petty theft can occur, even in hotels. The usual caution should be shown, especially after dark.

### ELECTRICITY

The current in Tonga is 220V to 240V, 50Hz AC, normally using Australian-style plugs.

### BUSINESS HOURS

Opening hours of offices are 8.00am to 12.00 noon and 1.00pm to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. Banks, supermarkets and restaurants are open throughout the day. Almost everything closes in Tonga on Sundays for religious observance reasons.

### CLIMATE

Tonga has a subtropical climate and is warm year-round. The cooler, driest weather falls between May and November, while the hottest time of the year is between December and April, a time of higher rainfall and occasional cyclones.

### COMMUNICATIONS /INTERNET/RADIO

Mobile phone coverage now encompasses most of the country and international GPRS mobiles can pick up the local network.

Internet access is still provided via satellite in Tonga and thus is slow and pricey. Several local hotels provide wireless internet, while **Friends Café & Tourist Center**, **Café Escape** in Nuku'alofa's Taufa'ahau Road and **Fresh Café** on the wharf provide casual internet access.

Radio Australia can be heard at 103 FM in Nuku'alofa; the BBC World Service on 1017 AM and 90 FM.

### FOOD & DRINK

Seafood is a feature of local cuisine. In town, **Friends Café** (+676 22 390) is a popular option for breakfast, lunch and dinner. There are a number of options on Vuna Road, including **Kaati-Ni Restaurant** (+676 28 393), the **Seaview Lodge and Restaurant** (+676 23 709), pizzeria **Little Italy** (+676 25 053) and **Cottage Breeze Restaurant** (+676 28 940). At the port end of Vuna Road, the

**Waterfront Restaurant** (+676 24 692) provides good fare, as does **Fresh Café** (+676 27 808) and **Lunarossa Restaurant** (+676 26 324) with its Italian Cuisine.

To experience local food and culture, a dinner show at the **Tongan National Centre** (+676 23 022) is recommended.

On Sundays, when nearly all of Tonga closes down for religious reasons, many take the short TOP\$20 ferry ride to Pangaimotu Island to eat and drink at **Big Mama's Yacht Club**.

### ACCOMMODATION

Most accommodation in Tonga is provided by small, local operators. For the business traveller, the following are the most suitable options:

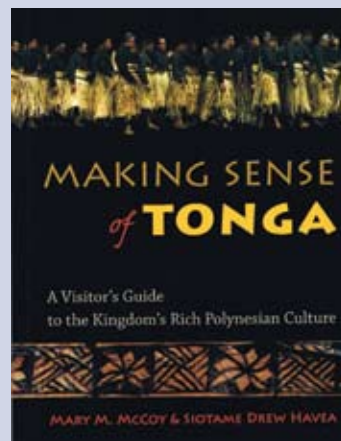
**In the main commercial area**  
**International Dateline Hotel** (www.datelinehotel.com). Built

in 1966 for the coronation of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, this is the largest of Nuku'alofa's hotels. **Loumaile Lodge** (www.loumaile.com). Opening in late 2008 as part of the rebuilding of Nuku'alofa's centre, this hotel is central and hospitable, with 24 spacious rooms and wireless internet.

**A few minutes drive away**  
**Seaview Lodge** (seaview@kalianet.to), **Little Italy** (www.littleitalytonga.com), **The Villa** (www.tongavilla.com), **Waterfront Lodge** (www.waterfront-lodge.com), **Black Pearl Suites** (www.blackpearlsuite.com).

**At Fua'amotu International Airport**  
The recently-completed **Royal Tonga International Hotel** (www.royaltongahotel.com).

## TONGAN CUSTOMS & ETIQUETTE



The Kingdom of Tonga has never been colonised and many aspects of Tongan life remain rooted in a long tradition. For *palangi* (as foreigners are known), this can be hard to navigate, and mistakes can be made without you knowing it.

'You can jeopardise your whole business if you don't make the effort to understand the social hierarchy,' notes Mary McCoy, Executive Vice President of Training Group of the Pacific, a Tongan company that offers induction courses to train expat workers on the complexities of Tongan society. 'The implications are literally unending. It affects everything—even where Tongans sit in a car.'

To help overseas visitors understand Tongan culture, Training Group of the Pacific publishes a book called *Making Sense of Tonga: A Visitor's Guide to the Kingdom's Rich Polynesian Culture*.

Further information

www.traininggroup.to



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