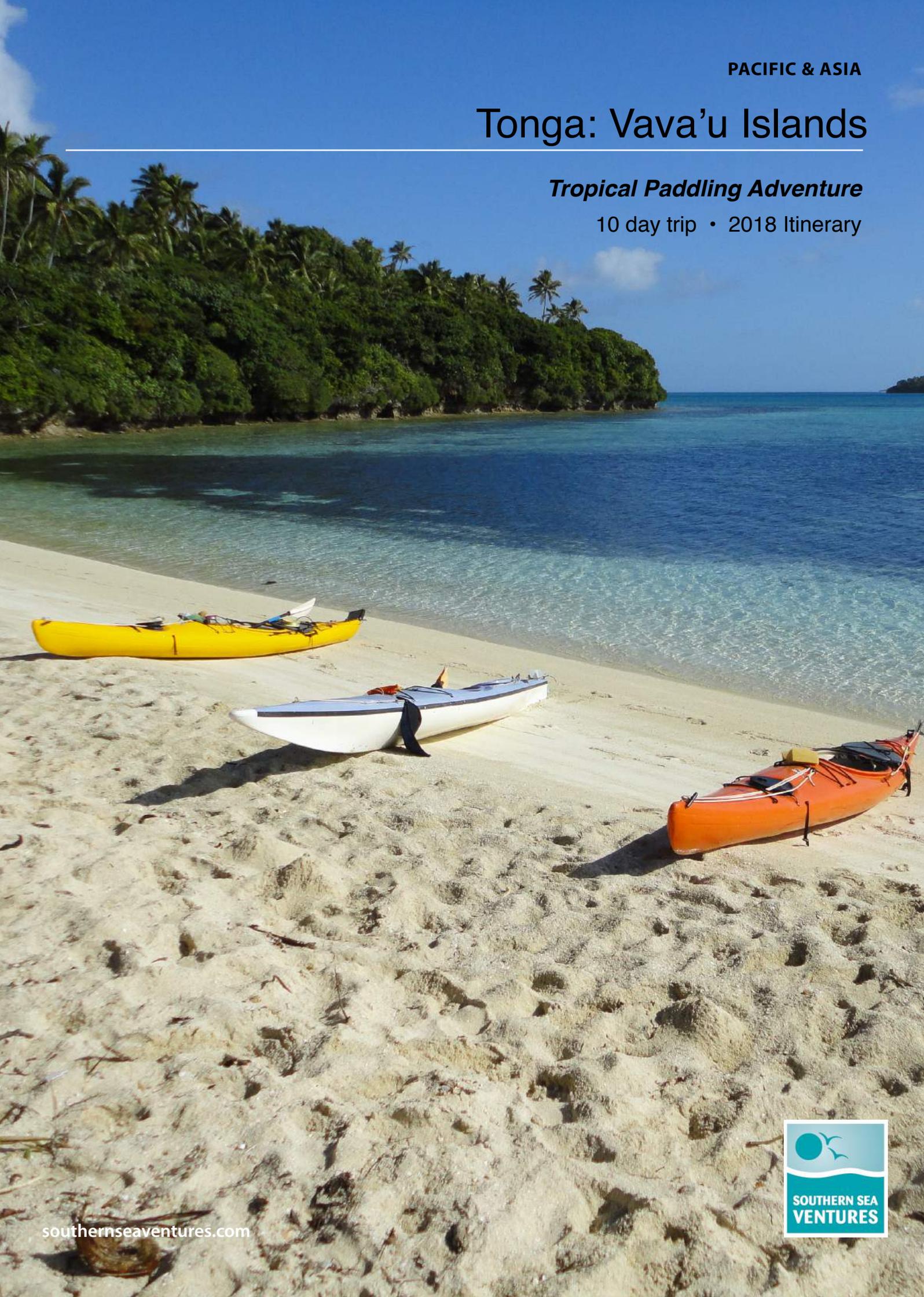


PACIFIC & ASIA

Tonga: Vava'u Islands

Tropical Paddling Adventure

10 day trip • 2018 Itinerary



Tonga: Vava'u Islands



10 day trip 7-8 days kayaking

Situated approximately 240 kilometres north of Tongatapu, the Vava'u Island group is a smattering of approximately 50 islands in an area 23 by 25 kilometres and protected by a semi-circular reef. The islands are separated by reefs or open water and are not great paddling distances apart. In his book, *The Happy Isles of Oceania: Paddling the Pacific*, author Paul Theroux describes sea kayaking in Vava'u thus: "It was a perfect area for paddling a kayak - perhaps the best in the Pacific. There was a surfy side and a safe side to each island - the lee shores usually had the beaches - all were secluded, all were lovely."

On our Tonga sea kayak expeditions we strive for a healthy balance between relaxation and adventure. We generally paddle in the mornings, leaving the afternoons free for snorkelling amidst colourful coral or inside legendary marine caves, exploring lush tropical bush and observing the traditional village lifestyle. The pace of life in Vava'u is slow and relaxed - much like it was a century ago. We spend our evenings on deserted beaches beneath waving palms and the Southern Cross, bathed by warm South Pacific breezes.

A Quick Itinerary

B = Breakfast • L = Lunch • D = Dinner

Day 1: Arrival, afternoon trip briefing and overnight at the group hotel.

Day 2: Begin kayak trip. Camping. L • D

Days 3–8: Kayaking in the Vava'u Archipelago. Camping. B • L • D

Day 9: Finish kayaking. Farewell dinner. Overnight at the group hotel. B • L • D

Day 10: Trip concludes.

Meeting Place and Time

If arriving into Vava'u on Day 1, you will be met at the airport and transferred to the group hotel. We recommend a morning arrival into Vava'u as the trip briefing takes place on the afternoon of Day 1.

How to Get There

The following is a summary of air services to, from and within Tonga (subject to change). Flights can be booked using the airline website or through a travel agent. There are no flights into, out of or around Tonga on Sundays.

Fiji Airways fly Nadi to Vava'u and v.v. on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The flights are direct, not via Tongatapu (Nuku'alofa). Fiji Airways have flights to Nadi from Australia, New Zealand and Los Angeles.

Virgin Australia fly direct from Sydney to Tongatapu (Nuku'alofa) and Auckland to Tongatapu and v.v. twice a week.

Air New Zealand flies from Auckland to Tongatapu (Nuku'alofa) and v.v. six times a week. Connections in Auckland from Australian cities and Los Angeles are possible.

Real Tonga: Fly between Tongatapu (Nuku'alofa) and Vava'u daily (except Sundays.)

Your domestic flight to/ from Tongatapu and Vava'u can be purchased on the Real Tonga website. Real Tonga is the only domestic airline in Tonga. Costs quoted on their website are in Tongan Pa'anga.

It is recommended, due to the possibility of Real Tonga flight delays, to give yourself at least a minimum of two hours connection time between international flights and domestic flights and v.v.

REAL TONGA

Website: www.realtonga.to

Email: booking@realtonga.to

Phone: +676 23777.

Sea Kayaking

Sea kayaking is an activity that any reasonably fit person can participate in and could be compared to brisk walking or cycling. Some previous paddling experience can be useful. The degree of difficulty of the trip **will depend on the weather** we encounter. The sea and weather conditions in the islands are predominantly stable but in windier conditions we may require a full days paddling. Paddling loaded kayaks into a trade wind of 15-20 knots requires extra effort and can make the distance we travel feel longer. An "average" paddling day will range from 2-4 hours and we mix in as much snorkelling and exploration walking as possible. We ask that all participants feel confident in swimming.

The kayaks are stable, easy to paddle, control and ideally suited for this remote trip. They are very forgiving and are suited for beginners to experts. The kayaks are designed as an expedition boat and it is important to keep gear to a minimum as we carry all of our food and equipment on board with us. The issuing of single kayaks is at the guide's discretion as it depends not only on the paddler's ability, but also on weather, sea conditions and group composition (i.e.

ratio of novice to experienced paddlers). There is usually at least one single kayak on tour, which may be shared among paddlers who can demonstrate solid support strokes.

Your guides cover boat handling basics; paddling strokes; use of the foot-controlled rudder; boat entries and exits and rescue procedures before we depart on the kayak adventure.

They also cover trip safety and carry a hand-held VHF radio and flares for emergency use. Sea kayaking is a very safe sport when conducted properly. The expedition always paddles as a group, but there is still ample opportunity for individuals to enjoy their personal space on land if so desired. Certain rules of sea kayaking must be agreed to and observed by all trip participants to ensure everyone's safety and enjoyment. We discuss these rules and why they are necessary as well as contingency plans. We do everything reasonable to minimise the risks of this outdoor pursuit to ensure your safety and expect you to do the same.

While the guides endeavour to balance the group by pairing slower members with stronger and more experienced paddlers, the slowest members dictate the pace. Base camps offer the luxury of paddling empty kayaks or a lay day for exploring and relaxing.

In general, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the paddling, so it's a good idea to begin some regular exercise like walking, jogging, cycling, aerobics or swimming well before the trip. If you have not paddled before we highly recommend some kayak tuition before your trip and may be able to suggest a local operator near your home.

Proposed Itinerary

The following itinerary should be seen as an approximate guide only. Please note that weather, sea and logistical conditions can cause alterations and delays to our itinerary. Sundays in Tonga are an enforced day of rest and may impact on the kayaking itinerary. Paddling times are approximate only.

Day 1: If arriving today, you will be met at Lupepau'u Airport in Vava'u and transferred to your hotel. Your guide will phone you at your hotel to welcome you and discuss the schedule of events. This afternoon, usually at 4pm, your guides present a 45-minute orientation talk at The Adventure Centre in Toula Village, 2.5 km south-east of Neaifu. It is important that all participants attend this informative talk.

MEALS NOT INCLUDED/VAVA'U HARBOURVIEW RESORT OR BOATHOUSE APARTMENTS (SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY).

Day 2: A safety briefing commences at approximately 9:00am before departing on the first day of kayaking. Our journey begins at the entrance to the Port of Refuge, reputedly the most protected and beautiful port in the Pacific. We paddle into renowned Swallows Cave, snorkel and picnic at Kapa Island and finish off the day by skirting several islands on the western side of the group. Our camp for two nights is on uninhabited Vaka'eitu Island. Paddling time today is approximately 3-4 hours.

L • D / CAMPING

Day 3: Following a leisurely hot breakfast, we paddle across the lagoon to the village of Matamaka on nearby Nuapapu Island or to Hunga village which is situated on a hillside above a small lagoon and accessible via a canoe passage. Back at camp, we can snorkel amidst stag horn coral gardens teeming with reef fish. A short hike before dinner to the island's summit may be rewarded by a view of the setting sun and possibly humpback whales (June-November) in Pulepulekai channel. Paddling time: 1-2 hours.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 4: After breaking camp we paddle northeast to Ovaka and Ovalau Islands, towards the distinctive tabletop island of 'Euakafa. While paddling in Vava'u we may be fortunate enough to sight turtles, dolphins and humpback whales, the latter of which migrate annually to Tonga's warm sheltered waters to breed and calve. Following a picnic and snorkelling at an offshore reef, we paddle to inhabited Taunga Island. This evening, the villagers host an authentic Tongan feast consisting of roast suckling pork complemented by fresh root vegetables, octopus, reef fish, vegetarian dishes and tropical fruits such as papaya in coconut milk, all steamed in an underground oven or 'umu. Participating in a kava ceremony, Tonga's traditional ceremonial drink, provides an insight into the local culture. Paddling time: 3-4 hours.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 5: Today, Sunday, is by Tongan law, a day of rest and worship. Those who choose to attend the morning church service in Taunga village will be impressed by the splendour of the Tongan people's elaborate attire and the harmonised singing. By law, tour operators are not permitted to offer guided activities on a Sunday, however, we may use the kayaks as transport to access beaches and bays. Swimming, exploring by foot, reading and eating are pleasant diversions on this enforced lay day.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 6: This morning we break camp and paddle across a deep channel to nearby Eueiki Island where we picnic, snorkel and at low tide, explore an immense cave with Tarzan-like vines cascading through a hole in the ceiling. Thirsty paddlers may order cold drinks at Treasure Island Eco Resort, a setting for a survivor reality TV show. Conditions permitting, we'll circumnavigate 'Euakafa Island. The afternoon is free for snorkelling, beach combing and gathering dry coconut husks and fronds for the evening bonfire. Pack some marshmallows for a sweet treat! Paddling time: 1-2 hours.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 7: In the cool hours of the morning, our local guide leads the group through lush bush to the site of a royal tomb within the fortress of a Tu'i Tonga king. Today's kayak destination is the eastern island chain with a lunch and snorkelling break at Tapanu Island. We visit Ofu village en route to Kenutu, one of three islands comprising a fringing reef that protects the Vava'u Group from the Pacific swells. Paddling time: 3-4 hours.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 8: After breakfast, stretch your legs on an optional bush walk to a cave tucked into the hillside. Dare to swing from the vines and tumble into the cool brackish water! The summit of the island's precipitous, windward side affords a spectacular view of waves crashing against cliffs, a sharp contrast to the calm idyllic waterways inside the reef where we paddle. After lunch, we paddle to adjacent Umana Island for some more exploring. Paddling time: 1-2 hours.

B • L • D / CAMPING



Day 9: Our last paddle day takes us westward, back to the Port of Refuge where we started our journey. We stop for a picnic lunch on Mala Island, once the home of a cannibal demi-god that liked nothing better than to catch and eat paddlers passing in outrigger canoes! From the beach, confident swimmers can snorkel across a channel to the entrancing Japanese Gardens. Back at the Adventure Centre, transfer by taxi to your group accommodation. This evening, we dine at a local restaurant in Neiafu. Paddling time: 3-4 hours.

B • L • D / VAVA'U HARBOURVIEW RESORT OR BOATHOUSE APARTMENTS (SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY).

Day 10: If departing Vava'u today, the trip concludes with transfers to Lupepau'u Airport and a warm farewell from your guides.

MEALS AND ACCOMMODATION NOT INCLUDED

Climate

The climate of Tonga is very pleasant, being slightly cooler and less humid than most tropical areas. From May through December, (peak season), the temperatures range from approximately 22°-27°C (72°-80°F), the mean humidity hovers around 74% and the trade winds blow an average of 13-18 knots - often perfect weather for paddling and adventuring.

During the wetter summer months, (January to April), the weather is hotter (25°-30°C), more humid and changeable with an increased risk of tropical cyclones. However, most cyclones either brush past Tonga leaving little or no damage or miss Tonga altogether.

Trip and Camping Organisation

The sun sets quickly in the tropics so paddling days will start early to take advantage of cooler temperatures. It's a good idea to pack your dry bags before breakfast, prepare your personal items for the day and take down your tents so that loading for departure can be organised. On a paddling day we'd like to be on the water before 9:00am and arrive into camp just after lunch. It's important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members.

On the first camping day, (Day 2), the guides introduce participants to the camp kitchen and protocol for erecting and breaking camp.

On arrival at camp the guides require help with erecting the overhead tarpaulin; hanging up life vests and spray skirts, unloading the kayaks and hauling seawater for washing dishes and vegetables. Once these duties are completed, everyone is free to pitch their tents. Assistance with meal preparation and dish washing is not expected but always appreciated.

Tents (screened), groundsheets and mattresses (Thermarests) are included for the camping portion of the trip.

Expedition Staff

A minimum of one Tongan professional guide accompanies all trips. Depending on the group size, there is an additional guide (guide:guest ratio=1:6). The guides' role is to co-ordinate the expedition and ensure the safety of the group.

They will answer questions and inform you of the objectives and progress of the trip. They will decide on safety matters, administer the medical kit and liaise with the local villagers on your behalf. Should you have any inquiries during the trip, feel free to ask your guide/s.

Meals while Kayaking

Snacks and three meals per day are provided, beginning with lunch on Day 2 and ending with the farewell dinner on Day 9. We re-provision with fresh tropical produce and water at outer island villages. Our meals have an international theme so you are likely to find Thai, Indonesian, Italian, Mexican and Polynesian cuisine on the menu. The meals are predominantly vegetarian supplemented with fresh fish. We try to make extensive use of the delicious tropical fruits and vegetables and fresh seafood caught by our Tongan guides.

Please let us know well in advance of the trip of any food and drink allergies and/or intolerances.

At one of the island villages we partake in an authentic 'umu feast (food baked in an underground oven) and share with the villagers their traditional song, dance and customs. A multitude of chicken, roast pig, seafood and vegetarian dishes are served, but no one is offended if it isn't all eaten. We might be fortunate enough to participate in an impromptu kava ceremony, also permeated with Tongan culture, should the occasion present itself.

Food & Water in Tonga

There is a wide selection of eateries in Nuku'alofa and Vava'u, some of which are excellent. In Nuku'alofa (Tongatapu), we can recommend Friends Café, Marco's Pizza and Pasta, Seaview Restaurant, Café Escape, Luna Rossa and The Waterfront Café. In Neiafu (Vava'u) try Mango Cafe, Bellavista Restaurant, Aquarium Cafe, La Paella Restaurant and The Tongan Beach Resort.

The tap water in Tonga is treated well water with a high mineral content, giving it a metallic taste. While the tap water is potable, for people unaccustomed to the local water, it is advisable to drink rainwater or bottled water. Both are readily available on request at shops, restaurants and hotels.

While kayaking, our water is untreated rainwater collected from roofs and stored in cement holding tanks. We have never encountered a problem on tour with fresh water-borne diseases or infections.

There are no waterfalls, rivers or lakes in Tonga so on tour we bathe and wash laundry in the sea using biodegradable saltwater shampoo or soap. Provided there is not a drought we fill solar shower bags with rainwater from cement tanks in the villages.



Accommodation in Vava'u

The fale/rooms at the Harbourview Resort and Boathouse Apartments are spacious, simple, clean and comfortable. Package accommodation is based on double or twin occupancy. Single supplements apply to those who prefer a private fale/room or who cannot be paired with another single participant.

Harbourview Resort: www.harbourviewresort.com

Boathouse Apartments: <http://boathousetonga.com>

If there is no availability in the above properties, then the Hilltop Hotel may be used.

Stopover Accommodation on Tongatapu

Incoming and outgoing international flights may not connect with the domestic flights to/from Vava'u, necessitating a stopover night on Tongatapu (the main town is Nuku'alofa). For a convenient stopover, the closest hotel to the airport is the Scenic Hotel Tonga. Bookings can be made through the hotel website: www.scenichotels.co.nz

Travel Arrangements

Should you voluntarily decide to alter your travel arrangements after commencement of your trip, Southern Sea Ventures and its' partners are not responsible for any additional charges involved. Our staff will assist you if possible but you are responsible for organising these arrangements yourself. Delays may occur due to weather or transport difficulties and Southern Sea Ventures and its' partners will do their best to rectify the situation.

If our return from the kayak trip is delayed, your guides will continue to provide all camping and food needs in the outer islands. However, any additional expenses incurred by a trip participant such as meals, accommodation, prepaid airline tickets, fees for visas, etc. in connection with changes and/or delays to a route or itinerary shall be borne by the trip participant. If possible, ensure some degree of flexibility in your travel plans.

Please understand that in this part of the world, delays and waiting are commonplace and whilst we do our best to keep to schedule, it is not always possible. We're sure you will appreciate this and accept it as part of the whole Tongan island experience.

Travel Insurance

It is necessary to take out a personal insurance policy to cover yourself against sickness, accident, loss of baggage, trip cancellation due to weather or other reasons, and in the unlikely event that you need emergency evacuation by plane or helicopter due to illness or accident. Ensure you have read the policy thoroughly and are familiar with the claim process in case it becomes necessary to make an emergency claim. We will require proof of your insurance prior to departure.

Time & Communication

Tonga is 12 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

Mobile phone coverage is usually good on Tongatapu and in Neifau but may be patchy in the outer islands.

The Country and Its People

Spread across 700,000 square kilometres of ocean, just west of the International Date Line and east of Fiji, the Kingdom of Tonga comprises four major island groups. From south to north these are Tongatapu, Ha'apai, Vava'u and the Niuas.

Vava'u and Ha'apai cover approximately the same land area (119 and 110 square kilometres respectively), but the population of Vava'u (20,000) is double that of Ha'apai (10,000). Vava'u is the water sports capital of the Kingdom while Ha'apai is known for its laid-back atmosphere, traditional way of life and history (this is where the Mutiny on the Bounty took place).

A total of 171 mostly raised coral islands (fewer than 40 of them inhabited) cover a total land area of 747 square kilometres. The population of Tonga is estimated at 106,000 with two thirds of that number living on the main island, Tongatapu. The native language is Tongan although approximately 70% of the population speak English, with a 99% literacy rate.

Tonga is unique in that it is the only Polynesian country never to have been colonised as well as being the only surviving monarchy in the Pacific.

Cultural Considerations

Respect is extremely important in the Tongan culture. A clean, modest appearance signifies respect for you and for others.

Visitors are not expected to be aware of Tongan codes of behaviour, but those who observe them are more likely to be accepted. Women are advised to dress conservatively (i.e. high necklines, covered shoulders, loose skirts, dresses or pants) in the villages. Low-cut tops, sheer and/or tight clothing should be avoided. Swimsuits are acceptable on the beach; covering up with a lava lava (wrap-around cloth) is a polite gesture to approaching villagers. Men should wear long shorts in the daytime; long pants or a lava lava at night time. In Tonga, men are

required by law to wear a shirt in public except when on the beach. Footwear is removed before entering a Tongan fale (home). It is advisable to maintain a low profile until outside village areas on Sundays when physical activity, noise and fishing are prohibited.

As gift giving is very much a part of Tongan culture, the Tongan people don't make a fuss about giving and receiving gifts compared to westerners. In fact, when receiving a gift, a "thank you", or even eye contact for that matter, is not social protocol in Tonga.

At the village feast we eat the Tongan way: seated on the floor, men crossed legged and women side saddle. Note that it is considered rude in Tonga to sit with your knees drawn towards your chest. Eating is with your hands-either hand is acceptable. It is customary that hosts provide considerable more food than guests could possibly eat, so no need to be embarrassed leaving food. Hosts may also withdraw while guests eat. Also, it is a Tongan custom for guests to dine and dash (believe it or not!). In this way, the hosts may then follow in behind and partake while the food is fresh.

Sundays in Tonga

The government of Tonga has legislated that Sundays are a day of prayer and rest. Businesses are required by law to close, with the exception of restaurants. Marine activities, including kayaking, are banned.

Sundays, therefore, are lay days and our guides strive to arrange other activities such as bush and inter-tidal walks, village and, of course, church visits. If the campsite is out of sight of a village, sometimes participants can snorkel.

Passport

Your passport must be valid for at least six months from the date of entry to Tonga. You must present an onward ticket on arrival in order to be granted a 30-day visitors visa.

Visas

At the time of writing, a visa is not required prior to arrival in Tonga if you are a citizen from one of the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Canada, Cook Islands, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Darussalam, Denmark, Dominica, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Finland, France, French Polynesia (New Caledonia, Tahiti, Wallis & Futuna), Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kirabati, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niue, Norway, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Russia, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Spain, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lusia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Sweden, Switzerland, The Bahamas, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Vanuatu.

All other nationalities require a visa prior to arrival; this can be obtained by contacting the Immigration Division, Ministry of Foreign affairs of Tonga by the following email: visatonga@gmail.com

Environmental Responsibilities

In an effort to preserve Tonga's natural environment, we strive to promote environmental sensitivity and to minimise our impact on the marine and land environment. During the orientation talk your guides share the company's minimum impact guidelines with respect to waste disposal and conservation of reefs, marine life, flora and fauna. We carry out all non-decomposable rubbish along with other people's rubbish. Snorkelers are briefed on correct use of their fins and the importance of not touching the fragile reefs.

We employ a variety of methods for disposing of human waste. On most islands the guides dig a pit toilet within 50-75 metres of our camp. Given that our campsites are not used year round we consider this method to be the best compromise.

Photography

The humidity is always high in Tonga and as we are paddling in a salt water environment, the delicate electronics in cameras can be damaged. You might consider bringing a waterproof camera or a small plastic waterproof case or dry-bag with a supply of silicon packs. Ensure you have sufficient memory storage and batteries as there is no opportunity to purchase batteries or access electricity while camping. It is wise to keep lenses to a minimum. One variable lens will reduce your load and the amount of your equipment that can be damaged. If you are buying a new camera, consider a waterproof one and get it well before departure so you can practice with it.

Whale Watching

Humpback whales migrate each year from the Antarctic to the warm, sheltered waters of Vava'u typically between the months of July to mid October. A number of whale watching operators offer day trips which may include swimming with the whales. It is advisable to pre book a trip before arriving in Vava'u to ensure a place on a boat. If you're interested in booking a day with the whales, pre or post kayak trip, contact us and we'll put you in touch with our local partners who can answer questions and arrange a booking. Please note that tours do not operate on Sundays.

Money Matters

Your tour cost includes:

- Return airport transfers between Lupepau'u Airport (Vava'u) and the group hotel.
- Hotel accommodation at our group hotel on a twin share basis for the first and last night of the trip.
- Double and single expedition kayaks, paddles, life jackets and safety equipment.
- Two person tents.
- Sleeping mats (Thermarest pads that also convert to camp chairs).
- Professional guide/s.
- Snacks and three meals a day on the kayaking portion of the trip.

Your tour cost *does not* include:

- Any flights.
- Meals in Vava'u (except dinner on the last night).
- Tongatapu (Nuku'alofa) accommodation, transfers and meals.
Alcoholic beverages.
- Airport taxes (if any).
- Travel insurance.
- Snorkelling gear.
- Single supplement fee.
- Tips.
- Items of a personal nature such as postage and laundry.
- Expenses incurred as a result of delays due to inclement weather, flight delays, logistical delays and resultant changes to the itinerary.
- Emergency evacuation charges.

Money to Bring With You

Consider bringing TOP\$50-T\$100 in small denominations on the kayak trip for purchasing handicrafts and drinks at our island resorts. Budget TOP\$100-125 per day for meals (not including alcohol) and taxis in Nuku'alofa and Neiafu.

Currency

The unit of currency in Tonga is the Pa'anga (TOP\$). If you have not already exchanged your money by the time you arrive in Vava'u, you can do so at the ANZ Bank or Bank of Tonga/Westpac in Neiafu on weekdays. An ATM/Cashpoint is available 24/7 at both banks. Note that hotel and airport exchange rates are not as favourable as bank rates. Most of the accommodation properties have credit card facilities, however, many businesses accept cash (TOP\$) only.

Gifts

Tongans are exceptionally generous and gift giving is a central feature of their culture. If you wish, bring a few small gifts such as T-shirts, postcards, photos, lapel pins, hair ties, hats, watches, yoyos, washable tattoos, kites, lighters and pocket-sized games. Educational resources are in short supply in the outer island schools and children and teachers greatly appreciate receiving pens, pencils, stationary and primary level books.

Tips

Tipping is not customary in Tonga, but is not considered offensive either. In fact, the local people graciously accept tips. A guideline for tipping guides would be TOP\$30-\$40 per person per guide.

Baggage Allowances and Airport Shuttle

The maximum baggage allowance for Tonga domestic flights is 23kgs for passengers holding international tickets valid within 24 hours of

travel. Excess baggage is subject to a surcharge of T\$4.50 per kilo and may have to travel on a different flight than you.

Local taxis operate a shuttle service between the international and domestic terminals in Tongatapu for every inbound and outbound international flight (including those that arrive/depart at night or in the early hours of the morning). The one way taxi fare is approximately TOP \$10.00 (Pa'anga) per person. Both the domestic and international terminals at Fua'amotu Airport have unlocked covered waiting areas patrolled 24 hours a day by an on-site security guard. However, it is inadvisable to leave luggage unattended. The waiting areas can be breezy and cool particularly at night, we recommend having a fleece and/or windbreaker handy (i.e. in your carry-on luggage).

Security

Before leaving home, photocopy your passport, airline voucher and make a note of your credit card and ATM card numbers in case you lose or misplace them.

Theft is not common in Tonga. However, in a culture where "what's mine is yours" and items are "borrowed" indefinitely, unattended personal belongings and valuables are at risk. We recommend that you bring your passport and airline tickets triple wrapped and in a dry bag on the kayak trip so that, in the unlikely event of evacuation, your guides can readily access these documents.

Do not carry large amounts of cash with you and always be aware of what you are carrying, especially personal valuables like cameras, jewellery and watches. Do not display valuable items or leave them lying around in such a way that might tempt a thief. It is a good idea to use a money belt or neck wallet. You may also like to look up the contact details of your country's consulate in Tonga.

Medical Matters

Any passenger undertaking this trip is required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately. Please advise us of any side effects of any medication you take and of any dietary requirements related to the medication. Be sure to let your guide know of any drugs to which you are allergic as well as noting this on your medical form. You will be isolated from modern medical facilities, so attention to medical matters is vital.

Hygiene

Be conscious of hygiene. Regularly wash your hands, be wary of uncooked food and wash fruit or preferably peel it (with clean hands!).

Vaccinations

For entry into Tonga there are no statutory vaccinations at the time of writing, however, you should check with your doctor or medical centre for current information. We require every participant to have a current tetanus vaccination and recommend vaccinations against hepatitis, typhoid and polio.

Dental

Due to the remoteness of the trip, it is advisable to have a checkup before departure.

Mosquito-borne diseases in Tonga

Mosquito-borne illnesses, such as Dengue Fever, occur most years in Tonga, especially during the summer months when the weather is hot and humid and there is a high prevalence of mosquitoes. Zika virus is also present in Tonga and pregnant women should take extra care to protect themselves from insect bites. As long as paddlers take sensible precautions, the risk of exposure is minimal. Precautions to be taken include regularly applying insect repellent (containing DEET) and, where possible, avoiding sheltered areas where mosquitoes are more abundant than in windy areas. Other precautions include covering up as much as possible e.g. wearing long sleeved tops, socks, trousers throughout the day and night.

Medical Supplies

On our trips into more isolated areas we carry a comprehensive medical kit.

In addition we suggest that each passenger bring:

- Sun screen (water resistant variety at least SP15).
- Lip protectant.
- Band-aid strips.
- Antiseptic swaps and cream.
- Antihistamine cream (for insect bites).
- Antibiotic cream or powder (powder is better for tropical climates).
- Insect repellent (containing DEET).
- A mild anti-nausea drug if you are concerned about sea sickness.
- A mild antiseptic soap/liquid handwash.

It is your responsibility to bring sufficient quantities of any specific medications you require. Consider giving your trip leader half your medication for safekeeping in case your supply gets lost or wet.

If you are prone to any health disturbances (e.g. easily infected cuts or severe migraines) please remember to bring any preventative medications.

Hospitals

Vaiola Hospital in Tongatapu and Prince Wellington Ngu Hospital in Neiafu are experienced with cuts, fractures and tropical disorders. However, for most other conditions it is advisable to seek diagnosis and treatment in your own country.

Equipment & Clothing: What You Need to Bring

As we are self-sufficient, (i.e. we carry all food and equipment with us in the kayaks), it is important to keep gear to a minimum. Large dry bags, duffel bags and backpacks cannot be accommodated in the hatches. Please bring no more than two large (20L) dry bags; one for clothing, the other for miscellaneous items and an optional sleeping bag; plus one small (10L) dry bag for items you need to access in the cockpit (e.g. wallet, documents, sun screen etc). A mesh bag containing your snorkelling gear is additional to the above items. Nylon stuff sacks lined with one or two heavy-duty garbage bags each are a more affordable option if you do not already have dry bags. However, a dry bag for the cockpit is essential. Camera and optical equipment should be waterproofed and insured.

We provide tents, groundsheets and mattresses. Please bring your own snorkelling gear.

Any excess baggage not needed while kayaking can be left at the kayak base for safekeeping.

Gear List

The following checklist is a guideline for your trip. Contact us if you have any questions.

Essential Items:

- A wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigid in a breeze, e.g. straw hat with a strap to put under your chin is good. A scarf made from a light material like silk to protect your neck can be useful too.
- Sun-glasses with a cord to prevent them from falling into the water.
- Light weight rain jacket or spray jacket.
- One long sleeve lightweight synthetic shirt. This is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling. Cotton is not very suitable for paddling as it gets stiff with salt and can irritate the skin. A lightweight capilene or polypropylene top may be suitable.
- T-shirts (long and short sleeved).
- A lycra sun top is useful for snorkelling.
- One pair of light-weight, quick drying, full length trousers.
- Two pairs of shorts and swimwear.
- Sarong, called a lava lava in Tonga (this can double up as a second sheet).
- Very light-weight fleece jacket (not a heavy jacket), i.e. Polartec 100 is sufficient, or a sweatshirt.
- Sleeping sheet.
- Sleeping bags are not generally required with fairly mild nights but you might like to bring a small airline size blanket. If you tend to feel the cold and choose to bring a sleeping bag, ensure it is lightweight, very compact and zips open.
- One pair of running shoes (recommend to get away from wet sandals and sand in the evenings.)
- Reef shoes for paddling or a good fitting pair of sandals that attach solidly.
- Lightweight socks to wear with your running shoes and perhaps your sandals if the sand is irritating your feet.
- Small towel (a chamois towel is ideal, or a medium sized hand towel).
- Minimal toiletries (a bio-degradable soap that will lather in salt water is very useful). Bring unbleached toilet paper.
- A headlamp or small torch and batteries (batteries can be expensive and difficult to obtain in Tonga).

- One or two 1-litre water bottles—the type used by cyclists are fine and inexpensive.
- Dry bags (2X 20L and 1X10L) or nylon stuff sacks lined with heavy duty garbage bags.
- Small TOP\$ notes.
- Plastic Ziplock bags, large and small.
- Snorkelling gear is not provided nor is it readily available to hire, so you should bring your own mask, snorkel and fins stored in a mesh carry bag. Really keen divers might bring a small but bright waterproof torch for night snorkelling.
- Lightweight cycling gloves can ease blistering if you are not used to paddling.
- Pillow case or very small pillow (e.g. airline pillow). It must fit into your dry bag. A pillow case can give you the flexibility to make for a comfortable sleep.
- Favourite snacks. Healthy snacks, such as muesli or granola bars can be hard to buy in Tonga. We recommend you pack a few of your favourite snacks for the kayak trip.

Optional items:

- Camera and film, with waterproof container if the camera is not waterproof.
- A book/reading matter.
- 10 metres of lightweight clothesline.
- Drink crystals.
- Fishing lures and hand line.
- Binoculars.
- Talcum powder to prevent salt water rash.
- Ear plugs—noisy roosters!!
- Half wetsuit 3mm (Jun-Sep).

Delays or Problems

In the event that you are delayed en route or there is an emergency, contact Friendly Islands Kayak Company in Vava'u, Kingdom of Tonga. Phone:: +676 8748506. Please give your name, trip name and revised arrival details.

If you experience delays or an emergency and you cannot reach the above contact, call Southern Sea Ventures Australian office. Please be prepared to leave your name, details of your trip, the telephone number where you can be reached and all other pertinent information. We will forward your information on and, if need be, will get back to you as soon as possible.

SOUTHERN SEA VENTURES

HEAD OFFICE — SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
PO Box 641, St Ives, NSW 2075
Ph: (02) 8901 3287 Fx: (02) 8901 3297
International phone: 61 2 8901 3287

ssvtrips@southernseaventures.com
www.southernseaventures.com

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