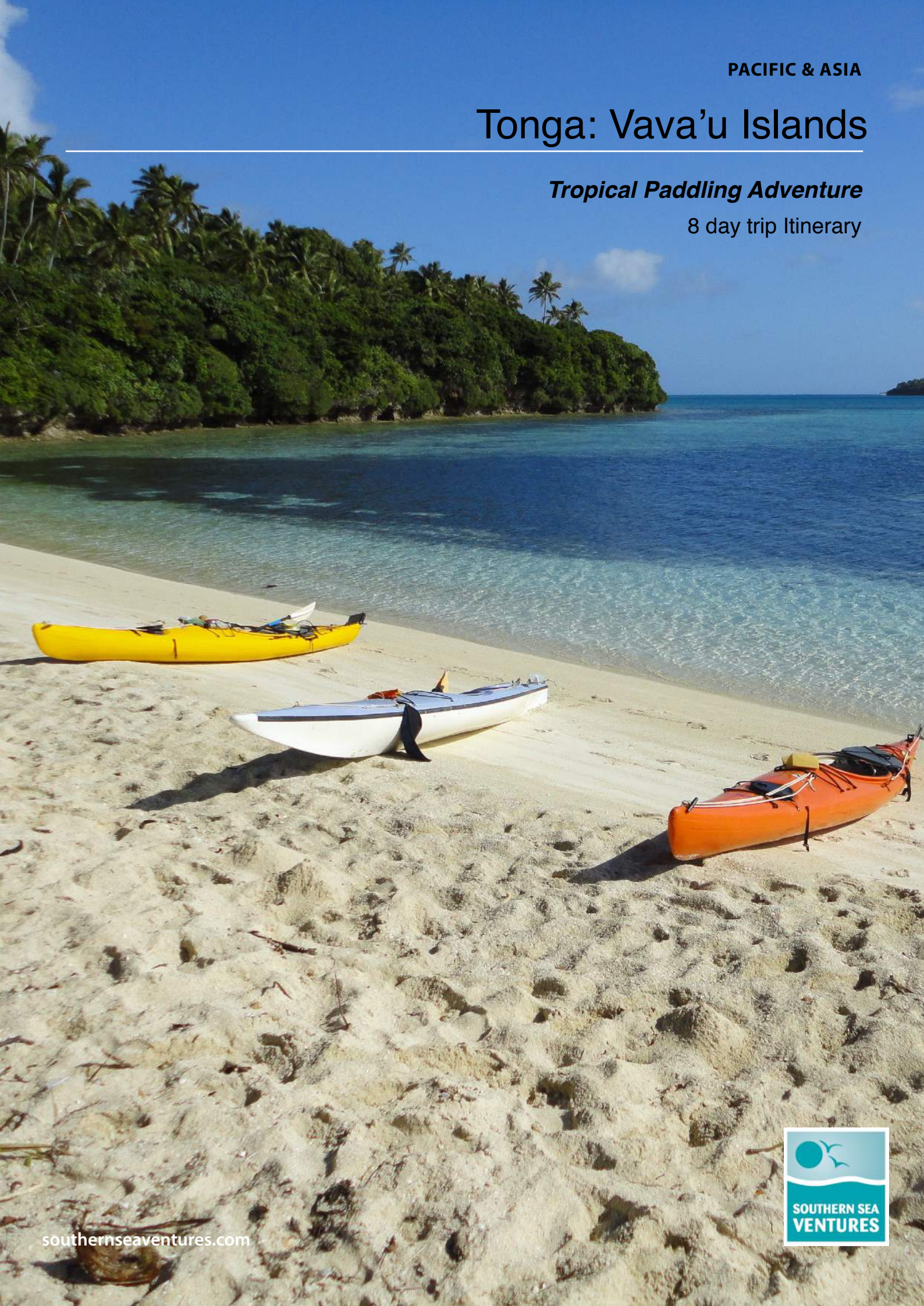


PACIFIC & ASIA

Tonga: Vava'u Islands

Tropical Paddling Adventure

8 day trip Itinerary



Tonga: Vava'u Islands



8 day trip 5 days kayaking

Situated approximately 240 kilometres north of Tonga's main island of Tongatapu, the Vava'u Island group is a smattering of approximately 50 islands in an area 23 by 25 kilometres. Protected by a semi-circular reef and closely grouped, the Vava'u archipelago is a perfect paddling playground. In his book, *The Happy Isles of Oceania: Paddling the Pacific*, author Paul Theroux describes sea kayaking in Vava'u: "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 3-6: Exploring the Vava'u Archipelago. Camping. B • L • D

Day 7: Finish kayaking. Farewell dinner. Overnight at the group hotel. B • L • D

Day 8: 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 usually twice a week. These flights are direct, not via Tongatapu (Nuku'alofa). Fiji Airways operate flights to Nadi from Australia, New Zealand and Los Angeles. They also fly from Auckland and Nadi to Tongatapu.

Virgin Australia fly direct from Sydney to Tongatapu and Auckland to Tongatapu and v.v. twice a week.

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

Real Tonga: Fly between Tongatapu 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 a full day's paddling may be required. 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 two to four 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 craft used are mainly double Necky Tofino kayaks). It is important to keep gear to a minimum as we carry all of our food and equipment in the kayaks. 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 departing on the kayak adventure. They also cover trip safety and carry a cell phone 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.

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 (no kayaking). 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 accommodation. Your guide will be in contact to discuss the schedule of events, including the time and place for this afternoon's orientation talk. It is important that all participants attend this informative talk.

NO MEALS INCLUDED/BOATHOUSE APARTMENTS OR PULEKOLEVA GUESTHOUSE (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 island 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 for a glimpse of village life. Visit the primary school and watch the women weaving mats in the village hall. Back at camp, we can snorkel amidst staghorn 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: 2 hours.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 4: After breaking camp and re-provisioning with water at nearby Lape village, we paddle northeast bound for Taunga Island. While paddling in Vava'u we may be fortunate enough to sight turtles, dolphins and humpback whales, the latter which migrate annually to Tonga's warm sheltered waters to breed and calve. Following a picnic and snorkel at Sisia Island, we paddle to inhabited Taunga Island. This evening, the villagers host an authentic Tongan feast consisting of 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 congregations elaborate attire and the harmonised singing. By law, tour operators are not permitted to offer guided activities on a Sunday. Exploring on foot the inter-tidal zone of Taunga, Ngau and Pau Islands, interconnected by a sand bar at low tide is a must. Bathing in the warm sea (no snorkelling), reading, socialising 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. Here we picnic, snorkel and at low tide explore an immense cave with Tarzan-like vines cascading through a hole in the cave ceiling. Thirsty paddlers may order cold drinks at Treasure Island Eco Resort, a setting for a survivor reality TV show. Back in our kayaks, we paddle across a channel to neighbouring uninhabited 'Euakafa Island, tonight's campsite. The afternoon is free for snorkelling, beach combing and gathering dry coconut husks and fronds for the evening bonfire. Pack some marshmallows and chocolate 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. Our last paddle day takes us westward, back to the Port of Refuge where we started our journey. En-route 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 kayak base, transfer by taxi to your accommodation. This evening, we dine at a local restaurant in Neiafu. Paddling time: 3-4 hours.

B • L • D / BOATHOUSE APARTMENTS OR PULEKOLEVA GUESTHOUSE (SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY).

Day 8: If departing Vava'u today, the trip concludes with a transfer to Lupepau'u Airport. End of trip arrangements.

MEALS AND ACCOMMODATION NOT INCLUDED

Climate

The climate of Tonga is very pleasant, being slightly cooler and less humid than most tropical areas. From June to November temperatures range from 22°-30°C with humidity around 74%. The southeasterly trade winds average 12-18 knots-ideal weather for paddling and camping.



During the wetter summer months, (December to May), the weather is hotter (25°-32°C), more humid and changeable with an increased risk of tropical cyclones.

Trip and Camping Organisation

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 9:30am and arrive into camp for lunch.

On the first camping day, (Day 2), the guides introduce participants to the camp kitchen and protocol for erecting and breaking camp. On arrival into camp, the guides require help with erecting the overhead tarpaulin; hanging up life vests and spray skirts and unloading the kayaks. 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), and self-inflating mattresses 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 enquiries 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 7. Meals have an international theme and you're 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. Some specialist diet food products are not available to buy in Tonga, for example, gluten-free cereal and UHT soy milk are sometimes hard to find. We recommend you bring some from home for your personal consumption during the trip.

Food & Water in Tonga

There is a wide selection of eateries in Nuku'alofa and Vava'u. In Nuku'alofa (Tongatapu), we can recommend Cafe Reef, Fakalato Restaurant, Fresh Juice Bar, Little Italy Pizzeria, Luna Rossa, Friends Café,

Seaview Restaurant and The Waterfront Café. In Neiafu (Vava'u) try the Basque Tavern, Bella Vista, Cafe Tropicana, Coffee and T's, Dancing Rooster, Mango Cafe, Refuge, The Tongan Beach Resort and Vava'u Villa.

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

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

Pulekoleva Guesthouse <https://www.pulekoleva.com>

Let us know if you wish to upgrade your accommodation to a beachfront resort and we can provide a quote.

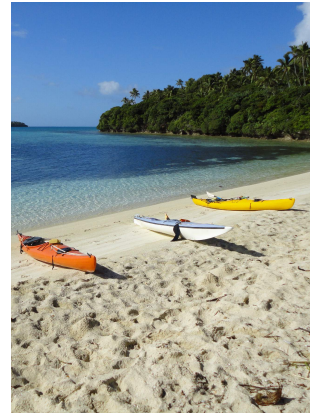
Stopover Accommodation on Tongatapu

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 in Tonga, Friendly Islands Kayak Company (FIKCO), 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 FIKCO 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 (“Tonga time”) 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. There are currently two cell phone companies in Tonga: Digital and U-call. 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. The Tongan archipelago comprises of 171 mostly raised coral islands with fewer than 40 of them inhabited. The population of Tonga is estimated at 106,000 with two thirds of that number living on the main island of Tongatapu. The native language is Tongan although approximately 70% of the population speak English, with a 98.5% 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.

Vava'u is known as the water sports capital of the Kingdom of Tonga. Tour operators offer whale watching/ swimming, scuba diving, snorkeling, sailing and game fishing tours.

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).

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 or with both legs outstretched. Eating is with your hands-either hand is acceptable. It is customary that hosts provide considerably more food than guests could possibly eat and there's no need to be embarrassed by 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 hotel restaurants. Marine activities, including kayaking and snorkelling, are banned. No commercial or physical activities on Sundays are allowable anywhere within the Kingdom.

Sundays, therefore, are lay days and our guides strive to arrange other activities such as bush and inter-tidal walks and a church visit.

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. Snorkellers 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 mattresses (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 WIFI 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 outer 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, Westpac Bank of Tonga, Malaysian Banking Finance or Western Union in Neiafu on weekdays. On Saturday, Westpac Bank of Tonga is open from 8am to 11am and Western Union from 9am to 11.30am. ANZ and Westpac have 24 hour ATMs with Cirrus, MasterCard and Visa functions. The larger accommodation properties have credit card facilities, a surcharge of 4.5-5% usually applies. Smaller businesses usually 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\$4-\$5 per day per person for each 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 and may have to travel on a different flight than you. Please refer to Real Tonga's website for up to date details.

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 triple wrapped in a dry bag on the kayak trip so that, in the unlikely event of evacuation, your guides can readily access the document.

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. 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. Participants aged 65 years or

over must also provide a medical certificate. 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. Every participant should have a current tetanus vaccination and we 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 (December to May) 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. The tents and rooms at our preferred accommodation properties have mosquito screening on the windows. It's a good idea to close all doors before dusk when the majority of mosquitos come out. Our guides select breezy campsites to keep the mosquitoes at bay.

Medical Supplies

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

In addition we suggest that each passenger bring:

- Medication (pain relief, anti-inflammatory, mild anti-nausea drugs).
- Sun screen (water resistant variety at least SPF30).
- Lip protectant (SPF30+).
- Band-aid strips (water-proof).
- 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 hand wash.

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 (Vava'u) 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 kayak hatches. Please bring no more than two medium sized (20-25 litre) dry bags per person; one for clothing, the other for miscellaneous items 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 and an optional summer weight sleeping bag is additional to the above items. Nylon stuff sacks lined with one or two heavy-duty garbage bags 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.

Any excess baggage not needed while kayaking can be left at the kayak base, however this is at your own risk as it may be unoccupied overnight.

Quick-dry clothing is recommended for Tonga's warm tropical climate. Long-sleeved shirts with a collar offer good sun protection. Long loose pants and socks provide protection from mosquitoes. Lava-lavas (two metre wrap-around cloth) may be purchased in Tonga. It is advisable to bring along two lava-lavas, one for wearing over shorts or a swimsuit when entering a village and a clean one for other occasions.

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.
- Swimwear.
- T-shirts (long and short sleeved).

- A lycra sun top is useful for snorkelling.
- Modest clothing if planning to attend a Sunday church service.
- One pair of light-weight, quick drying, full length trousers.
- Two pairs of shorts.
- Two lava lavas (can also 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.) Not expensive as they may get wet.
- Reef shoes for paddling or a good fitting pair of sandals that attach solidly.
- Lightweight socks and underwear.
- 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.
- Medical supplies as per section above.
- A headlamp or small torch and batteries.
- One or two 1-litre water bottles—the type used by cyclists are fine and inexpensive.
- Dry bags (2X 20-25L 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 dried fruit or granola/muesli 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.

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