

The Tonga Compendium

including Minerva Reef

A Compilation of Guidebook References and Cruising Reports



Image courtesy Brian Heagney, [Fins 'n' Flukes](#)

Rev 2025.2– May 5, 2025

We welcome updates to this guide!
(especially for places we have no cruiser information on)
Email Soggy Paws at [sherry –at- svso](mailto:sherry-at-svsoggypaws-dot-com)ggypaws –dot- com.
You can also contact us on Sailmail at WDI5677

The current home of the official copy of this document is <http://svsoggypaws.com/files/>
It might not be the most current version if you found it elsewhere. Please check the above site for the most up to date copy, and remember...it will always be free!

Revision Log

Many thanks to all who have contributed over the years!!

Rev	Date	Notes
2025.2	05-May-2025	Added Link to excellent Exploring Minerva Reefs document
2025.1	27-Jan-2025	Added Whatsapp Group Link
2024.4	04-Oct-2024	Duty free fuel when checking out in Vava'u, new dive operation in Neiafu
2024.3	22-Sep-2024	Details on shipping boat parts
2024.2	20-Aug-2024	New 3D printing service in Nuku'alofa
2024.1	04-Apr-2024	Various updates from sv Pavic from Nov 2023 in Neiafu.
2023.4	30-Oct-2023	Minor update about dinghy docks in Vava'u.
2023.3	6-Sep-2023	Updates to VVMRA and Vava'u contact information. Updates from Greg Just at Café Tropicana throughout Vava'u.
2023.2	27-August-2023	Reorganization of compendium by Sugar Shack. Updates from Sugar Shack, Jamala, Steel Away, Pogeyan, Oh Joy II, Eastern Stream, Perigee, Nutmeg, Ana Maria throughout the guide.
2023.1	23-Jun-2023	New link to Tropicana Café's Tonga Information Pages (Updated 2023) Cruising notes from Oh Joy II in 2023, Rainbow Safari in late 2022, and Zoomax from 2019. Some updates to weather links.
2019.1	01-Jun-2019	24 Hour Notice of Arrival Required by Customs/Immigration
2017.1	30-Jul-2017	Updates from Spunky on Nuku'alofa
C.1	01-Nov-2014	Updated info on Services available in Neiafu and information from Greg Just at Café Tropicana.
B.7	30-Nov-2012	Inputs on Tongatapu from s/v Namani
B.6	25-July-2012	Inputs on the Ha'apai from Dream Away, and Soggy Paws on what to do in Neiafu
B.5	24-June-2012	More Neiafu area and Ha'apai Updates
B.4	20-May-2012	Added Ha'apai Info and some final updates to Vava'u info
B.3	20-Feb-2012	Added Tongan Phrases, Added Cyclone Season Weather section
B.2	01-Feb-2012	Added Ocelot's (the Hacking Family) dive sites + a little Ha'apai diving info
B.1	24-Jan-2012	Added Nine of Cups (2009) and s/v Passage inputs
A.3	15-Jan-2012	Chesapeake's Inputs for Vava'u and Ha'apai
A.2	21-Nov-2011	Added Grommit's account of Neiafo'oo Island
A.1	24-Oct-2011	Added Minerva Reef
A	21-Oct-2011	Initial version, extracted from the Cooks and Samoa's Compendium.

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	5
1.1	ORGANIZATION OF THE GUIDE	5
1.2	OVERVIEW OF TONGA	5
1.3	MANEUVERING AND ANCHORING IN TONGA	6
1.4	CUSTOMS & IMMIGRATION.....	10
1.5	LOCAL CUSTOMS.....	14
1.6	YACHTSMEN’S SERVICES – OVERVIEW	15
1.7	GENERAL SERVICES.....	16
1.8	PROVISIONS	18
1.9	COMMUNICATIONS	18
1.10	GETTING VISITORS IN AND OUT	21
1.11	HAUL OUT, STORAGE, AND REPAIR FACILITIES.....	22
1.12	TIME ZONE	22
1.13	WEATHER IN TONGA.....	23
1.14	CRUISING INFORMATION SOURCES	28
1.15	PRINTED SOURCES.....	30
2	PASSAGE REPORTS TO/FROM TONGA	31
2.1	VAVA’U TO FIJI	31
2.2	FIJI TO VAVA’U	31
2.3	VAVA’U TO FIJI	31
2.4	NEW ZEALAND TO TONGA VIA MINERVA REEF	32
2.5	NIUE TO TONGA.....	32
2.6	TONGA TO NIUE.....	33
2.7	THE SAMOAS TO TONGA.....	33
3	PASSAGE REPORTS WITHIN TONGA.....	33
3.1	VAVA’U TO HA’APAI (AND BACK).....	33
3.2	TONGATAPU TO HA’APAI (AND BACK)	34
3.3	NIUATOPUTAPU TO NEIAFU.....	34
4	NIUAS GROUP	35
4.1	NIUATOPUTAPU	35
4.2	NIUAFO’OU.....	38
5	VAVA’U GROUP	39
5.1	VAVA’U OVERVIEW & MAP WITH ANCHORAGE NUMBERS	39
5.2	NEIAFU	41
5.3	VAULELEVA BAY (NEAR LOTUMA ISLAND)	56
5.4	VAIPUA LAGOON (BOATYARD ANCHORAGE) (ANCHORAGE #4).....	56
5.5	LOTUMA BAY (ANCHORAGE #5)	57
5.6	MALA (ANCHORAGE #6)	57
5.7	PORT MAURELLE (ANCHORAGE #7), SWALLOWS AND MARINER’S CAVE	57
5.8	NUKU (ANCHORAGE #8)	59
5.9	LUAMOKO (ANCHORAGE #9)	59
5.10	AISEA’S OR LISA BEACH (ANCHORAGE #10)	59
5.11	TAPANA (ANCHORAGE #11)	60
5.12	TAPANA ISLAND (ANCHORAGE #12).....	60
5.13	HUNGA (ANCHORAGE #13)	60
5.14	LATE ISLAND.....	62

5.15	FOEATA ISLAND “BLUE LAGOON” (ANCHORAGE #14).....	62
5.16	MATAMAKA (ANCHORAGE #15).....	62
5.17	VAKA’EITU (ANCHORAGE #16).....	63
5.18	LAPE ISLAND (ANCHORAGE #17).....	64
5.19	TAUNGA (ANCHORAGE #21).....	64
5.20	NGAU (ANCHORAGE 23).....	65
5.21	TAUNGA SOUTH (ANCHORAGE #24).....	65
5.22	OLD HARBOR / MAKAVE (ANCHORAGE #25).....	65
5.23	EUEIKI (ANCHORAGE #29).....	65
5.24	KENUTU (ANCHORAGE #30).....	65
5.25	MANINITA ISLAND (ANCHORAGE #31).....	66
5.26	EUAKAFA (ANCHORAGE #32).....	67
5.27	FUAMOTU (ANCHORAGE #33).....	68
5.28	LAHIAPO (LUAHAIPO) (ANCHORAGE #35).....	68
5.29	FONU’ ONE’ONE (ANCHORAGE #36).....	68
5.30	FANGASITO (ANCHORAGE #37).....	69
5.31	OVAKA (ANCHORAGE #38).....	69
5.32	AVALAU (ANCHORAGE #39).....	70
5.33	OVALAU ISLAND.....	70
5.34	MOUNU (ANCHORAGE #41).....	70
5.35	MOU’MUA (MU’OMU’A) (ANCHORAGE #42).....	71
5.36	DIVING VAVA’U.....	71
6	HA’APAI GROUP - NORTH TO SOUTH.....	75
6.1	VAVA’U ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ASSOCIATION.....	75
6.2	NORTHERN HA’APAI GROUP.....	76
6.3	LULUNGA GROUP.....	87
6.4	SOUTHERN HA’APAI GROUP.....	90
7	TONGATAPU.....	93
7.1	NUKUALOFA.....	94
7.2	PANGIAMOTU & BIG MAMMA’S.....	102
7.3	FAFA ISLAND.....	103
7.4	MALINOA.....	103
8	MINERVA REEF.....	103
8.1	NORTH MINERVA.....	103
8.2	SOUTH MINERVA.....	104
9	APPENDIX A - USEFUL TONGAN WORDS AND PHRASES.....	106
9.1	EVERYDAY GREETINGS.....	106
9.2	THE BASICS.....	106
9.3	TONGAN NUMBERS.....	108
9.4	MONETARY RELATED PHRASES.....	108
9.5	SHOPPING AND GROCERIES.....	109

1 Introduction

We started creating compendiums for the Tuamotus in French Polynesia as a way for s/v Soggy Paws and a few friends to organize notes and various internet sources. Later, it became a way for us to pass on what we've learned to other cruisers.

We have since created over 25 compendiums all the way across the Pacific and in to SE Asia. Including, Panama, Ecuador, French Polynesia, Cook and Samoa Islands, Tonga, Solomon's, New Caledonia, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Hawaii, Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Plus, we have received updates from cruisers since 2011 (please send us yours!).

If you haven't found our other 'Compendiums', they are free at www.svsoggypaws.com/files

This is not intended to replace the guidebooks or charts, but to supplement out-of-date guides with recent cruiser first-hand reports, and fill in information on places that the guides don't cover.

This 'compendium' contains cruiser feedback from personal experiences, some website content, and information from our own experience. Source and date of information are usually noted.

1.1 Organization of the Guide

This guide is loosely organized in the order that cruisers coming from French Poly and the Cook Islands normally transit... north to south.

1.2 Overview of Tonga

Also see: www.vavau.to. The Tonga Tourism site maintained by Greg Just of Café Tropicana. Greg also produces and updates the "Vava'u, Ha'apai, Tongatapu, Nui Cruising Guide" which is full of very useful information. We highly recommend you download it.

Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonga>

Tonga, officially the Kingdom of Tonga is a Polynesian country and an archipelago. The country has 171 islands – of which 45 are inhabited. Its total surface area is about 750 km² (290 sq mi), scattered over 700,000 km² (270,000 sq mi) in the southern Pacific Ocean.

As of 2023, Tonga has a population of 107,773, 70% of whom reside on the main island, Tongatapu. The country stretches approximately 800 km (500 mi) north-south. It is surrounded by Fiji and Wallis and Futuna (France) to the northwest; Samoa to the northeast; New Caledonia (France) and Vanuatu to the west; Niue (the nearest foreign territory) to the east; and Kermadec (New Zealand) to the southwest. Tonga is about 1,800 km (1,100 mi) from New Zealand's North Island. Tonga is a member of The Commonwealth.

First inhabited roughly 2,500 years ago by the Lapita civilization, Tonga's Polynesian settlers gradually evolved a distinct and strong ethnic identity, language, and culture as the Tongan people. They were quick to establish a powerful footing across the South Pacific, and this period of Tongan expansionism and colonization is known as the Tu'i Tonga Empire. From the rule of the first Tongan king, 'Aho'eitu, Tonga grew into a regional power. It was a thalassocracy that conquered and controlled unprecedented swathes of the Pacific, from parts of the Solomon Islands and the whole of New Caledonia and Fiji in the west to Samoa and Niue and even as far as parts of modern-day French Polynesia in the east. Tu'i Tonga became renowned for its economic, ethnic, and cultural influence over the Pacific, which remained strong even after the Samoan revolution of the 13th century and Europeans' discovery of the islands in 1616.

From 1900 to 1970, Tonga had British protected-state status. The United Kingdom looked after Tonga's foreign affairs under a Treaty of Friendship, but Tonga never relinquished its sovereignty to any foreign

power. In 2010, Tonga took a decisive step away from its traditional absolute monarchy and became a fully-functioning constitutional monarchy, after legislative reforms paved the way for its first partial representative elections.

In January 2022, the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha‘apai volcano, 65 km (40 mi) north of the main island of Tongatapu, erupted, causing a tsunami which inundated parts of the archipelago, including the capital Nuku‘alofa. The eruption affected the kingdom heavily, cutting off most communications and killing four people in Tonga, including a British national who ran an animal shelter and died trying to save her dogs. It took around five weeks to repair a submarine fiber optic cable used in the Tonga Cable System for internet and telephone connectivity. Business magnate Elon Musk directed his company SpaceX to provide emergency internet services to households remaining under blackout via a Starlink satellite infrastructure network based in neighboring Fiji.

Labor Shortages: The tourism industry did not get much monetary support from the Tonga government even though millions were given by NZ, AUS, and Japan to aid the industry. What was given was not fairly distributed. A huge portion of the workforce is now doing seasonal work in NZ and AUS which means finding workers in Tonga is a very difficult challenge for business owners. This on top of three years of border closures and little money to maintain facilities. So please be patient and support the local businesses of Tonga. – Greg Just, Café Tropicana

1.3 Maneuvering and Anchoring in Tonga

Many cruisers have already been through French Polynesia and know how to anchor around coral heads (bommies). However, for other cruisers may not be familiar with “floating your chain” as they are coming from different countries.

1.3.1 Anchoring in Coral

Please remember, we are guests visiting this country, islands, and backyards of the lovely locals. We must take responsibility to protect their lagoons.

In most of the anchorages in Tonga, your anchoring conditions may be one of the following:

- (1) Solid coral bottom
- (2) Sand with a lot of coral heads
- (3) Sand with a few coral heads (rare)

The water depth is usually 35-50 feet, and the coral heads are 4-5' off the bottom, and scattered on the bottom at about every 6-10 feet or so, with sand in between. This is a perfect setup to badly wrap your chain, damaging the coral, and endanger your boat.

Often lagoons are not clear and many times you are anchoring without knowing if there is coral on the bottom. Some cruisers have found the use of a fish finder to locate clear spots on the bottom invaluable in murky situations. We have a cheap one with the transducer stuck to the inside of the hull with silicon.

Each year sail boats cruising in Tonga get into trouble at anchor: They get trapped on lee shores after a shift in the wind direction and/or foul their anchor and/or chain in coral. The results are stressful maneuvers to get the anchor back up, bent bow rollers, and ruined or even ripped out windlass. Of course, the fragile coral structures get badly damaged with each of these messed up maneuvers as well.

It is **easy to avoid damage** to the coral and your boat if you:

- Anchor in conditions with **good visibility** (don't drop your anchor blindly)
- Try to find a **big, sandy spot** to drop your hook
- Anchor in **shallow** water...
 - ...where you can see the bottom clearly

- ...usually fewer coral heads grow on sandy shelves, and
- ...you only need a short chain.
- **Float the chain** so the boat swings in shifting winds without getting the chain caught in coral
- Keep an eye on the **weather forecast** and move to a safe anchorage before the wind shifts

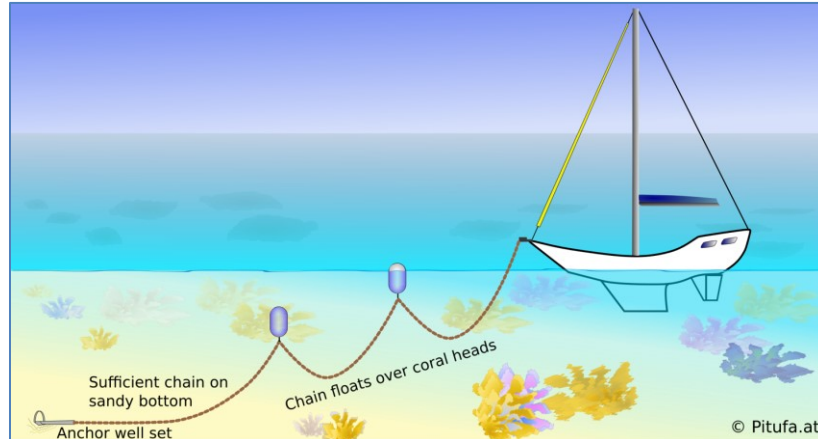
There are many ways to float your chain. Some people set their chain first, then pull back on it to ensure it is set properly. Once set, they will slowly pull up the chain to install the floats and then pull back again. Another way is listed below.

Floating the chain is a simple procedure. You just need:

- (3) or more medium-sized fenders or buoys
 - (3) or more carabiners that fit into your chain
1. Drop the anchor in the middle of the biggest sandy spot you can find,
 2. Pay out chain while reversing gently,
 3. Look around at the surrounding coral heads and estimate your swinging radius,
 4. Hook in the first fender/buoy before the chain could touch any of the coral heads,
 5. Pay out some more chain and set the anchor gently pulling in reverse,
 6. If the scope is still not sufficient, additional floats can be added followed by more chain.

The general rule:

The first float should be inserted at double the depth. If you drop the hook in 5 meters, put the first float on at 10 meters. Then add another float every 7-15 meters. If you have small floats/fenders, then add them every 7-10 meters. If you have a larger float/fender, then add them every 12-15 meters. The goal is to keep the chain off the surrounding coral heads.



For more information, visit www.pitufa.at.

If your chain does get wrapped...

If you are in a storm situation, it is critical to maintain some free chain. Boats have successfully weathered bad storm situations by going to a really long really strong snubber and/or letting out more chain as their chain gets wrapped (having a spare buoy rigged for this would make a lot of sense).

In some deep anchorages inside the lagoon, it can be difficult to see the bottom snorkeling, and therefore difficult to see what's going on when your chain seems stuck. It is USUALLY possible to unstick your chain without diving on it—patience and calm weather are helpful. A snorkeler in the water can be helpful. But this is a time where having a dive tank can be a big help.

Another very useful resource about Floating Your Chain can be found here:

<https://www.jacarandajourney.com/floatingyourchain>

Not anchoring in coral... After spending several seasons in the South Pacific, we found that if you make your way to the windward side of the atoll, there may be spots where the sand has been pushed over the coral reef in big storms, making good sandy anchor spots in shallow water with scattered heads.

1.3.2 Using Out-Island Moorings

Another word of caution on using moorings that are in various locations in Tonga. Many moorings are placed for one reason or another and then are not maintained after they were installed, and a number of boats have broken free of their moorings. If you still want to take the risk, best to dive on the mooring and check it out - making sure the shackle is seized (one boat came adrift not having the shackle seized), and that the chain has not worn thin at the bottom.

How to Properly Tie up to a Mooring (or, don't wreck the mooring, please!):

First, never ever assume that a mooring is good without inspecting it. Boats are wrecked every year while crossing the Pacific due to trusting a poorly maintained mooring.

A mooring that is not properly inspected and revamped every 6 months can be very dangerous for your boat. Few of the moorings you will find in the South Pacific are inspected and revamped every 6 months. So, inspect it yourself! Some things to look for:

- Inspect the loop for signs of chafe. Inspect the length of line to make sure that the line is of appropriate strength for your boat, and that the line, the chain, the shackles, and the mooring are of appropriate strength/size for your boat.
- Inspect the chain, especially if the chain hangs in the sand. As the mooring ball "dances", the chain rubs in the sand, resulting in very thin links.
- Inspect the connection to whatever is on the bottom... some are chain wrapped around a massive (dead) coral head. Some are concrete blocks with re-bar loops cast into the concrete (these can go bad) and some are sand screws (that can unscrew from the bottom).
- If you have a concrete block on the bottom, know the dimensions of that concrete block, and remember that concrete is half as heavy in water as it is in air (so a 500 lb block is only 250 lbs underwater). Do not assume that the islander who set up that mooring understands just how big a concrete block is required to properly moor a 45 ft cruising boat in a 35-knot squall.

Proper Way to Connect to a Mooring

The proper way to connect to a single-loop mooring is to run two lines, one from each bow cleat. Each line should go from the cleat, through the loop, and back to the same cleat. This provides redundancy, and eliminates the "sawing" problem.

Some moorings are short; if under full load the line goes into the water steeper than 33 degrees (1 down for 2 forward), extend it with your own lines. A near vertical mooring will rip off, even with a small boat. Don't blame the mooring when that happens.

The fundamental problem is that every time someone drops an anchor in those areas, a few years of coral growth gets destroyed; so, advising cruisers not to use moorings will quickly ruin those wonderful places.

DANGER Using a Single Line to a Mooring:

DO NOT run a single line from one bow cleat to another, through the mooring loop. This is a recipe for disaster! As your boat swings back and forth, this will saw on the loop, severely damaging it. In strong gusty wind, you can saw through a 1-inch 3-strand line in a couple of hours. We pulled one boat off the

rocks, and heard of another boat whose boat was a total loss due to sawing through the loop. Even in light winds, you are damaging the loop (not being a good neighbor). Don't be lazy!

1.3.3 Navigating in Areas with Coral

July 2023: Open CPN with satellite overview in addition to Navionics are only second best to having a look out on the bow. – Sugar Shack

Nov 2022: During our time in Tonga we found the Navionics Charts to be quite accurate and in sync with satellite imagery. I would plan all our tracks on Navionics and double check waypoints near shore/reef against satellite images – and that worked well. – Rainbow Safari

May 2018: Though we found both the CMAP (CM93 v2) and Garmin charts to be fairly accurate in French Polynesia (not so everywhere, however), your ability to explore coral-laced atolls is greatly enhanced by acquiring high-resolution satellite images.

There are a number of sources of satellite charting/imagery for French Polynesia.

1.3.3.1 Free Downloadable KAPS and mbtiles (used by charting programs like OpenCPN)

Migration's Charts	Pacific Mexico, French Poly, Pitcairn Island, Easter Island mbtiles 2020
Zen Again's Charts	Pacific Ocean, SE Asia, Crossing to S Africa, S Atlantic, Brazil
Soggy Paws' Charts	Pacific Ocean, SE Asia, Red Sea
Jacaranda's Charts	French Polynesia
Valhalla's Charts	SE Asia and Western Pacific
Ocelot's Charts	SE Asia, Western Pacific, and Indian Ocean

Make Your Own: You can make your own, look for the Sat2Chart program here: <http://gdayii.ca>

There is a Facebook Group called GE2Kap that provides support for Sat2Chart (formerly GE2KAP).

OpenCPN is a free fully functional navigation program, downloadable from <http://opencpn.org> It runs on Windows 7-11, many flavors of Linux and Raspberry Pi, and Apple Macs (but not iDevices). There is a support forum for OpenCPN on CruisersForum.com and an OpenCPN Users group on Facebook.

1.3.3.2 iDevices

OpenCPN doesn't run on iPads and iPhones due to their proprietary architecture/non-open source attitude. Here are some satellite navigation options for iDevices.

Ovital Maps used to be the most-recommended for iPads/iPhones, but the Apple Store gutted this program in about 2019. If you have it, and have maps you want to keep, don't hook your iPad up to the internet, or your maps will go away!

Guru Maps: Highly recommended: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bodunov.galileo>

You get one free week and then can buy the Pro version for \$10 per year. Cheaper to start with the free version than buy the Pro outright, but I heard that maps downloaded for the free version have to be re-downloaded for the Pro version. You can add map types from here: <https://ms.gurumaps.app/>

Also **Zulu Offshore:** <https://apps.apple.com/id/app/zulu-offshore/id1522412216>

1.3.3.3 Android

The most-recommended solution (besides OpenCPN on Android) is **All in One Offline Maps:**

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.psyberia.offlinemaps>

Guru Maps: Another option: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bodunov.galileo>

You get one free week and then can buy the Pro version for \$10 per year. Cheaper to start with the free version than buy the Pro outright, but I heard that maps downloaded for the free version have to be re-downloaded for the Pro version. You can add map types from here: <https://ms.gurumaps.app/>

And a third is **Alpine Quest**: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=psyberia.alpinequest.full>

1.3.3.4 Windows

OpenCPN, of course (with added maps). <http://opencpn.org> The benefit of OpenCPN is the widely available whole worldwide CMAP chart set. Can download free from Valhalla's site (see chart source links above).

SAS Planet: <http://sasgis.org> is a good alternative for Windows users. But SAS is NOT a navigation program. OpenCPN is.

1.4 Customs & Immigration

1.4.1 Pre-Arrival

Tonga requires an "Advanced Notice of Arrival Form" to be completed and sent to info@customs.gov.to or faxed to +676 24124 at least 24 hours prior to arrival. Note: sent at least 24hrs in advance meaning you can send them 2-3 weeks in advance as well.

Forms are available at Ministry of Revenue and Customs web site www.revenue.gov.to/customs-forms or Advance Notice of Arrival form (<https://Vavau.to/tongaanoa.pdf>).

1.4.2 Customs

International ports of entry as of July 2023 (double check with Tonga customs):

- Nuku'alofa at Tongatapu
- Neiafu at Vava'u
- Pangai at Lifuka
- Niuatoputapu at Falehau
- Niuafu'ou at Futu

Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1230 and 1330-1630. Lunch, weekends, and holidays require prior approval and overtime fees.

On arrival, yachts will be granted a 4-month stay. Should you wish to keep your boat longer in Tonga, you must submit an application to Customs to extend the stay to 12-months.

Submit your application at least 2 weeks prior to the 4-month expiry date and you will get a reply within one week. The application should state the name of the boat and the names of the crew. The application must be signed by a Customs Boarding Officer either in Vava'u or Nuku'alofa.

IMPORTANT: Make sure you ask the Customs officer for your TIN # (Tax Identification Number) if you plan to ship items into Tonga. You need this number in order to get duty free shipping.

Equipment sent to vessels in transit may be imported duty free. All goods go to Nuku'alofa and then you pay a courier to transport the goods to your port of choice. Yacht in transit will have customs inspection fees.

July 2023: We arrived at 1030am, but by the time the officials met us at the dock and we got to the boat we ran into lunchtime. We paid \$324TOP in fees (\$200TOP health, \$100 Customs, \$24 Biosecurity). They were super nice, but the fees surprised us. – Sugar Shack

1.4.3 Clearance in Vava'u

The best most up-to-date information about Tonga and checking in (with a focus on Vava'u) is Greg Just's (Tropicana Café) guide. Greg is a Port Officer for the OCC (Ocean Cruising Club) and a Cruising Station for SSCA, ICA, OCC, CA, RCC, Noonsite. He updates his information booklet every few weeks.

The current location is www.vavau.to/portofficer.pdf This is 13 pages of useful information right from someone directly involved in the yachting community in Tonga.

There is a (perhaps outdated) copy in the Tonga section of [Soggy Paws Files page](#). Only placed there in case the Vavau.to website goes offline, at least we have something.

International check-in in Neiafu is done at the wharf. There is a sandbar on the eastern side of the wharf and a sunken vessel on the western side. There is plenty of room to tie up in between. Call Vava'u Customs on VHF 16/26, usually Vava'u Volunteer Maritime Response Association (VVMRA) will answer. Wait on the dock for Customs, Health and Immigration.

International check-out in Neiafu is also done at the wharf. It is possible to get duty free fuel once the Export permit has been issued. Duty free alcohol can also be purchased, only on the day you clear out, through Leiola Duty Free +676 70148 located next to Café Tropicana. The order needs to be placed and paid for 24 hours prior to departure. They will deliver to Customs and Customs will deliver to the boat when you show the receipt.

Aug. 2023: Clearing out in Neiafu, Vava'u. Bring all of your paperwork (boat registration, passports, entry paperwork) first to Port Authority and pay your port fee. Port Authority is located in the same white warehouse building on the main wharf. Enter the large warehouse doors, pass Customs sitting at a folding table on your right and turn the corner. Port Authority cashier is on your right.

Then take your receipt and all of your other paperwork back to Customs to clear out. It is helpful to visit them the day before to pre-fill paperwork. If you bought duty free fuel and/or liquor you can get it after you clear out.

1.4.4 Clearance in Tongatapu

As you enter Tongan waters contact Port Control on VHF 16 to alert them of your arrival.

They ask that all boats tie up to the Q dock (21°08.326S / 175°11.065W). It is a concrete dock and you will need loads of fenders (placed middle of the boat, not at the water line). The officials will meet you at your boat on the dock.

Tonga Customs: Sau Niulala: +676 774 9826. Sp.niulala@gmail.com and copy Tonga Customs Clearance: info@customs.gov.to.

July 2023: Because of our rudder issue (or lack thereof), we requested to anchor just outside the basin 21°08.197S / 175°11.060W) in 15m of water. We received approval and met the officials (customs, immigration, ministry of health, and biosecurity) at the dock. We loaded them into our dinghy, brought them to the boat, conducted our business and returned them to shore. They were very friendly and easy going.

They asked about prescription medication and food. We declared everything including meats, fruits, and some vegetables and they just told us not to take them off the boat. They even drove us to the ATM to get TOP to pay the fees. – Sugar Shack

May 2023: Due to issues with our big boat engine during our passage from New Zealand, we requested permission to anchor outside Nuku'alofa off Pangaimotu Island. Normally they ask boats to come into Fua Harbor for clearing in. We were given permission to anchor and dinghy ashore to clear in. (We weren't able to get to shore until four days after we arrived, but that's a different story. We were in

frequent contact with Customs through this and they were patient and understanding of our dinghy engine issues as well as our big boat engine issues.)

Clearing in was pretty simple. We started at the big Customs office that's east of Fuaa Harbor but were sent to the yard where the shipping containers are, and to a small office filled with Customs officials inside and out. I would have no way of describing how to get here, but asking someone for directions will likely get you there. They cleared us in pretty painlessly and quickly. No questions about our food on board, though I did declare everything including meats, dairy, fresh fruit and vegetables and nuts.

Sometimes the Tonga Customs VHF radio doesn't work. We found emailing pretty effective. Sau Niulala: Sp.niulala@gmail.com and copy Tonga Customs Clearance: info@customs.gov.to. – Oh Joy II

Nov. 2022 (via Noonsite): We were anchored off Nuku'alofa's Harbour wall. I took the dinghy into the harbour basin to figure out inbound clearance.

Custom's phone numbers posted: +676 874 3359 or +676 24 599. I received the phone number of the Customs officer in charge, Duke, +676 775 1026. He arranged for someone from Customs to meet me and take care of port clearance and passport stamps.

There is a floating dock in the harbour basin at 21°08.303S / 175°10.882W. Duke asked us to go alongside there, but I requested to stay anchored off because we were planning leave after clearing in.

I dinghied the Customs officer to our boat, where he checked our clearance papers and stamped our passports – no need to go to immigration. There was no inspection. We returned to the harbour, and met the Health officials. They checked Covid vaccination certificates and asked for our immunization records. I had left them on board, offered to go get them, but it wasn't needed. For T\$100 we received the Pratique.

Customs then drove me to the Biosecurity office at 21°08.415' S 175°10.688' W. They viewed the ship registration and issued Biosecurity clearance for a fee of T\$20. There was no inspection and no other visit to the boat. – Rainbow Safari

1.4.5 Immigration

Verified April 2024: Tonga Immigration Website: <https://www.revenue.gov.to/immigration-and-general-services> Make sure you double-check the details for YOUR country on the website.

A 30-day visa is granted upon arrival, for citizens of most countries. A second visa for up to 6-months can be purchased for \$69 TOP per 28 days. A passport photo is required for the first extension. \$5 TOP fee every 28 days, for those under 18 years of age. A 15-day Visa can be purchased for \$45 TOP.

If you are a citizen of Schengen countries, a 90-day visa is granted upon arrival.

Passports must be valid for at least six months when entering Tonga (or pay a fine of \$230.00TOP to the Tongan Immigration office).

Yacht crew get a visitor's visa on arrival plus they can apply for an extension of the visitor's visa for up to 5 months. The visa extension can be applied for at Neiafu, Vava'u +676.26970 or Nuku'alofa, Tongatapu +676.26971 or email, tonga.permit@gmail.com.

Keep your visa up to date at all times, if you do not, you risk a \$1,150 TOP fine.

Citizens of certain countries (those not on the list on the Tonga website) must obtain an entry permit issued by the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prior to arriving in Tonga. Email tonga.permit@gmail.com for details.

July 2023: Visitors are granted a 30-day visa upon arrival. If you plan to explore Tonga for more than a month, it is a good idea to obtain a visa extension upon arrival. We have done this several times at Nuku'alofa and once at Neiafu. In Nuku'alofa it took about a week and in Neiafu it took a few hours. In

Nuku'alofa you must submit the documents below at the Parliament building on Vuna Road. Enter on the south side. The immigration service desk is on the first floor and it's marked "Passports." You must arrive before noon to submit the application. Required Documents:

- A completed "Application for a Tongan Permit." You can find this online. The captain completes this for all crew.
- A passport size photo for each crew.
- Application fee of \$69/TOP/person/month. The fee is lower for children.
- A copy of a bank statement.
- A copy of a return ticket for each crew OR a letter from the captain explaining that all crew will depart on the yacht.
- Passports for each crew must be submitted to get their visa stamps.

Processing time in Nuku'alofa is about a week. Our latest visa extension wasn't ready after a week – which jeopardized a weather window for heading north. We were told to visit Becky who sits in the southernmost office on the 2nd floor. Becky was very nice and issued our permits a few hours later after hearing about our weather predicament. – Pogeyan

July 2023: Visa extensions took between 5-7 business days in Nukua'alofa and you had to give up your passport. Many boats stated that it was a much easier and faster process to get the visa extension in Vava'u (1-2 business days). – Sugar Shack

1.4.6 Permit to Cruise Between Island Groups

Each yacht is required to clear in and out of each island group (Tongatapu, Ha'apai-Lifuka/Pangai, Vava'u/Neiafu). If you plan to travel within Tonga and in between archipelagos, then you must do a domestic check-in/check-out and you will need to complete a Local Movement Report (small craft) issued by customs for each island group. There is a \$1150 fine for not following this requirement.

Check in with customs within 48 hours of arrival at the next island group.

Any harbor dues should be paid prior to visiting customs, as the receipt needs to be shown to obtain the Local Movement Report.

It is highly recommended that you pre-fill out the Local Movement Report prior to arriving at each island group. It will greatly facilitate the process and the agents will be super happy.

Neiafu-Vava'u office: By the commercial dock, inside a large, white warehouse building. Customs sits at a folding table just inside the large double doors.

Lifuka-Pangai office: From dinghy dock, turn right, then turn left at dead-end. You'll see large "Customs" sign in front of the Red Cross Building (white with red roof). Go behind this building, turn right into dirt road and you will see small custom's building in yard.

Nuku'alofa- Tongatapu: We went to Port Authority to pay our port dues first. From the dock, turn left, follow the very long chain link fence until just before you get to a large blue sign that spans over the road. On the left you will see a white building with a blue roof that says "Port Authority." Go inside, upstairs to the "cashier" and tell them your boat name and weight. We paid \$64TOP for our 14tonne catamaran. Next to Customs.

Exit the building, turn left into the parking lot, and turn left onto the side road (not the main road). Across the street you will see a customs building, do not go here. Continue down the road to a large green warehouse (on the same side of the road as Port Authority). Enter through the large double doors and go straight ahead to the office with the yellow sign in the window.

July 2023: Nuku'alofa: We did try to get one Interisland form to go from Tongatapu to Vava'u via Haa'pai but they wanted us to check in Pangai then get a new form to go to Vava'u.

I had the form pre-filled and it took less than 5 minutes to get our stamp and signature. There is no fee for the inter-island clearance form. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022: Nuku'alofa: Customs said to contact them for domestic clearance to Ha'apai. I called on the morning before departure and later met them at the small craft clearance office. There was a one-page form to fill out, no other papers required, no fee. Take a phone and stay in close contact, as the office is not usually manned and Tongan time is flexible. – Rainbow Safari

1.4.7 Renewing Visas

Visas can be renewed in Neiafu or in Nuku'alofa.

Immigration office in Neiafu is located behind the 'Small Boat Marina' where dinghies can tie up. The big multi-level blue building. Immigration office is hard to find 18°39.109S / 173°58.585W (Big, blue building, 2nd floor, north side, accessible and visible only from the harbor-side of the building. Perigee paid TOP 207 per person for a 3-month visa extension.

Aug. 2023: We easily extended our visa for three (3) additional months upon arrival at Neiafu. We did not have to surrender our passports and we did not need a photo. The entire process took 20 minutes, one form, \$210TOP per person for 3 months. – Ana Maria

1.5 Local Customs

Tongans are very conservative. Dress code is enforced. Please adhere to their rules while visiting Tonga.

1.5.1 Attire / Clothing

Hats should not be worn in front of anyone of authority.

Men: Shirts are required at all times (even during swimming).

Women: Clothing must cover the shoulders to below the knee and bathing suits should not be worn outside of the resorts (so cover up even when swimming).

Nudity is against the law and strictly prohibited, even while you are on your boat as someone from shore can still see you.

Anyone not following the above rules will risk being fined. Someone can take a photo of you and use that to report you to authorities. You can be convicted based on a photograph.

1.5.2 Sunday: A Day of Rest

Sunday a Day of Rest: No work is allowed on Sunday including swimming, running, creating noise (music/machinery), laundry, surfing, kiting, SUP, and any type of sporting event or other strenuous activity. It is truly a day of rest.

Almost all stores, services, and restaurants observe Sunday as a day of rest.

Displaying anger or frustration is considered very bad form in Tonga.

1.5.3 Guidelines to Swimming with the Whales

Whales: It is illegal to chase the whales or to be in the water with the whales without a licensed and trained guide. There is a large fine and possible jail time if you are caught (a photo of you doing this constitutes being caught even if nobody approaches you at the time of the offense). You must stay 300m clear of the whales at all times (whether you are in a sailboat, dinghy, swimming, etc...)

Tonga respects its whales and realizes that it is a huge part of their tourism. Being in the water with whales requires a guide and they only bring 4 people at a time to see the whale. Only one operator per

whale and that one operator can only stay with that whale for 90 minutes before moving on to another whale. Please respect the whales and Tongan regulations set up to protect the whales.

1.6 Yachtsmen's Services – Overview

Please make sure you check out Café Tropicana Online Information. www.vavau.to

There is a PDF file that they update every year, download: www.vavau.to/portofficer.pdf Ten pages PACKED with info & references. somewhat Vava'u-centered, but has info for Ha'apai & Tongatapu.

1.6.1 Cooking Gas (Propane)

Refill stations do not have any adaptors. Stations are located in Vava'u and Tongatapu.

Neiafu - Vava'u:

Café Tropicana has adapters (calor, camping gaz, gasmate, clipon, 20 21 22 27 acme, and a few more). They do at least weekly gas refill service and they are flexible if several boats need it by a certain date. Greg Just at Café Tropicana announces which days he is doing a gas run on the morning net (VHF 26 at 0830 Mon-Sat). Channel 26 is on repeaters and can be heard all through Vava'u group. Fees are \$5TOP per KG and \$5TOP per bottle. Procuring a cab to the station will cost \$10TOP each direction.

The Vava'u Boatyard offers once weekly delivery and collection of propane bottles. If gas is required more urgently arrangements can be made in the office.

Pacific Gas: Just south of town on the main road, about 3.3km. We got a fill with a U.S. tank with no problems. We paid TOP 41.50 for 9 kilos of Butane. The receipt we got indicates there is a similar place in Nuku'alofa, so cooking gas is available there too.

Tongatapu:

Has a few gas refilling stations but they require a taxi ride and adapters. Some fuel stations offer propane refilling options as well. Pacific Gas has a location here and can refill propane/butane.

1.6.2 Fuel (Diesel and Gasoline)

Fuel is available in Vava'u (Neiafu), Tongatapu (Nuku'alofa) and Lifuka (Pangai). If you are clearing out, you can arrange for duty free fuel in either Neiafu or Nuku'alofa, but you must purchase a minimum of 200L. See [Vava'u](#), [Haa'apai](#), and [Tongatapu](#) sections for more fuel details.

1.6.3 Trash and Recycling

The officials will take your trash for a small fee (and they prefer it) in both Vava'u and Tongatapu.

Vava'u has a dedicated trash and recycling area near the small basin dock. Next to each picnic table is a small green bin (please don't use these). Next to the ramp is a small square fenced in area on a cement slab (use this as your rubbish dump). Rubbish must be placed in bags.

Tongatapu: There are no large trash or recycling bins. There are only small public bins that are emptied every 3-4 days.

There are no trash disposal bins in the outer islands. Cruisers are asked to dispose of their trash in Tongatapu, Lifuka, or Neiafu where they have proper disposal containers.

1.6.4 Water

Tanks can be filled at Neiafu (Vava'u) and Nuku'alofa (Tongatapu).

Vava'u:

Twice filtered rainwater: Café Tropicana in 20-liter jugs. VHF 26, +676 71322, greg@vavau.to

Bella Vista states that they offer free water. VHF 26

Some rainwater may be available from the cistern on Niuatoputapu Island.

The quality of the water is variable so it is advisable to check if the tap water is safe to drink. When traveling in rural islands it is recommended to drink bottled water. Town water supply is heavily chlorinated and calcified, village supply is not treated, but can be tainted by sea water if it is overused.

July 2023: Moorings/Riki Tiki charter boats fill up with town water on the dock in front of Mango Restaurant. It is possible to arrange water through them. Just ask at the Mango. – Perigee

1.7 General Services

1.7.1 Airlines

See “Getting Visitors In and Out” for more travel details.

Airlines are available in Nuku’alofa and Neiafu.

Air New Zealand +676 23 192. <http://airnewzealand.com.au/> - Air New Zealand flies Tonga-USA via NZ Fiji Airways +676 24 021. Located on Vuna Road. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1600

Chathams Pacific: <http://www.chathamspacific.com/> - Local airline in Tonga

Lulutai Airlines: www.lulutai-airlines.to is non-operational almost as much as it is operational. Runs on infrequent schedules and flights are often changed or cancelled. They have a SAAB 340 “large” plane (up to 36pax) and a Y12 “smaller” aircraft (19pax).

1.7.2 Banks & ATM’s

The currency in Tonga is the Tongan Pa’anga (TOP), however, when locals quote prices, they say “dollar” even though (usually) they mean Pa’anga. As of July 2023, 1 Pa’anga equals approx \$0.43 USD. In this guide, I will try to indicate Tongan Pa’anga (TOP) or US dollars (USD).

Very few places in Tonga will accept USD, NZD, or credit cards. It is best to obtain local TOP for all transactions.

In Neiafu, there are ATMs at the BSP and Bank South Pacific located across the street from the building in front of the “small boat marina” and there is one next to Café Tropicana.

In Pangai (Lifuka), has an ATM.

In Niuatoputapu, there is NO ATM. However, there is a bank that will exchange USD, Euros, and maybe Aus and NZ dollars, at whatever the current rate plus a 10 TOP service charge.

In Nuku’alofa there are several ATMs including BSP and ANZ. You can get more money out with BSP for the same amount of fees as ANZ.

Exchange rates at Aug 2024

1 TOP = 0.63 AUD

1 TOP = 0.33 GBP

1 TOP = 0.69 NZD

1 TOP = 0.43 USD

1.7.3 Boat Parts & Repairs

Aug 2024 – 3D Printing Service: There is now a company in Nuku Alofa that is offering a 3D printing service to “custom make” parts from within Tonga for things that would take weeks to source and ship in. <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61562601009631>

Defiant Group, defiantsoftware.net +676 840 6407

July 2023: The Yacht Shop has two locations in Vava'u. One is near the Boatyard and the other is near Bellavista restaurant. +676 881 6855, cmmarine.chandlery@gmail.com. Hours: Mon-Tues: 0930-1530 & Wed-Fri: 0930-1700. The Boatyard runs both shops. See 1.7.6 Shipping Boat Parts. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: The Boatyard is located in an old quarry and sits 20 feet above mean sea level. They have a custom-built hydraulic trailer. It is capable of handling monohulls and multihulls up to 28 metric tons and 58 feet. They advertise that they can arrange woodwork, fiberglass repair and fabrication, metal fabrication and welding, mechanics, sail repair and canvas work, refrigeration and electrical repair. However, we know that a few of the trades people, the sailmaker for example, have left the island since Covid/2022 Tsunami. There is a rigger in Neiafu who used to work for Moorings (he only tunes, he does not manufacture). Ask on the morning net for contact details. – Perigee

1.7.4 Hardware stores

EM Jones and PTH Timber both have locations in Vava'u (Neiafu), Ha'apai (Pangai), and Tongatapu. See each section below for more details (contact information and hours).

1.7.5 Getting Around

July 2023: Nuku'alofa: Taxi's: Olini +676 9 771 2330 sapoiolini@gmail.com; Lata +679 849 8511; Tomasi +679 847 8886.

Vava'u: Taxi Stand +676 70 009, +676 887 2525, +676 751 9266. VHF 26. Across from Café Tropica is "Ana Tevunga Taxi. – Sugar Shack

Nov 2022 – Nukualofa: Taxis are not readily available on the street in Nuku'Alofa. To get one you need to call. We called +676 23 919 and paid T\$6 from the market to harbour basin. – Rainbow Safari

1.7.6 Shipping Boat Parts

Sep 2024 – To Tongatapu:

1. Before placing the order for your part/s -- show your passport and apply for a tax identification number at the customs office.
2. Order your part/s and have them include your TIN on your invoice.
3. Then go across the highway to the DHL office with passport and ship's papers. At DHL, they will help you fill out the paperwork for tax exemption on your shipment using your TIN. They will tell you explicit instructions for how the shipper should address the package.
4. Share the shipper's order number for your part/s with DHL.
5. Wait for notification that the product has arrived. You will have to go back to the customs office to pay a 21 Pa'anga processing fee.
6. Take the receipt for that to DHL and pay a 35 Pa'anga handling fee, and they will release your package without your having to pay 40% duty.

Contact Silei at DHL, +676 7718886 on WhatsApp. She was extremely helpful. She mentioned that five boats are currently awaiting shipments

Aug 2024 – To Vava'u: I do not recommend shipping via DHL to Vava'u, as there is no DHL office here. Ship via FedEx—usually comes within 2 weeks. FedEx here in Vava'u acts as customs agent, so the process is simpler. – Boatyard Vava'u

Aug 2023: A "TIN" (tax identification number) is now required for receiving duty free parts. New as of early August 2023 all vessels wanting to ship duty free items into Tonga must obtain a Tax Identification Number (TIN). You can get this from customs when you check in, but you have to request it. If you have

already checked in, then stop by customs in Tongatapu or Neiafu with your boat registration, passport, Tonga entry paperwork and make a request. It may take 24-48 hours to obtain the TIN.

Once you have your TIN you must include this on your shipping label and it is recommended to include it on the invoice as well to ensure a smooth clearance process.

July 2023: NZ-Tongatapu-Vava'u: We needed to have a small generator shipped in from NZ and found the shipping process to be rather easy. Customs gave us our number which we had the NZ vendor put on our receipt and our shipping label. We then mailed a copy of the receipt, captain's passport, boat registration, Tonga arrival notice, dimensions and weight of the box to customs at mafileofifita65@gmail.com and Silei Vea at dhltongainfo@gmail.com. Tonga prepared the shipping label and scheduled the pickup in NZ. Generator arrived 2 days after it was shipped and cleared customs 3 days later.

We decided to leave Nuku'alofa and inquired about having someone else pick up our generator or having it shipped to Vava'u. They were super accommodating. They asked that we stop by customs again to sign a few additional documents.

DHL shipped our generator to Vava'u for an additional \$100TOP. Our package was waiting at the Vava'u domestic airport office in the center of town, as a regular package, already cleared customs.

Total fees: \$450USD to send a 23kg package (NZ to Tongatapu) plus additional \$220TOP to send to Vava'u from Tongatapu and \$25TOP customs fees. – Yana

May 2023: US-Tongatapu: We shipped a replacement freshwater pump for our diesel engine from Seattle in the US to Nuku'alofa via DHL. The part departed Seattle on May 1 and arrived at Nuku'alofa on May 8. There is a DHL office a short walk from Fuaa Harbor, across the street from the big Port Authority building. We checked at the DHL office on May 9 and they had the package.

There was some confusion about when Customs would release the package to us and no clarity on what was required from us to facilitate the release. They said they would let us know. When we hadn't heard from them by late morning the next day, our local friend Olini went with us to "get a different outcome," as he said. There was a lot of conversation in Tongan, much laughter and what looked like flirting. Olini said they were going to make us do it "the long way" and he was very sad about this. Something about needing to go to the tourism office and get a number and then go to two other offices for approval. He encouraged the DHL manager to let us do it "the short way." They finally relented, and we paid \$83 TOP to get the package in our hands.

Olini Sapoi - Olini's Yachting Services - Message him on Facebook or text or phone at +676 771 2330 sapoiolini@gmail.com. – Oh Joy II

1.8 Provisions

See individual sections for more detailed information on provisioning.

The largest smarkets are at Neiafu (Vava'u), Pangai (Ha'apai), and Tongatapu. Each of these locations has a fairly large fresh produce area, several Chinese shops, and a few local markets.

Eggs are reportedly not rotated in the Chinese shops. Best to get eggs from the 'Egg Lady' at the fresh produce market. Or the day after a supply ship has come in.

1.9 Communications

1.9.1 Social Media

Tonga WhatsApp group, run by Greg Just of Tropicana Café in Neiafu:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/CMOnBCOYvcgKPZg63ZKGNX>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/tongaexpatsandlocals>

1.9.2 VHF

General VHF Advice that applies to all areas: Be aware that on high power, a good VHF will transmit 25 miles line of sight. So, if you are only doing within-anchorage communications, switch to low power. On the flip side, if you are trying to call across island, or to the next island, use high power, and turn your squelch down. Make sure you are aware which channels are automatic low power (ie 17, 67 on some radios), and stay away from the low-power channels for long distance conversations.

Though widely spaced in channel number, channels 16, 68, and 18 are very close to each other in frequency. Most VHF antennas are 'tuned' for channel 16, so long distance communications will work best on 16, 18 or 68. Conversely, in a crowded anchorage, transmission on high power on channel 18 or 68 may 'bleed' over to channel 16 (and almost any other channel, if you're close enough). You don't need high power to talk to the boat next to you, so turn your radio to Low Power!!

Also be aware that some channels that Americans use frequently are 'duplex' channels in International mode. So, for example, you may have trouble communicating with a European boat, or an American boat whose radio is in International mode, on Channel 18. (see any VHF guide for the full list of international and US channels and frequencies, but any US channel designated 'a', like 18a, 22a, etc will cause trouble with VHF's in international mode).

Make sure you ask in each port what the local channels are--both so you know how to reach someone ashore and so you know not to use those channels for your off-channel conversations.

1.9.3 VHF Vava'u

In **Neiafu**, there are a number of channels in use by local businesses. Channel 26 is a repeater channel, which can be used by boats (and locals) trying to communicate in places where normal VHF won't work. Most boats cruising the outer areas, and most of the resorts and islanders stand by on 26 instead of 16. Channel 26 was donated by Sports Fishing Club and is telehoused in a TCC cell tower for free. This is a repeater channel so has a better range than channel 16 - please keep your conversations short on this channel.

The **Neiafu VHF net** runs Monday to Saturday on VHF 26 at 0830 Tonga Time.

Here is the current list of who's listening where (from Café Tropicana)

06 Backup channel for VHF Net

09 Beluga dive/Beluga moorings

11 Te Pana Island

13 Max Taxi

16 Hailing ONLY – Mayday/Pan Pan etc.

26 Repeater channel – VHF Net and used for long range communication. Be aware this channel is monitored by Customs, Police, Governor and Tourism.

71 Game Fishing

72 Moorings/Sunsail calling

73 Moorings/Sunsail working

74 Whale watching operators

77 Mounu Island

Café Tropicana has marinetraffic.com and AIS and assists with emergencies.

1.9.4 SSB Radio Nets

Gulf Harbor Radio www.ghradio.co.nz SSB 8752 (or 8779 or 8297khz) In that order depending on interference. 0515 UTC (17:15NZST) May 1 through 15 November. Daily passage making – otherwise weekdays. Patricia and David offer great advice, weather, and daily passage tracking. Tel: +64 09 424.5765 or ghradio@xtra.co.nz. Great source for local information and weather. They will follow your AIS track and provide weather and traffic updates based on your position.

Pacific Seafarer's Net. This is also a good frequency to have saved in case of emergency—the Hams on the PacSea net will move heaven and earth to help any boat with a true emergency—ham operator or not. Even when there is no net going on this frequency, there are often hams monitoring the frequency for emergency traffic.

The Pacsea net operates on 14,300 Khz USB at 0300 UTC. They start with a 'warmup session' at 0300, where you can call in and chat, and maybe hook up with someone who will make a phone call to the US for you. They start calling boats on the roll call at 0330, and when they finish (30-60 minutes later), they call for boats getting ready to go on passage to get on the list for tomorrow's net.

1.9.5 Telephones & Cell Phones

The International Dialing code for Tonga is +676. There are no local area codes.

The international operator can be reached at 913 and the directory inquiries are at 910.

There are two cell phone companies in Tonga: Tonga Communications Corporation (TCC) and Digicel.

In Nuku'alofa there is a Digicel location across from the Talamahu Market (main fresh and craft market). +676 876 1000. Hours Mon-Sat: 0800-1700. Do not go on Saturday as it is extremely crowded! Best time to go is right when they open. They are located at Fatafehi Road and Salote Road.

TCC (Tonga Communications Corporation) +676 20 000. Located on Salote Road. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1630.

July 2023: Nuku'alofa: We purchased a SIM card for \$5TOP with 4gigs but it expired in 4 days. So, we waited in line at Digicel and purchased a \$20TOP voucher with 7 gigs that lasted 30 days. You can purchase the SIM and top up vouchers from most markets and/or ask the information desk on the left as you enter Digicel.

You can top up Digicel with an APP or on their website but it can be challenging at best (especially with iPhones). The Digicel App seems to work best on android phones. Most stores will sell a SIM card and voucher if you want to figure it out on your own.

We were told by other cruisers that TCC had better coverage in Haa'pai but Digicel had better coverage everywhere else.

Starlink worked great in Tongatapu and about 35nm out toward Haa'pai. Once we hit the 35nm mark we had to switch to Priority/Roam but once we got near Kelelesia it started working fine without priority data enabled. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022: Nuku'alofa: The Digicel Prepaid SIM card cost T\$6 at Ding Dong shop. – Rainbow Safari.

May 2022: To dial the U.S. from a Tongan cell phone, dial 001-XXX-XXX-XXXX. To have friends and family dial a Tongan cell phone from the U.S., dial 011-676-number. Some Tongan phone numbers (fixed numbers, I think) are 6 digits, and some (newer, and cell numbers) are 7 digits.

Calling cell phone to cell phone with the same operator is cheaper than cell phone to land phone, which is cheaper to cell-to-cell with different operators. If you're unsure what it costs, ask. – Soggy Paws

1.9.6 Internet Access

Digicel and TCC both claim that they provide access throughout Tonga. However, cruisers have reported that you can “some service” from both carriers but you cannot be connected 100% of the time. The big towns (Neiafu, Pangai, and Tongatapu) have good coverage.

1.9.7 News

Here are some sources of news that we used to keep abreast of what was happening in the world:

English Language Voice News

As the internet proliferates, English-language voice broadcasts on SSB seem to be dwindling. Many of the broadcasts you can find these days by dialing around are either religious-oriented, or anti-American oriented (so listen carefully!).

I did a lot of research on the internet before we left Central America, but I found that what worked best was to dial around on the 9Mhz band at the time of day I wanted to listen to news (morning and evening are the best times for propagation).

We found the BBC on 9695 am at 1600-1700 UTC (mornings) and 12095 usb at 0100UTC (afternoons).

And Radio Australia on 9580 at 1700 UTC, or FM radio broadcast.

<https://www.abc.net.au/pacific/ways-to-listen>

News via Email

I don't know of any news service that formulates a customizable daily news email for yachts at sea (if you do, please email me, see email address at front of this guide).

But we had success, using Sailmail, in subscribing to a 'daily news email' from Reuters. We set it up so it went to a shore email address, and then we used Sailmail's Shadowmail feature to retrieve the daily emails when we felt we needed news, and had good enough propagation, to retrieve the email, stripped of all the graphics and stuff.

The daily 'US News', coming in through Sailmail, was only 7Kb. It contains the 'top 10' headlines, with a one sentence summary of each. Check out what Reuters offers at <http://links.reuters.com>

I am sure there are many other similar sources of a daily news email, but try them out on your internet email before you subscribe via your Winlink/Sailmail account!!

2018: We use NPR (US National Public Radio) news feed when away from internet. It gives you a headline with a short 2-3 lines of data. There is some text that you have to ignore but it does give you a basic summary of US news. You can receive this via Saildocs – send an email to query@saildocs.com with this in the body: send <http://www/npr/org/sections/news>. – Jacaranda

News via Facebook

Tonga Expats and Locals is a Facebook group that offers local, international, and local political news. This is run by Greg Just at Café Tropicana.

1.10 Getting Visitors In and Out

Flights into Neiafu all originate from Nuku'alofa. Here are some airline links that may help you get travel sorted out:

<http://www.airpacific.com/> - Fiji airline that flies Tonga-Fiji-LAX

<http://airnewzealand.com.au/> - Air New Zealand also flies Tonga-USA via NZ

WARNING: If you are flying in on a one-way ticket, or leaving your boat in Tonga and flying out and back in on a round trip ticket (ie one-way back in, as far as the Tongans are concerned), there is a \$34.50TOP Pa'anga fee per person.

This fee is either paid ad-hoc at the airport in Nukualofa as a 'penalty' when you arrive at the airport with no onward ticket, or, if you want to get a piece of paper from Immigration before you leave, to say you are returning to your boat. Either way, apparently, it costs the same.

A one-way visa can now be completed in Vava'u in a few days (as opposed to several weeks). Visit www.vavau.to/crew1.pdf for more information. The captain of the vessel needs to write a letter to Immigration (including crew's full name, travel and passport information, vessel's name, registration, owner, departing port, departure date, and arriving port), a copy of the crew's airline ticket, copy of crew's biometric passport page. See above link for specifics on the letter.

A cheaper option is to buy a full-fare 'onward ticket' from Nukualofa to NZ (on Air New Zealand), that can be canceled with little or no fee, to get around this payment.

Please note that "Chartering" is illegal in Tonga. You will be reported to customs when locals figure it out.

July 2023: Fiji Airways flies Nadi to Vava'u twice per week. This service started in April 2023. There are no other direct international flights to Vava'u.

Air New Zealand and Fiji Airways fly into Nuku'alofa. We had crew fly out of Nuku'alofa. He elected to get a fully refundable return flight which he cancelled once we arrived and purchased a one-way ticket back to Auckland. The alternative is to take a color photocopy of the crew's passport into immigration and request an official letter for a one-way ticket.

Crew need to be signed on and off the boat at a cost of TOP34.50. However, we couldn't find anyone to sign off our crew in Nuku'alofa. Other cruisers experienced the same difficulty. Our crew signed off in the ships log and sent us a photo of his boarding pass just in case we needed it.

Getting from Nuku'alofa to Neiafu

Tongan Domestic Airline: LuluLai Tongan Airline.

From talking to locals, the Tongan domestic airline had serious operating issues. They didn't have a booking system and flights barely ran to a schedule. They were using a Facebook page to announce their flights. – Perigee

Ferry Service

There are three ferries that run from Nuku'alofa to Neiafu stopping along the way in Ha'afeva and Pangai.

1.11 Haul out, Storage, and Repair Facilities

Vava'u Boatyard is the only boatyard facility in Tonga. +676 881 6854. www.boatyardVava'u.com. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0800-1700. The Boatyard sits 20' above sea level and is protected on three sides by steep hills and an old quarry face. They have a hydraulic trailer that can handle monohulls and multihulls up to 28 metric tons and 58' smoothly and efficiently.

Services include: woodwork, fiberglass repair and fabrication, metal fabrication/welding, mechanics, refrigeration, electrical repair, chandlery, and superyacht services.

They do not order parts, you'll have to order what you need yourself. See [Shipping Boat Parts](#)

1.12 Time Zone

Note that you cross the international dateline when arriving in Tonga from the Cook Islands or Samoa.

Tonga is GMT +13. Example: If it's Tuesday 09:00 in Tahiti, it's Wednesday at 08:00 Tonga time.

New Zealand practices day light savings whereas Tonga does not. So, there are some times of the year when New Zealand and Tonga are on the same time.

1.13 Weather in Tonga

1.13.1 General Weather Conditions September-November

The Vava'u area is considerably cooler than the Samoas in October. Similar to French Polynesia in June-August, it is warm during the day but cools down nicely at night.

By October it is starting to warm up some. There are still lows and cold fronts going through the area in October, bringing alternately rainy and squally weather, and then fine clear weather.

There is also the possibility of the South Pacific Convergence Zone dropping into the area from the west, bringing very wet weather.

I have heard more complaints in Tonga about the inaccuracy of the GRIB files than in our whole run west from French Polynesia (no doubt because of the fronts and SPCZ).

1.13.2 Weather Sources – With Onboard Email/SSB

Whoosh – September 2010

Here are additional weather products beyond those useful for French Polynesia

Saildocs: send nadi.cooks

Saildocs: send nadi.nuie (*note, not spelled correctly, but is the correct spelling for this request*).

Saildocs: send nadi.fiji

https://met.gov.to/forecast/html/FCST_BULLETIN.html

(the Tongan waters f'cast, done by Nadi and tweaked at Nukalofa airport). Not very detailed and not forecast very far in the future. This can be retrieved by saildocs with a send <url> request.

Soggy Paws - 2011:

In our transit through this area, what we used most of the time for watching the weather were 3 files:

1. A spot forecast for the location we were in—every 6 hours for 10 days
2. A 'local' GRIB file that gave a fairly detailed forecast for a reasonably small area for about 5 days
3. A 'wide range' GRIB that watched conditions approaching well to the west and south of us. The area we requested while in Tonga was 05S-40S,160E-165W, for the next 10 days. This was about a 40K GRIB file (we had to use Winlink, and our Iridium to receive one that big). This provided a good long range forecast.
4. The Tonga 'Routine Forecast' file listed above.

1. **GRIB files.** GRIB files seem to be generally accurate except when stalled cold fronts from NZ run into troughs or convergence zones which lurk sometimes over Tonga. Then, no one, including the Tongans, Fiji, or NZ weather offices do a very good job of predicting what the wind will do exactly in any given location.
2. **New Zealand Weather Faxes - From 1 July 2023, the Radiofax broadcast of isobaric mean sea level analysis and prognosis charts will be discontinued.**
3. **Hawaii Weather Faxes**

UTC	Local	Product	Coverage Area
1724	0724	SIGNIFICANT CLOUD FEATURES	30S - 50N, 110W - 160E
1755	0755	STREAMLINE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1849	0849	SW PACIFIC GOES IR SAT PIC	40S - 05N, 130W - 165E
1940	0940	WIND/WAVE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1953	0953	24HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
2302	1302	48HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
2315	1315	72HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
2341	1341	24HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
2354	1354	STREAMLINE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
0524	1924	SIGNIFICANT CLOUD FEATURES	30S - 50N, 110W - 160E
0555	1955	STREAMLINE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
0649	2049	SW PACIFIC GOES IR SAT PIC	40S - 05N, 130W - 165E
0740	2140	WIND/WAVE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
0753	2153	24HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1102	0102	48HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1115	0115	72HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1141	0141	24HR WIND/WAVE FORECASTS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1154	0154	STREAMLINE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E

Note: To get any of these via internet directly, here is the link:

https://www.weather.gov/source/marine/mobile/hfhi_mobile.html

If you have trouble viewing or downloading as TIF file, try changing the .TIF to .GIF

For a printable listing of current Pacific “Fax” products: www.weather.gov/media/marine/hfhi.txt

1.13.3 Weather Sources – Voice

The best source of voice weather for Tonga is the new **Gulf Harbor Radio** net, which is now on 8752 kHz, Monday-Friday NZST 7:15am, May - November

David Sapiane (s/v Chameleon) is located in Gulf Harbor, NZ (or out cruising in the Western Pacific) and is easily receivable by boats in the western South Pacific islands, and enroute to/from NZ.

www.ghradio.co.nz: Gulf Harbor Radio schedules and frequencies.

If you have AIS, when Gulf Harbor Radio is operating (cruising season, from May to November). David includes reports for places where boats have position reports.

If you don’t have an SSB radio, you can also pick up Gulf Harbor Radio via YouTube—click on the Live Streaming link on their website.

1.13.4 Weather Sources – Internet

Soggy Paws has compiled a bunch of specific South Pacific weather links on their website. These are mainly for French Polynesia, westward to NZ, and northward to Hawaii. These are all the government office forecast products that I have found to be useful. (and a few non-govt sites)

Tonga Met Service: www.met.gov.to/

Text Forecast: https://met.gov.to/forecast/html/FCST_BULLETIN.html

SW Pacific Satellite Loops

www.star.nesdis.noaa.gov/goes/sector_band.php?sat=G18§or=tsp&band=Sandwich&length=12&dim=0

www.goes.noaa.gov/sohemi/sohemiloops/shirgmscol.html

Bob McDavid: metbob.wordpress.com/

Bob McDavid, based in NZ publishes a weekly overview of SW Pacific weather. This is a good high level view of what's going on.

New Zealand Met

Current surface analysis & next few days: www.metservice.com/maps-radar/maps/southwest-pacific-low-bandwidth

These are great maps in small (PNG) format--about 16K per map. But not easily downloadable via email (appears to be no fixed product name for the graphics, unlike other offices' websites).

US NOAA Charts in Color from Hawaii

Though these are highlighted in color (much easier reading), they are small files, only about 30K each.

Streamline Charts:

https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/stream_00.gif

https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/stream_06.gif

https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/stream_12.gif

https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/stream_18.gif

24, 48, 72 Hr SFC Prog for Entire Pacific

https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/24hr_sfcprog_00.gif

https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/24hr_sfcprog_12.gif

https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/48hr_sfcprog_00.gif

https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/48hr_sfcprog_12.gif

https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/72hr_sfcprog_00.gif

https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/72hr_sfcprog_12.gif

Full List of Hawaii Marine Weather Products: www.weather.gov/marine/hawaii

Satellite Pictures

This is likely available on a marine weather site somewhere, for slow connections here's the link I use for a small B/W Pacific Satellite: <https://tgftp.nws.noaa.gov/fax/evps00.jpg>

Change the ending from 00 to 06, 12, 18 to get snapshots every 6 hours.

Another source is: www.aviationweather.gov/satellite/intl?region=f&type=irbw&date=

And www.data.jma.go.jp/mscweb/data/himawari/sat_hrp.php?area=r5s

FIJI Met Office: www.met.gov.fj

They have some very good products, but some of them only start coverage west of 155 degrees West.

1.13.5 Tropical Weather (Jan-Mar)

Soggy Paws 2012: We have only experienced one tropical season in Tonga. So we don't really know enough to know whether our experience is typical or not. But here's what we got.

The official tropical season runs 1 Dec - 30 Apr. But the height of the activity seems to be 15-Jan through 15-March.

From about Jan 15, the SPCZ descended on us, and lay right along a line from the Solomons down to Tonga. The wind in Neiafu area was NW and cloudy/rainy for weeks on end. And a new tropical low spawned in the NW and came towards Tonga about once a week. Some of lows have been just squally, one or two turned into 'Named Storms' and got pretty violent. At least one popped up out of a blob of

rain over Fiji and built into a cyclone between midnight and 6am, and was on top of Neiafu by 7am--with no warning whatsoever. This was right as an MJO peak was passing over us. So when Bob McDavitt and others start talking about MJO's, pay attention.

Check this link for more info on the current state of the MJO:

<https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/precip/CWlink/ghaz/index.php>

The main cyclone forecasting in our area is handled by Fiji. Fiji is not like the US National Weather Service. The frequency of bulletins is not very good, and they don't forecast much more than about 24 hours in the future. Tonga's text forecast is not much better.

If the tropical system drops below 25S, Fiji stops reporting on it, and Wellington, NZ, picks it up (but lackadaisically). We had one system that walked along 25S, and it seemed neither weather center wanted to take responsibility for it.

The US Joint Typhoon Warning Center is not supposed to be forecasting cyclones in our area, however, they do. If there is an active system, they have a graphic and text forecast out for 120 hours.

<https://www.metoc.navy.mil/jtwc/jtwc.html>

I could not find a weather product in Airmail for the text forecast, but once you request it via internet, you can then request the text file directly via Saildocs by requesting:

send <http://www.metoc.navy.mil/jtwc/products/abpwweb.txt>

This works. Though if the link gets too long, you might have trouble with the 72-character limit on Sailmail

The Fiji Tropical Weather information can be gotten on Sailmail by requesting

Met.14trop

This is the URL in that Sailmail weather product:

http://weather.gmdss.org/navimail/GMDSS_METAREA14-TROPICS_INMARSAT

This is a conglomeration of tropical and high seas warnings, and sometimes runs so long when there are active warnings that Sailmail truncates it. Sometimes, the report is not there, and we get nothing..

Finally, if you don't have all this internet stuff, a long range, wide-area GRIB file is much better than nothing. We request this one to be sent daily:

GFS:05S,40S,160E,165W|3,3|0,12..240|PRMSL,WIND,RAIN

It is about 40KB, so you might have to request something smaller if you don't have Winlink (to get around Sailmail's size limitations).

1.13.6 Understanding the South Pacific Weather Patterns

Several really good sources of instructional material on South Pacific weather exist.

1. The [French Polynesia Weather Compendium](#) (free) Compiled in 2021 by a weather savvy cruiser crossing the Pacific, and covers Fr Poly and west.
2. Bob McDavitt's "Mariner's Met Pack for the Southwest Pacific" ISBN 1-877197-08-04 published by Captain Teach Press, Auckland, NZ. Though Bob is located in NZ and his weather focus is mainly the western portion of the South Pacific, his instruction manual covers a lot of useful information for the South Pacific in general. Purchase: [Waypoint Books](#) [Bluewater Books](#) If you can't find it, email Bob at bob@metbob.com or visit his website.
3. Jim Corenmans "Letters from the South Pacific" originally published in the late 1990's in Latitude 38 Magazine. Copies might be found on Latitude 38's website. Jim had a great article on

understanding South Pacific weather that is still really helpful to newbies entering French Polynesia. Download: <http://svsoggypaws.com/files/index.htm>

4. David Sapiane's from Gulf Harbor Radio has a bunch of writeups on the GHR website that are useful for understanding weather in the Southwest Pacific: www.ghradio.co.nz/weather.html
5. The Hacking Family has a great circumnavigation website, and their South Pacific weather page is here: http://hackingfamily.com/Cruise_Info/Pacific/SPacific_Weather.htm

1.13.7 Professional Weather Routing

One of the most-mentioned names in the South Pacific when talking about the weather is **Bob McDavitt**. Professional forecasts can be obtained from Bob McDavitt. Email at bob@metbob.com
Soggy Paws used a USA-based weather router named **Ken McKinley at Locus Weather** for the Easter Island to Pitcairn and Gambiers. Ken did a good job for them. Email Ken at locuswx@midcoast.com.

1.13.8 Passage Guardian

The Passage Guardian (<https://passageguardian.nz/>) provides a global (free of charge) safety service for recreational vessels conducting ocean passages. Any ocean, any time! He offers vessel tracking, GMDSS Weather Reports, Shipping Alerts (that might cross your track), communications, rescue coordination. Peter Mott: +64 21 279 4995 peter@passageguardian.nz. He does accept donations so if you are happy with his service, please tell others and make a small beer donation.

July 2023: We used Peter Mott at Passage Guardian several times and were always impressed with his services and response rate. He was able to alert us of a fishing fleet in our path 24hours before we encountered them. He provides a sense of calm and security just knowing he has your back! – Sugar Shack

1.13.9 Tsunami Information

The entire Pacific Basin is subject to tsunamis. Since we have been in the Pacific (3 years), there have been 3 significant tsunamis which have affected cruising locations (American Samoa and Tonga in 2009, So America, Galapagos & Panama in 2010, Hawaii & Mexico in 2011). The tsunamis originate in various locations, but the worst origination locations were Japan and Chile, however, many 'tremors' happen in these locations that do not cause widespread tsunamis.

The International Tsunami Information Center: <http://itic.ioc-unesco.org>.

If you have onboard email, it is a good idea to subscribe to tsunami warning emails while you are in the Pacific, which you can do on this website. It might be useful to first subscribe from your internet email for a little while, to understand what messages might be coming your way, and how often, before you chance clogging up your onboard email.

July 2023: The latest tsunami to affect Tonga came from the eruption of the Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai submarine volcano on January 15, 2022. Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai is 40 miles north of Tongatapu. The consequent tsunami severely damaged the country's coastline and reefs, reshaping the landscape of the many unprotected islands.

Cruisers who were in New Zealand at the time told us that they heard the eruption. 160 atmospheric shockwaves push through her chest like being thumped. The underwater fiberoptic cable from Tongatapu to Vava'u was severed and islanders in Vava'u had no internet for 6 months. With no way of contacting the capital, local people believed that it had been wiped of the face of the planet. – Perigee

1.14 Cruising Information Sources

We are indebted to the people and organizations below for documenting their experiences and sharing them with us.

A few details about the boats are included, so you can assess what 'a foot under the keel' means, for example.

Where it's important, we've annotated the contributions. But every section is a mix of several sources.

1.14.1 Tongan Websites

The Vava'u site, maintained by an expat who has been resident in Vava'u since 2007, has a wealth of cruising and visitor information. <http://vavau.to/> - Vava'u Cruiser's website

Tonga Pocketguide: <https://tongapocketguide.com/the-sailing-guide-to-tonga/>

Facebook Groups:

- Tonga Expats and Locals: www.facebook.com/groups/tongaexpatsandlocals
- Vava'u Cruisers Net: www.facebook.com/Vavaucruisersnet
- Vava'u Buy and Sell
- Vava'u Expats

Whatsapp Group: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/CMOnBCOYvcgKPZg63ZKGNX>

Gulf Harbor Radio's site (lots of good info, plus weather briefings for the trip between Tonga/Fiji/Vanuatu and New Zealand).

<https://www.ghradio.co.nz/flotsam.html>

1.14.2 Noonsite

www.noonsite.com

Originally started by Jimmy Cornell, this site is a great repository of information for all those out-of-the-way places. Made possible by YOUR contributions.

1.14.3 Seven Seas Cruising Association

www.ssca.org

The SSCA is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a monthly publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. They also have a good website and a well-attended bulletin board.

Membership is reasonable, and the monthly publication is available electronically every month. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.

1.14.4 Sail South Pacific Tonga

The Sail South Pacific Tonga App is costs about \$50 U.S. It features charts for the three main archipelagos (Vava'u, Haa'pai, Tongatapu). It is an interactive Cruising Guide designed to help cruisers safely navigate Tonga waters whether connected to the internet or not. Anchorages, village and sevusevu information, and passages are listed in the app. www.sailsouthpacific.com/products/sail-south-pacific-cruising-guide-apps/sail-tonga-cruising-guide/

1.14.5 Pacific Puddle Jump Yahoo Group

<https://groups.io/g/PacificPuddleJump>

This group is where the people gathering in South and Central America meet to share information about crossing the big puddle. A good source of information, but not very organized, and it can be full of bloat from people who ask the same questions without doing any research of their own.

You must be a member to read or post anything on this site, but if you are getting ready for a Pacific crossing, it is well worth a few minutes to sign up for Groups IO and then sign up for this group. Explore Files and Links pages, for great information.

1.14.6 Cruiser Reports

For most of the earlier sources, we have gleaned the information off the internet (cruiser's websites, blogs, and online forum postings) or out of an SSCA bulletin. For the sources reported below, much of the info has come directly from cruising friends.

SY Orea (2024): Lagoon 450 (14m x 7.5m - 1.3m draft)

Sugar Shack (2023): Matt and Christine on Sugar Shack have sailed from Turkey to the Caribbean, ABCs, Panama Canal, Costa Rica, Galapagos, Chile, French Polynesia, Fiji, New Zealand, Minerva and Tonga. They arrived in Tonga in July 2023. Sugar Shack was instrumental in the reorganization and update of the Tonga, Fiji, and French Polynesia Compendiums in 2019-2023. In addition, Christine created the French Poly Cruisers Facebook group and ran on the Poly Mag Net (SSB Radio) for 2+ years. Sugar Shack is a 47' Catana catamaran: 15m long, 7.7m wide, 1.3m draft. www.svSugarShack.com

Oh Joy II (2023): Captain Harry Pattison and First Mate Joy Archer, sailing aboard Oh Joy II, a 44' Mason monohull with a draft of 6.5 feet. Home port Bainbridge Island, Washington in the United States.

Ana Maria (2023): Katherine and Andres spent 2.5 years sailing from Bellingham, Washington down the West Coast USA, through Sea of Cortez, across the Pacific to French Polynesia, Suvarrow (Cook Islands), American Samoa, to Tonga. They spent three months in Tonga before heading to New Zealand. Ana Maria is a 1994 Pacific Seacraft 34 monohull, 34' in length, 10' beam, 4.2 draft. www.cocaptainslog.com

Jamala (2023) Maria and Allen left the U.K. in 2017 on their Moody 425, Lady Jane, and sailed to French Polynesia in 2019. In 2020, we sold Lady Jane, bought Jamala in Seattle, and crossed the Pacific Ocean again to continue circumnavigation. After spending time in Mexico and another 18 months in French Polynesia, we arrived in Tonga in July 2023. Jamala is an Amel Super Maramu 2000, 16m ketch with a 4.6m beam and 2.05m draft. www.untilthebuttermelts.com

Eastern Stream (2023): With their steel ketch, Eastern Stream, Jaap and Minke sailed in seven years from the Netherlands to Tonga. They spent most of that time in Chile (2 years) and French Polynesia (2.5 years due to Covid). The boat's length of 15m, wide 4m, and depth 2m.

Nutmeg (2023): Max and Whitey (Maxine and John) White are crew with the owners Ruth and Jim Metz. They started their around the world sailing trip in February 2023 from the BVI. Ruth and Jim, the original owners, decided to see the rest of the world after chartering in the BVIs for 12 years. Max and Whitey have over 25 years working in the charter industry throughout the Caribbean.

Pogeyan (2023): Richard and Michelle spent the 2018 and 2019 seasons cruising and exploring Tonga and then returned for several months in 2023. Our most recent experiences are limited to Tongatapu and Ha'apai groups. Each of our visits were a round trip from New Zealand via Minerva Reefs. Clearing in and out of Nuku'alofa. Pogeyan is a Leopard 47. It is 16m long, 8m wide, and 1.5m draft.

Perigee (2023): Perigee is an Amel Super Maramu 2000. She is 16m long, 4.6m wide, and draws 2.1m. Lenny and Dave have been full time live aboard cruisers since 2017, cruising the US east coast, Caribbean, ABC's, Columbia, and Panama. They have been cruising the South Pacific Since 2019.

Rainbow Safari (Late 2022) - Stefan and Ute Hirsch and their four children cruised Tonga late 2022 just after it reopened from Covid closures. Aboard their 45-foot Leopard catamaran.

Zoomax (2019) - 16 mt monohull, 2.4 mt draft.

Soggy Paws (2011 & 2012) - Soggy Paws arrived in Tonga in Oct. 2011, and stayed over for the 2011/2012 cyclone season. They were in Neiafu most of the time, but spent a month in the Ha'apai in May-June 2012. Soggy Paws is a CSY 44, a 44' monohull with a 5.5' draft. svsoggypaws.blogspot.com

Namani (2012) - Namani is a 1981 Dufour 35' sloop. They crossed the Pacific to Tonga in 2012. They spent several weeks in Tongatapu, and cleared out there for NZ. sailblogs.com/member/namaniatsea/

Chesapeake (2011) - Chesapeake is an Outbound 46 owned by Jim and Linda. They spent a month in Neiafu, before going through the Haap'ai Group towards NZ. seaofchangeagain.wordpress.com/blog/

Passage (2010) - These notes came from Vava'u Cruiser's Guide, from s/v Passage <http://svpassage.com>

Visions of Johanna (2010) - Visions is a 62' custom racer/cruiser with a 6'8" draft. vofj.blogspot.com

Nine of Cups (2009) - Nine of Cups is a deep draft 44' cruiser. www.nineofcups.com.

Tackless II (2005-2006) - T2 is a 44' CSY center cockpit cruiser (5.5' draft). They were in Tonga in 2005, thru cyclone season into August 2006. www.thetwocaptains.com/logbook/southpacific.htm

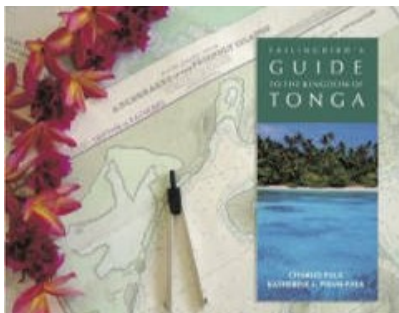
Sloepmouche (Nov 2004) - Sloepmouche is a 46' Cross Trimaran with a 5' draft, with Luc Callebaut & Jackie Lee aboard. They have a website, but I have lost the link. Google them!

1.15 Printed Sources

We are consciously NOT duplicating any printed, copyrighted information here. It takes a lot of effort AND money to publish a cruising guide, and we firmly believe that if it is still in print, you should BUY it, not steal it (in electronic form).

There are two excellent, but slightly out of date, guides to Tonga. For cruisers who really want to get the most out of Tonga, I would buy both.

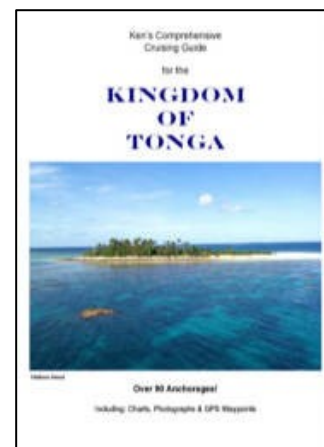
1.15.1 *Sailingbird's Guide to The Kingdom of Tonga*



Sailingbird's Guide was published in 2004 with a downloadable update as of 2007. This one IS available in Neiafu from the Megapode, a bookshop near the Moorings base. Find it on Amazon.com [here](#) or at other cruising bookstores. Sailingbird was interested in diving and snorkeling, and so their chartlets indicate good places to snorkel and dive.

1.15.2 *Ken's Comprehensive Guide to the Kingdom of Tonga*

Last updated ~2004 or 2005. Has nice waypoints for all of Tonga. We emailed the address in the book to ask if it was available locally, and never received a response. We finally bought our copy on Amazon.com [here](#). It is still available from cruising book sources in the U.S, and probably in NZ. I could not find a copy in Neiafu.



1.15.3 *South Pacific Anchorages – Warwick Clay*

[South Pacific Anchorages](#), Warwick Clay, 2nd Edition, 2001, pages 22-33

Reported by s/v YOLO in July 2011: South Pacific Anchorages GPS Locations:

We noted that the anchorage locations stated in South Pacific Anchorages by Warwick Clay did not match up with our C-Map NT+ plotter locations, or our backup GPS units. In general, Clay's locations were slightly east of the actual locations and usually on land.

1.15.4 *The Pacific Crossing Guide – RCC Pilotage Foundation*

The Pacific Crossing Guide, published by the Royal Cruising Club Pilotage Foundation in association with the Ocean Cruising Club. Originally edited by Michael Pocock, and Revised by Ros Hogbin. We have the 2nd Edition published in 2003.

The latest edition shown on Amazon is 2016.

1.15.5 *Landfalls of Paradise – Earl Hinz*

Landfalls of Paradise, Earl Hinz, 5th edition April 2006

2 Passage Reports to/from Tonga

2.1 *Vava'u to Fiji*

Aug. 2023: Sadly, we left Tonga after only 3 weeks. We got a late start this season and then we lost a rudder. We had to take the early weather window to ensure the safety of our remaining rudder.

We left Neiafu anchorage at 0730 and had a challenging exit out of the Faihava pass. The forecast was for 10-12kts ESE so we put full sail up (despite only having one rudder). As it happened a storm came upon us and the winds were howling from several different directions. And what we learned is that a catamaran cannot hold course or provide you steerage with full sail and one rudder. We quickly reefed the main and got control back.

There was supposed to be lots of rain but small seas. Of course, we only saw a little rain and 3m seas. Lucky for us the wind and seas were coming across ESE which is on our good rudder side. We constantly had to manage the sail trim to ensure the boat was not overpowered and overworking our auto pilot.

We had on average 15-20kts of wind and 2.5-3m seas both from ESE. There was no moon and a lot of cloud cover so our nights were dark. But over all a very uneventful passage. Boat speed average 7kt, max 14.2kts, total travel time 60 hours. – Sugar Shack

2.2 *Fiji to Vava'u*

Nov. 2022: Tonga reopened its borders post Covid at the end of September 2022, and we readily decided to take the next weather window from Fiji to sail there.

In November we had a series of low-pressure systems around Fiji, and on November 14th we had a trough pass over Suva, followed by light wind conditions for the coming week. We cleared out in Suva in pouring rain and left on a Tuesday morning at 5am. We motored/motor sailed for three days in gently rolling one metre waves, clear to cloudy skies and no lightning. – Rainbow Safari

2.3 *Vava'u to Fiji*

June 2012: The nasty weather finally cleared from Tonga, and we left our nice quiet anchorage at Hunga at 0945 on the 18th of June.

It took 48 hours of fairly nice downwind sailing to make it to our first waypoint--Katafun1 just outside the Katafunga Passage through the Lau Group of Fiji. We had timed our departure to hopefully arrive and transit most of this part of the passage during daylight hours. Fiji is very reef-strewn and the charts are still largely inaccurate--in some places they can be off as far as 2 miles (we are told). Even though we had pretty good waypoints (from Curly's Neiafu to Fiji briefing charts), we still wanted to be able to see the reefs. It turned out to be a 'cakewalk'. The passage was several miles wide conditions fairly benign by that time.

Once we got inside the reef area, the waves died down completely and we enjoyed a really nice sail for the afternoon. But on the evening of the 3rd day, when we were fully within Fiji's reefy waters, the wind died completely. So, we just kept motoring through the night. We arrived in Savusavu at 2:01pm Fiji Time (UTC+12). – Soggy Paws

2.4 New Zealand to Tonga via Minerva reef

May 2025: Before you go, be sure to download the Exploring Minerva Reefs pdf file from Gulf Harbor Radio's website. It is excellent. Find it (and some other good stuff) here:

<https://www.ghradio.co.nz/flotsam.html>

July 2023: We cleared out of Marsden Cove and pointed toward Minerva Reef. Forecast showed 20-25kt of SE wind with no cape and no rain, but the seas were 2-3m. Not the best weather window but we were anxious to leave after spending 8 months in NZ doing boat projects. We had a sporty ride the first day and enjoyed an average 7.5kt boat speed. But then we cleared the island and hit open ocean and the winds dropped and seas gained momentum.

We kept at least one reef in the main and jib the entire trip. We saw gusts up to 30-35kt. This was the first time sailing with our new North Ocean 370 3Di sails and we did not want to "overdo" it. Days 2-6 were bashing into 3m seas making it hard to do anything. Our boat powered through it and we arrived to Minerva in one piece. We hung out in South Minerva for a few days before moving to North Minerva.

A fairly large storm was coming and we had to depart Minerva far sooner than we planned. We left on a fairly decent window with no cape, no rain, 15-18kt of SE winds and 2.5m seas. The seas were the only problem. Back to bashing through the seas for 2 days.

At 2130, the auto pilot started freaking out. We had 2 reefs in the main and jib and thought he was being overpowered. We tried for 90 minutes to adjust the sails and get steerage under control. Finally, we dropped the main, kept the reefed jib out and started an engine. We were able to point back to Tongatapu and continued on our way. Matt checked both engines and from what he could see in the engine rooms everything looked ok. Pitch black night, big waves and 7kt of boat speed prevented us from seeing below the waterline.

At dawn, as we entered the channel and in the protection of the island, we finally saw the issue. We lost our port rudder. We did not hit anything, it just decided it was done playing with us. Lucky for us we have a starboard rudder which has enabled us to enjoy Tonga and get to Fiji where we picked up a used rudder to get us to NZ. – Sugar Shack

2.5 Niue to Tonga

June 2012: After 9 days in Niue on a Niue Yacht Club mooring, we weathered a very light frontal passage in Niue (west winds only to 15 kts) and then set sail on the building southerly wind after the front. The wind forecast was for the wind to continue backing from S to E and then NE, with the fairly large swell backing around a little more slowly than the wind.

The GRIB files were uncannily accurate, both for the mild frontal passage at Niue, and in the succeeding 2 days on our trip to Neiafu, predicting both the direction and wind speed well enough for us to anticipate the changing winds and make our sail plan match what we expected.

Because of the accurate weather information, this 2-day passage was a "cake walk". The only downside was some uncomfortable swell from time to time. We did the whole trip with just our genoa, first on a beam reach, then poled on one side and then the other.

Note that the GRIB forecasts are not always accurate on frontal passage (see Mr. John's account below) one should always be suspicious of the 'light and variable' winds shown on the frontal line, especially if there is any rain shown in the forecast. – Soggy Paws

2.6 Tonga to Niue

June 2012: While cruising the Ha'apai Group of Tonga, in May 2012, we saw a west wind event coming, courtesy of a passing low between NZ and Tonga. Watching the GRIB files, this was forecast enough in advance that we had time to change our plans, check out of Tonga in Lifuka, and be ready to head for Niue on the 2-3 days of W-SW-S winds.

The distance from the pass south of Lifuka, to Alofi Harbor in Niue is only 260 miles on a course of 079 degrees T. This hop is simple to do even with moderate S-SE winds--and eliminates the need for worrying about finding a west-protected anchorage in the Ha'apai when westerlies pass by.

We had a great sail, and arrived in Niue as planned, with wind SE, but the swell still SSW, unfortunately, and over 3m. Keith, the Commodore, said the dinghy landing/lift had been crazy the day before--almost unusable--but by the time we got there, it was merely "challenging". The anchorage was pretty roly, too, but not unsafe.

We didn't spend much time on the boat anyway, and within a day or so, the swell had moved around to the SE and subsided a little, making the anchorage only "a little roly" and the dinghy landing "interesting". – Soggy Paws

2.7 The Samoas to Tonga

Oct.2003: The Sail: Our three-day sail to Tonga was pleasant until we got within 20 miles. We'd been watching the weather faxes and a front was predicted to cross our path. We thought we might get to Vava'u before its arrival. The sky began to darken and we saw the characteristic line of black clouds ahead. As the front came through, we felt the rush of cold air hit us, the wind shifted 180 degrees, and immediately we had heavy rain and howling wind. In a flash we went from lovely sunny and warm conditions to virtually no visibility and 25 knots on our nose. Our hopes of arriving before dark were dashed. We made very slow progress motoring into the building seas. Vesper's bow occasionally crashed hard as it came down off a wave top. Nothing we could do but endure. At least we were close.

We rarely enter a harbor at night. It's just not worth the risk. But this time, we were assured by our friends already in Neiafu, the main town in Vava'u, that the harbor entrance was well marked and the range markers and buoys were lit. They even went out into the channel to check on the lights to make sure they were working. They relayed to us the GPS positions of the major marks. With that information, good charts, and our trusty radar, we decided to enter the harbor. Our friends were waiting for us inside the protected waters and guided us to a nearby mooring where we tied up for the night. – Vesper

3 Passage reports Within Tonga

3.1 Vava'u to Ha'apai (and back)

Aug. 2023: Foa to Anchorage 7. We left Foa at 0800 with predicted light 12-15kt of SE winds (gusts 25k) and 1-2m seas. Not really what we saw. We reefed the main and unfurled the jib and ran the motors (to make power and water). We ended up seeing ESE 8-10kts with 2-2.5m seas for most of the trip until we got to 15nm from Vava'u when the winds picked up to 20+. We had many 3m waves but lucky for us they had long intervals so they were not terrible.

We saw loads of whales playing, jumping, and spouting. They are such majestic beasts! It was mostly an overcast, drizzly passage but the whales brought sunshine to our day. We arrived 1630 averaged over 7kts on this not so comfortable, but not terrible trip. – Sugar Shack

May 2012: We had a quiet night at Fonua One One (southern Vava'u), where we anchored the night before--a little roly but decent protection. We got up at the crack of dawn and left the anchorage about

7:15am, with one reef in the main. The forecast indicated we'd have SE winds about 12-15 kts. Our course being about 195 degrees, this seemed like perfect sailing conditions.

By 7:30 we had all our sails up and were headed SSW for our northern tip waypoint at Ha'ano, about 53 miles away. We turned the engine off and, for the first time in 6 months, were actually sailing again.

Our perfect sailing conditions lasted only a couple of hours before the wind went to 10 knots on our beam--at those wind speeds, with any wave action, we just wallow along at 3 knots. We ended up motor sailing the rest of the day. When the wind strengthened again late in the afternoon, it had gone back to SSE--too close for us to make our waypoint of the NW corner of Ha'ano without a little assistance from the engine. By the time we were approaching the northern tip of Ha'ano, our conditions had changed considerably. The wind was now 20 knots and we had 100% overcast and rain threatening.

We arrived at our reefy 'open roadstead' anchorage just at sunset, with 100% cloud cover, and barely enough light to see. Fortunately, we had our Google Earth Charts, and 2 other boats' tracks, to help us in safely. The regular C-MAP charts are not very accurate here--they show us anchored on the land. But the GE charts are fantastically accurate (most of the time) (and our Garmin chart was pretty good too). Dave could see enough looking straight down that we were able to drop the anchor in a sand spot in 35', and it held well. We are out of the wind and the wind-waves and safe for the night.

It was a good passage, and we are glad to be in the Ha'apai.

Anyone who plans this leg from Neiafu should look carefully at Fonua One One (see previous post) as a jumping off point for the Ha'apai. This is a MUCH easier anchorage to get into and get out of than Maninita, and protected from ESE to SW, with an obvious shelf with good deep sand. It only costs you a couple of miles and a couple of degrees for the long leg, over starting from Maninita. – Soggy Paws

3.2 Tongatapu to Ha'apai (and back)

July 2023: We left Nuku'alofa at dawn (0730) and headed out the main pass toward Kelelesia, Haa'pai. It was an estimated 55nm in very light 5-7kt winds from the south and a 2m swell from the south. It was a gorgeous day, albeit no wind, so we made water and power. We saw several pods of whales sleeping, playing, and just having fun being whales. Super cool day and beautiful passage. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2011: We left Tofanga at 2pm a couple days before a big Northwesterly was due. We had 3kts current against us at the Ava Mata Mata Veka pass, dancing waters, 20k winds and ugly confused seas that extended out about 5 miles. Not such a good sail toward Nuku'alofa. – Chesapeake

3.3 Niuatoputapu to Neiafu

Oct. 2011: We stopped in Niuatoputapu on our way south from Samoa. Though technically within Tonga, Niuatoputapu to Neiafu is a ~170 nm trip, and when we did it in October 2011, the trip crossed a frontal boundary or the SPCZ. The weather forecast LOOKED like it was going to be a nice close reach, and it was for about 18 hours, but when we reached the disturbed weather, we got squally weather that varied from 0 knots to 35 knots, and variable direction, some of it right on the nose. It was very helpful having a good engine to keep moving in the lulls between squalls. This is because we chose to plan the trip as a '1 overnight', which would have been easy had the wind been consistent, but was not easy in the variable winds.

Nearly everyone who crossed this space during the week we did, had the same crappy weather. Even the '2 overnight' people. And one boat (Chesapeake) said they had the worst weather on this leg that they had experienced on their whole Pacific crossing. Again, this was because the SPCZ or a trough was laying directly across the route between Niuatoputapu and Neiafu.

So, pay attention to where the SPCZ is when you reach Tonga, it makes a difference!! (and it's nearly always somewhere nearby.). – Soggy Paws

4 Niuas Group

4.1 Niuatoputapu

Most cruisers refer to this place as 'New Potatoes', but though the spelling is daunting, the correct pronunciation is not that difficult... New-ya Tow-poo Tah-poo. Be the first of your friends to learn how to say it correctly!

There are three small villages, totaling about 600-700 inhabitants. About 40 live on Tafahi, the volcanic island not far to the north.

Warning: Several cruisers have reported in 2023 that James from "Ministry Health" is charging a \$200TOP anchorage fee and not offering receipts. Tongan officials will always offer and provide receipts with the Tongan crest on the top. Take a photo of him and his boat and report it.

In addition, officials should not ask you to transport goods from Niuatoputapu to any other port or island. The island has a very sea worthy vessel named "Kelesi" which does monthly and the officials should be using this vessel like the rest of the islands. They should be supporting the Kelesi as it is owned by the village.

4.1.1 Pass

2019: The pass should be approached with caution and good light. There is a ground alignment that proves useful. Navionics cartography is reliable. However, the advice is to complement charts with satellite photos. – Zoomax

Oct. 2011: Warning-Our Garmin GPSMap with 2008 charts, in the overview view, had the island, Tafahi, that is nearly in a direct line between the western end of Upolu, Samoa and the entry to Niuatoputapu, located 3 miles east of where it really is. The 'zoomed in' view had it more or less in the correct place, and the CMap charts showed it more or less correctly. It's easily seen 25 miles away in daylight, but if you're hove-to drifting around at night, be sure you know where it is.

Entry: The 2010 CMAP computer charts, and our Garmin MapSource charts are offset slightly for Niuatoputapu. Our actual track plotted just south of the pass on the chart (a similar offset to the few spots in French Polynesia that plotted off). The waypoints given in the Ken's Guide (the first two provided here) were perfect:

- Approach: S15°55.247' W173°45.590'
- #1 S15°55.507' W173°45.590'
- #2 S15°55.656' W173°45.621'
- #3 S15°55.771' W173°45.614'
- #4 S15°55.833' W173°45.618'

This will get you in the pass, and give you an idea of the offset on your chart system. Buy Ken's Guide for the rest. In normal light, navigation is easy. There didn't seem to be any current in the pass when we came in.

There are a pair of rusty pilings at about Wpt #1, and some other channel mark pilings on the way in. Only two had faded red and green boards on them. – Soggy Paws

4.1.2 Anchorage

2019: 15°56.420S / 173°46.114W. In 12m of sand in front of the village of Falehau. – Zoomax

2011: The anchorage is off the concrete pier in 25-40' of water. Holding seemed good, and protection is good. Even when the wind was low, we had a decent breeze (so nice after windless Apia). When the wind is howling out of the SE, this is a nice anchorage to be in.

Dinghy Dock: There is a low concrete step area on the lee side of the concrete pier. There are a few exposed re-bar that provide a place to tie up. Try not to let the cruiser dinghies block the whole dock, as the entire island uses this low step area to come and go. – Soggy Paws

Aug. 2011: The harbor is at Falehau and is well sheltered, in fact we are securely anchored in 37 feet sand bottom with 20-25 knots of wind blowing across the island. No fetch and great holding. The reef provides protection from the north, east and west.

15°55.49S / 173°45.62W. Harbor entrance to the harbor is narrow. There are two steel markers guarding the entrance. Before going through the entrance line up the two poles with white triangles on top then stay on that course all the way in. We had a depth of 30 feet most of the way in with one hiccup of 24 feet. There are worn down red (square) and green (triangle) channel markers to guide you the rest of the way in. There is only one VHF radio on the island and as we understand is rarely monitored. – Distant Shores

4.1.3 General Services

4.1.3.1 Bank & ATMs (Money)

2019: There are no banks or ATMs. If you do not have TOP you will have to find a store who can exchange money for you. – Zoomax

Changing Money: Cash and traveler's checks may be changed at the Tongan Development Bank in Hihifo, but there is a 10 pa'anga charge, whatever the amount. Unfortunately, there are no facilities for credit or debit card transactions in Niuatoputapu.

4.1.3.2 Customs:

The customs clearance authorities' offices are in the village of Hihifo, 3 km down the road that runs along the northwest side of the island. They do not have VHF but it is likely that someone will notify them of your arrival.

If no one arrives, you can go ashore and walk to the offices, which are located at coordinates 15°57.040S / 173°47.340W, to arrange a visit on board.

4.1.3.3 Transportation

You will often be offered a ride on the island by a passing motorist, and don't be afraid to flag a vehicle down if you're really exhausted and they don't seem about to stop! There are no official taxis on the island, but rides can be pre-arranged between Falehau and Hihifo for a cost of between 8-15 pa'anga, depending on the size of the car or van.

4.1.3.4 Cruiser Reports

2019: The lagoon, with its shades of turquoise, is beautiful to see but the water is murky, and snorkeling uninteresting. You have to get out of the pass, where, on the south side, there are beautiful coral formations.

In 2009 the island was hit by a tsunami that claimed 18 lives and destroyed much of the villages. The houses, rebuilt higher up (with a few exceptions) show the extreme essentiality of life on this remote island of Tonga. Hundreds of pigs and chickens roam freely in the streets and fields. Almost every house has a garden with fruit trees, papayas, breadfruit.

The island's main source of income comes from the sale of pandan leaves, from which ta'ovala, the traditional woven mats that are worn in public by large numbers of Tongans, are made.

A steep path leads to the top of the mountain; the view from there is remarkable.

On the motu along the reef to the north, at 15°56.140S / 173°46.850W, locals sometimes hold barbecues, and gladly involve cruisers. – Zoomax

Welcome Letter for Yachts in Niuatoputapu

This was handed to us (Soggy Paws, Oct 2011) on paper by the health official, on a 'many copied' piece of paper, it is obviously several years old, since there is a crossed-out reference to the hotel that was destroyed in the tsunami of 2009. But just in case it is no longer around when you arrive, I have transcribed it here, and added the Google Earth view.

Welcome to Niuatoputapu, Tonga's loveliest island. Here, far from the hustle and bustle of Vava'u and Tongatapu, you will enjoy a true taste of the South Pacific as it used to be. Niuatoputapu has much to offer, and the following are but a few of the highlights:

1. A walk along the island's ridge (approx 2 hours up and down), beginning through the local's plantations and taking in the truly spectacular panorama of the island and its lagoon, spread out below you from on high. And why not refresh yourself afterwards with a dip in Niutoua, Hihifo's lovely freshwater spring?
2. A trip across to Tafahi, the extinct volcano, and a hike to the top (approx 5 hours up and down).
3. An exploration of the waterways behind Hihifo--amongst the South Pacific's loveliest scenery, with vast stretches of white sand at low tide, and numerous little islets to swim or paddle around, depending on the tide.
4. A walk around Hunganga, the island just offshore from Hihifo, with its surprisingly diverse scenery, lovely beaches and spectacular views of Tafahi. Here too are pools in the reef connected by underwater caves which can be swum through



Shopping: There are a number of 'fale keloas' (bush shops)...The best stocked of these are in Hihifo.

Depending on how long it has been since the supply ship has come, these shops will usually have in stock most basic supplies such as flour, sugar, fish, canned fruit, biscuits, etc. Fresh groceries such as fruit and vegetables are only occasionally available in the fale keloas so it is best to ask local villagers if they are able to supply you some of these things.

The supply ship only comes once per month so please do not deplete the village of vital food and supplies. Buy local produce grown on the island or wait until you get to Vava'u.

Bakery: There is only one bakery on the island but unfortunately, they only bake on Sunday (if they haven't run out of flour). The bakery is in Vaipoa, the middle village. As you enter the village coming from Falehao, take the first turning to the left and it is the second house on the left. There is no sign so just go up to the door and knock. Be sure to check out the home-made oven! Bread costs 2 pa'anga a loaf and is available from about 11:00-1700 (usually sells out before closing).

Outings: Tafahi, the extinct volcano, may be reached by local fishing boat. The owner will also be able to arrange a guide to take you to the top. The cost will be 150 pa'anga for the boat trip (for up to 10 people), and 30 pa'anga for the guide. You may take your own food or arrange for with your skipper for some to be provided. Your guide will provide you with fresh coconuts to drink for refreshment, so it is unnecessary to carry a large amount of water with you. Please be advised that safety standards on local boats are not high, and it would be worthwhile to bring with you a mobile VHF if you have one, and perhaps life jackets. These trips are naturally taken at your own risk.

Locals who can arrange for this excursion for you are Nico and Sia, who can usually be contacted on VHF channel 16.

Nuiatoputapu's central ridge offers an excellent hike, with lovely panoramic views from the top. A guide is essential as the path winds its way through plantations initially and is often overgrown. Ask one of the locals. A fair price for a guide would be 15-20 pa'anga. Ask to begin in the middle village Viapea, and to descend afterwards to Hihifo where you can also cool off if you like in the freshwater spring.

4.2 Niuafu'ou

Niuafu'ou is about 150 miles west of Nuiatoputapu.

The following is copied from the MOON HANDBOOKS: South Pacific, travel guide:

Niuafu'ou is Tonga's northernmost island. Despite the airstrip that opened in 1983, Niuafu'ou remains one of the most remote islands in the world. The supply ship calls about once a month, but there's no wharf on the island. Landings take place at Futu on the west side of the island (this is where we are presently anchored). For many years, Niuafu'ou received its mail in kerosene tins wrapped in oilcloth thrown overboard from a passing freighter to waiting swimmers or canoeists, giving 'Tin Can Island' its other name. In bad weather, rockets were used to shoot the mail from ship to shore. Early trader, Walter George Quensell, doubled as postmaster and brought fame to Niuafu'ou by stamping the mail with colourful postmarks.

Niuafu'ou (50 square km) is a collapsed volcanic cone once 1,300 metres high. Today, the north rim of the caldera reaches 210 metres. The centre of the island is occupied by a crater lake, Vai Lahi, nearly five km wide and 84 metres deep. It is 21 metres above sea level. From this lake rise small islands with crater lakes of their own -- lakes within islands within a lake with an island. Presently, the volcano is dormant, but the southern and western sides of the island are covered by bare black lava fields from the many eruptions earlier this century.

Apart from the lava fields, the island is well forested. Incubator or megapode birds (malau in Tongan) lay eggs one-fifth the size of a grown bird, in burrows two meters deep in the warm sands of the hot springs by the lake. Natural heating from magma close to the surface incubates the eggs, and after 50 days, the megapode chicks emerge fully feathered and ready to fend for themselves. Unfortunately, the malau eggs that aren't collected by the islanders for food, are dug up by free-ranging pigs and the birds are facing extinction.

4.2.1 Anchorage

Nov. 2011: We arrived around 4:30 pm and spent over an hour anchoring. The sun was pretty low in the sky already, so it was hard to see what kind of bottom we were dealing with in terms of having our

anchor set. Our chart shows an area of shallow water, shallow being a relative term around here, so we did about 4 exploratory circles around the 'shallow' area and tentatively decided on a spot. I was not satisfied with not knowing what our anchor would land on so I put my mask and snorkel on and went down our swim ladder at the back of the boat. Black, it was all black. Black sand and black lava.

Niuafu'ou is a volcanic island but is presently dormant. In 1853 and 1929, lava flow emanated from fissures on the outer slopes of the caldera and destroyed the villages of 'Ahau and Futu. In 1946, which really isn't so long ago, the main town of Angaha disappeared under lava, so the government evacuated the 1,300 inhabitants to a neighbouring island. This explained why I was seeing only black. It wasn't a huge surprise, because the whole shoreline is black volcanic rock. – Grommit

4.2.2 Cruiser Report

Nov. 2011: We asked about the lake and the police officer who was taking our info said he could get us a ride to the lake that very day. We jumped into the back of the short-bed truck that pulled up a little later. The main roads are quite rough here on the island.

We were dropped off around 10am and set a pick up time for around 3pm. It was a fantastic day of relaxing and kayaking. The weather was warm and sunny and we had picnic lunch overlooking the crater lake on a sort of land bridge that cut the lake into two parts. The sand was pure black and hot!

On our way back through the main village, the policeman gave us a basket full of mangoes as a thanks for the flour, sugar, pasta and diesel fuel we had given some of the villagers. The monthly supply boat has not come to Niuafu'ou in over 3 months and the people are very low on many supplies.

It is whale season in this part of the Pacific. They come from Antarctica to calf because the water is too cold for the babies to survive there. We had not yet seen anything other than a flipper sticking out of the water or bit of water spraying up. But yesterday while we were eating lunch in the cockpit, Michael said that it would be nice to see a whale and guess what, within 2 minutes about 200 feet from Grommit along came a whale. It stayed at the surface for a couple of breaths and then it dove down. It did this 3 times very near the boat. – Grommit

5 Vava'u Group

5.1 Vava'u Overview & Map with Anchorage Numbers

The Vava'u group is comprised of 60 islands in an area 18nm from east to west and 16nm north to south. The largest island is Uta Vava'u (OO-tah-vah-VAH-oo) and the second largest is Pangaimotu (PAHNG-eye-MOH-too).

The anchorages were mapped and numbered by Moorings the charter company and have now become the standard. Laminated A5maps are available at Café Tropicana.

5.2 Neiafu

The town of Neiafu is situated on a steep hillside. The most up to date information on services can be found at www.vavau.to/portofficer.pdf. This is maintained by a local Greg Just who is also the OCC port officer and he runs Café Tropica with lots of cruisers services.

VHF Hailing Channel: In Vava’u, everyone uses VHF 26 as a hailing channel. This channel has repeaters and can be heard almost everywhere in Vava’u.

EMERGENCY: Vava’u Volunteer Marine Response Association (VVMRA)

Vava’u Volunteer Maritime Response Association (VVMRA) comprises a group of volunteers and is registered as a Tongan Incorporated Society (NGO).

VVMRA assists the Tonga Ministry of Police with Search and Rescue operations, handles requests for boater assistance, provides trip watch services, and maintains a VHF radio watch (24/7) on channels 16 and 26 in Vava’u. In 2022, promoting boating and water safety and providing maritime educational services were added to their focus.

VVMRA uses the call sign “Vava’u Radio.”

Additional Contact Information

Phone Numbers: +676 8465645, 7565645, 70197

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 43, Neiafu, Vava’u, Kingdom of Tonga

Email: vmratonga@gmail.com

Website: www.vvmra.org

Social Media: www.facebook.com/VVMRA

You can join them in making measurable safety improvements in their part of the World. They are collecting used but fit-for-service life vests for their free loaner program available to those traveling from the main island to the outer islands of Vava’u. Funds donated go toward initiatives to educate and provide boating safety resources to the community. In November 2022, 195 life vests were distributed to the students and staff at the government primary schools of Falevai, Hunga, Kapa, Matamaka, Nuapapu, Ofu, Ovaka, Ool’ua, ‘Otea, and Taunga.

Partnerships:

Tongan Ministry of Police – Memo of Understanding for Search and Rescue Support

Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand – Valued Local Resource for Assistance

U.S. National Safe Boating Council – Safe Boating Campaign Partner

International Maritime Rescue Federation – Affiliate Member

5.2.1 Vava’u Environmental Protection Association

VEPA focuses on conservation, education, community, and the future for Tongans. +676 751 9417, www.vavauenvironment.org. The SMA program began in 2002 through the Ministry of Fisheries with the objective to conserve the fisheries and marine resources for sustainable livelihoods and community benefits.

PLEASE pay attention to the protected and prohibited areas below. You are prohibited from fishing in within the yellow boundaries without a special permit and anchoring and fishing are strictly prohibited in the red striped area.

In addition, the following uninhabited islands are forbidden to go ashore without prior permission from VEPA: Fangasito, Fonua’one’one, Fuamotu, Lahiapo, Late, Maninita, Mou’ua. A note has been next to

information is no longer relevant as many establishments have closed their doors due to covid. The information on the moorings in particular is no longer relevant as many do not exist due to the 2022 tsunami. Keep in mind that the tsunami had very little effect on Vava'u.

You should read this guide completely before asking any questions on the VHF net, as it answers almost all the questions people normally ask.

VHF Cruiser's Net: Monday through Saturday, there is a cruisers net on VHF 26 at 0830 with local info as well as the normal things found on all morning nets. Restaurants broadcast specials and information at the end of the net. This net is on a repeated and can generally be heard throughout all of Vava'u.

5.2.2 *Pass*

Aug. 2023: We arrived from Niue early in the morning around the north of the island, then west and on to the channel. Fairly easy with a couple channel markers to show the way. We called on VHF 16 for Port Authority. Brian from Vava'u Radio responded to come to the main dock and all authorities would come in due time. He pointed out 2 obstacles on the wharf dock. A sand spit coming out of the mid-section of the dock and a sunken boat on the western end of the dock that is visible during low and mid-tide. – Nutmeg

5.2.3 *Anchoring & Mooring*

Docks/Marina access in town:

- The small boat marina in front of the 3 story blue roofed OTTO.G.SANFT VAVA'U LTD building is a good place to tie up the dinghy and has good access to the town. However, the dock is in pretty bad shape since 2015. So be careful when tying up. A few cruisers with inflatable dinghies received a puncture and or tear after docking here. The Tongan government is waiting for AID money to repair/replace the dock after no maintenance was done and it sunk. Several expats managed to get one pontoon refloated (Riki).
- **Floating dock at Kraken Restaurant:** Welcomes yachts to use their dinghy dock for a safe place to leave their dinghy while they go to town. Climb the stairs and turn left to go to town.
- **Floating dock at Mango Restaurant:** Mango just installed a new floating wood dinghy dock. They do not mind if you tie your dinghy here and go to town, but be sure to frequent their establishment for a drink, coffee, or meal. Climb the stairs on the right and turn left to go to town.

–Greg Just at Café Tropicana 2023

Moorings: The moorings can be a little confusing, but for the most part they are owned and operated by Beluga Dive (their dock is to the right of Mango Café). You can call them on VHF 26 or 09 and tell them when you boat name and arrival date. They will keep track of you as well. The fee is \$20TOP per night. You pay your final bill prior to departing.

The moorings north of Mango café are operated by the Tongan Beach resort who maintains a workshop at the back of Mango Café for the Moorings and Sunsail fleet. Mango Café was purchased by the Tongan Beach Resort.

Beluga and Moorings sunk most of the mooring buoys during Covid. They were refloated in 2022 when borders re-opened. Beluga Diving maintains the Beluga buoys and Riki Tiki Dive maintains the Moorings buoys. –Greg Just at Café Tropicana

Nov 2023: In November 2023, Beluga dive moorings were checked, cleaned and changed when needed. Great work done by the diver! - Pavic

Aug. 2023: 18°39.6373S / 173°58.9381W. We had the same idea as many other boats, hide in Neaifu for a fairly large storm. Gale force winds and 4m seas were predicted for 1.5 days. We tucked nicely into this bay and weathered the storm.

Near Small Basin: **18°39.1277S / 173°59.2368W.** Dropped in 8m in a small sandy patch surrounded by bommies. It was a short 2-hr stop to check out of Customs. We only had one rudder and could not maneuver to the dock so they let us anchor just by the docks.

Be sure to pull down on your mooring. Our friends on a steel ketch pulled down and discovered that they dragged the 1.5ton mooring 100m. They came back to the original spot, dropped the balls and picked up another mooring. They then tied the mooring balls together and informed the dive shop that the mooring was unstable and needed to be decommissioned. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: 18°39.444S / 173°59.414W. It is possible to anchor on the west side of the harbor in water between 8-14m.

Moorings are situated along the shore near the town. Most are provided and maintained by Beluga Dive. These are generally orange or yellow and numbered. Hail on VHF 09 on approaching and let them know which one you are on when you get ashore. Pay before departing, TOP 20 per night. Beluga Dive is clearly visible from the water and have their own dinghy dock.

When the ARC boats came through, they booked and paid for moorings for the entire time they were here. If not using the mooring, they put a fender on to reserve. Other moorings are owned by Moorings/Sunsail or privately owned. – Perigee

Aug. 2023: Upon arrival, we switched to VHF 16 & 26 and went into Neiafu. We did not call on the radio because there were three boats already on the dock and we did not hear anyone else calling customs. We went along side another monohull and tied up at the Fisheries dock.

Avoid: There is a sunken fishing boat right next to the dock and is visible during low and mid-tide.

Customs does monitor boats arriving and departing into the bay. Please be advised that Customs requires you to check in at the dock prior to picking up a mooring ball.

The moorings closer to shore are for smaller boats. Cost is \$20TOP per night. The anchorage is deep 30/40m and the bottom can be littered with items that will make it difficult to pull the hook up when you are ready to leave. – Jamala

Aug. 2023: 18°39.724S / 173°58.902W. We anchored in 30' of water with good holding. We found a shallow spot off a concrete dock halfway down the mooring field. Possibly room for 2 boats here.

The mooring ball situation was confusing. We called Beluga Dive for a mooring ball and they said we were too heavy for their mooring ball (50' catamaran). We could not reach anyone else to get approval to tie up to a mooring ball. Then we saw several other vessels that were either the same tonnage as us or more on mooring balls. We think that everyone just tied up to whatever was available. Just confusing. But we were happy with our anchor spot. – Nutmeg

July 2023: We were told to anchor close to the dock, if possible, because the dock was full of boats waiting to get fuel. Several boats anchored, including us. However, we found out the anchorage is covered in coral heads and most every boat had a major problem getting their chain and anchor up. There was one section about 200m off the customs dock where the water is much shallower, about 6m (as opposed to 30m everywhere else). The shallow area seems to be an outlier from a sandbank on the shore which has no coral heads.

There was such a backlog of boat waiting to clear in and anchored out, that Eduardo on Second Wind, fetched the customs, health, and bio security officials. He ferried them to all of the boats so they could complete the check in process.

I suggest that you do not anchor and just drift around. Be sure to keep an eye out for incoming ferries and cargo ships. Evidently, there is a fiber optic cable leading from the dock but nobody could pinpoint exactly where it was so boats could avoid anchoring near it. – Wizard

July 2023: Moorings: It seems there are not enough moorings to go around. The moorings from Beluga Diving seem to be in good condition although the two or three near the shore past Beluga are meant for the dive boats and they only have one loop. I had to use one of these moorings for 2 nights and I would not recommend it. It is very shallow. – SV Wizard

Dec. 2022: 18°39.452S / 173°58.985W. Sunsail mooring, near Kraken Restaurant. – Rainbow Safari

5.2.4 Boatyard

Vava'u Boatyard is the only boatyard facility in Tonga. +676 881 6854, +676 881 6846, +676 70 600, www.boatyardVava'u.com, info@boatyardvavau.com. Skype: boatyardvavau. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0800-1700. The Boatyard sits 20' above sea level and is protected on three sides by steep hills and an old quarry face. They have a hydraulic trailer that can handle monohulls and multihulls up to 28 metric tons and 58' smoothly and efficiently. The current storage capacity is 75 boats.

Services include: woodwork, fiberglass repair and fabrication, metal fabrication/welding, mechanics, sail and canvas repair, refrigeration, electrical repair, chandlery, and superyacht services.

They have three moorings outside the slipway. Two with double blocks and one with a single block intended as a staging mooring for those vessels hauling out. They plan to add more moorings.

5.2.5 Yachtsmen Services

Please visit the Vavau.to cruising guide for the most up to date information on Vava'u. Greg Just keeps it current and it is full of valuable information. www.vavau.to/Cruising_Guide3.pdf

Café Tropicana run by Greg is a huge resource and very willing to help. He is often very busy so please kind and patient with him. He will help you with propane, water, diesel, gasoline, laundry, discarded oil and lead batteries. He will also take some recycling items (plastic bottles with lids). He will also sell you sim cards, top up vouchers, postcards, and super tasty lunch specials. The used oil and lead batteries are used for community projects. If you'd like to donate, visit www.buymeacoffee.com/tropicana.

5.2.5.1 Cooking Gas (Propane)

July 2023: Homegas will fill tanks but they do not have adapters. +676 70 319. www.homegas.to. You can take a \$10TOP taxi (each way) or you can drop off your bottle at Café Tropicana +676 71 322, +676 881 2347, VHF 26/16, for a \$5 per bottle and have it back in a few days (sometimes the next day).

The Boatyard does a weekly run to fill up propane tanks as well. Generally, for customers, but exceptions can be made. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: Gas fill can be arranged with Greg at Café Tropicana (+676 71 322, +676 881 2347, VHF 26/16). He announces gas run dates on the morning net (Mon-Sat) at 0830 on VHF 26. – Perigee

5.2.5.2 Fuel (Diesel & Gasoline)

Aug. 2024: DUTY FREE fuel in Tonga. Buying duty free diesel in Tonga is possibly the most cost effective in all of the South Pacific - it works out at €0.88 / USD 0.98 / AUD 1.45 per liter - minimum order 250 litres. (TOP 2.30 - 30 Aug 24)

You need to order it 48 hours in advance for fueling on the day you checkout.

You can combine an order for multiple boats.

To order: Go up to the fuel depot (5 min walk from the “Harbourview” dinghy dock, deep in the south east of town anchorage (Koko bay) or call them on +6767097

On the day of fueling, you will need to go to the customs shed and get a duty-free fuel certificate (takes about 10 min).

Then bring your boat alongside the fisherman’s wharf and a fuel truck will pull up and fuel from there.

Some people report up to 2 hours delay to the agreed time, our experience was that they arrived 15 min after the agreed time. I did go and show my face early in the morning in the fuel depot office and confirmed the schedule for the day.

All in all, a relatively easy process. This is specific to international departures in Vava’u. – SY Orea

Aug. 2023: Fuel Truck: Pacific Energy, Tel: +676 70 972, +676 755.5210 or +676 70 824, tuiaki.kauvaka@p.energy, kauvaka@pacificpetrole.com, VHF Ch. 16/26 (prior arrangements required). Duty-free fuel can be ordered and delivered to the pier by truck, but is only available on the day of departure after clearing out and for a minimum of 200 liters. Schedule your delivery and verify the day before and the day of as often the appointments are misplaced or delayed.

Diesel and Petrol available from various stations around the town.

Diesel can more easily be obtained by dropping jerry cans off with Moorings (VHF 72) who will often fill them when the fuel truck visits. – Sugar Shack

Aug.2023: Utulangivaka Gas Station in Neaifu (18°39.414S / 173°58.476W in the village of Utulangivaka, .3miles south of Mango Café on the main road). They deliver fuel with no minimum charge. +676 751 2655, +676 882 5301, +676 71 286, gasstation@utulangivaka.com. Their moto is “No job too small” If you only need a little bit of fuel (less than 200L), then bring your jerry cans to their station, they will fill them and then give you a ride back to the dock. Or they may be willing to bring their jerry cans to the dock for you to do the fuel transfer. – Ana Maria

Aug. 2023: You can walk to the petrol station to get petrol or diesel in cans. Or you can call the fuel truck to get the big boat filled at the dock. – Jamala

Aug. 2023: Many boats received duty free fuel at the main wharf, but they always seemed to have a long wait. We only needed a small amount so we rented a car from Greg at Café Tropicana. It was quick and easy fill of the jerry cans. – Nutmeg

July 2023: Diesel fuel can be delivered by truck. Call Pacific Energy +676 70 972 in advance and advise the amount of fuel required. Minimum 200 litres. The fuel is reported to be clean by the owners of Mounu Island Resort. Other clean fuel available from the Gas station out by the Boatyard. – Perigee

5.2.5.3 Trash

Aug. 2023: Rubbish bins and a wire crate are located at the Small Boat Marina close to the access to the ramp. There is no recycling on the island even though there is a receptacle for cans, plastic, and glass. But please do your part and separate your recycling anyway.

There are lots of stray dogs and pigs in town so be sure not to leave any rubbish on the ground as it will be torn apart. – Perigee

July 2023: Organics can be used to feed the fish or bring into town to give to a local who needs it to feed their pigs.

Plastic water bottles with screw tops can be given to locals who reuse them or bring them to Café Tropica who will donate them.

Aluminum, batteries, used oil can be brought to Café Tropicana.

Other rubbish can be given to Café Tropicana or Aquarium Café for a small fee. – Sugar Shack

5.2.5.4 Water

July 2023: Twice filtered rain water can be arranged through Greg at Café Tropicana. VHF 26, +676 71 322 or greg@vavau.to.

Moorings / Riki Tiki charter boats fill up with town water on the dock in front of Mango Restaurant. It is possible to arrange water through them, just ask Mango. – Perigee

5.2.6 General Services

5.2.6.1 Accommodations

2012: Inexpensive Overnight Accommodations: The Boatyard Apartments. We were looking for a place to stay overnight for an early morning flight out of Neiafu. Backpackers, next to Tropicana Café, has both private rooms (with shared bath), and bunk rooms. They quoted 99 TOP for a double with shared bath, or 30 TOP per person in male or female dorm rooms. KS (next door to Balcony Restaurant, near Aquarium). Quoted us 50 TOP for private double with private bath and cold water (no A/C or TV). Add \$20 for the upstairs room with hot water. Kitchen privileges. Reservations at KS 887-9528 (Ian) or 888-7707 (Mele)

If you want something fancier, there are many resorts and B&B's here, see the <http://Vavau.to> website. – Soggy Paws

5.2.6.2 Banks & ATMs (Money)

Aug. 2023: We found (2) BSP ATM's which are good as they allow you to withdraw more money for the same fees as the other banks. One ATM is located near the Western Union (center of town, right side) the other is further down the road on left hand side.

Western Union +676 70 888. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1630, Sat: 0830-1230. Located center of town, main road, right side of street. – Sugar Shack

5.2.6.3 Boat Services

Vava'u Shipwrights +676 881 6846, +676 881 6854, vavau.shipwrights@gmail.com. Tonga's premier marine repair company. High quality wood work, fiberglass repair and marine electrical. They provide quality workmanship.

Metalwork and welding and mechanical engineering: Ashley +676 751 2408

July 2023: The Yacht Shop has two locations in Vava'u both are owned by the Boatyard. One is near Bellavista restaurant and the other is near the Boatyard. +676 881 6855, cnmarine.chandlery@gmail.com. Hours: Mon-Tues: 0930-1530 & Wed-Fri: 0930-1700. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: The Boatyard is located in an old quarry and sits 20' above sea level. They have a custom-built hydraulic trailer. It is capable of handling monohulls and catamarans up to 28 metric tons and 58'. They advertise services: woodwork, fiberglass repair and fabrication, metal fabrication, welding, mechanics, sail repair and canvas work, refrigeration and electrical repair. However, we know that a few of the trades people, the sailmaker for example, have left the island since Covid/2022 tsunami. There is a rigger who used to work at Moorings. Ask on the morning net for contact details. – Perigee

5.2.6.4 Chandlery

The Yacht Shop Tonga +676 881 6855, cnmarine.sales@gmail.com, cnmarine.com, Hours: Mon-Fri: 0900-1600, Sat: 0900-1200. Two locations: One downtown on main street and one by the Boatyard.

Aug. 2023: The Yacht Shop on the main road is well stocked chandlery. If you can't see what you need just ask and they will try to get it for you. – Jamala

5.2.6.5 Computer, Copy and Printing

Computer and Copy Solutions +676 772 6677, +676 842 2517, johnvuki@gmail.com. Located center of town, main road next to Bellavista Restaurant. Services include: repair of computer, unlock phone, print, scan, copy, passport photo, lamination. They also sell some toners. They will print from a USB stick for a moderate fee (\$.30TOP per page for black and white).

5.2.6.6 Customs

Aug. 2023: Customs is located at the Halaevalu Wharf (cruise ship wharf) and inside a large, white warehouse. Enter through the large doors, they are on the right, just inside the door at a folding table.

You clear into and out of the country here and you get your "inter-island clearance form" to travel to between island groups in Tonga. Remember, you need to stop by Port Authority to pay your port fee before you request to leave Vava'u. Hours Mon-Fri: 0380-1600 with lunch around 1200-1300.

Checking Out: We stopped by customs 24hr in advance to pick up the clearance forms -- so we could pre-fill them on the boat. We knew several boats were checking out on the same day and wanted to expedite our process. They gave me 2 small forms (one for each person) and one 3-page form.

The next day we went in and paid our port fees then got in line. You do NOT need to go to Immigration to check out. Customs will want to see your boat, even if you cannot get the boat to the dock. You will have to anchor out by the dock so they can physically see your boat. We did get duty free liquor which was picked up at customs on the day we checked out. They cleared us out at 1600 (even though it was 1230) and allowed us to leave early the next morning (0730). This not a "standard" procedure, but if you ask nicely, you can do the same.

Duty Free Liquor: Leiola is the duty-free liquor store on the main street near Café Tropicana. First you pay your port fees, then clear out with customs, then bring all of your paperwork to Leiola. Purchase the items you wish, you get 2L per person. The shop will then deliver your items back to customs where you can pick it up. They did not offer beer or wine duty free, but they did have a decent selection of liquor that you could select from. The cost is roughly 40-60% cheaper than their standard pricing. But I also learned that liquor is cheaper in Fiji than Tonga with duty free. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: Customs, immigration, and health came on board after a short wait. We had sent the pre-arrival request and had printed copy, but they still asked us to complete a 12-page form. We said yes, we have meats on board, but they just asked that we consume them on the boat. Cost to check in was equal to \$61USD. They asked for TOP and said we could go to the ATM. – Nutmeg

July 2023: Clearing in: The Customs/Immigration woman passed us 6-7 forms to complete and stepped away. She came back 2 hours later. We ticked the boxes to declare food and alcohol. There is no fee for customs unless you exceed the alcohol limit of 2L per person. After Customs/Immigration, then Bio Security and Health came onboard. They took our rubbish for a small fee. No food was confiscated, no searches were undertaken. We paid Health \$43USD the equivalent to \$100 TOP (he did say that he would accept many currencies, but be aware of the current exchange rate). Bio Security wanted local currency only. So, we had to go to the ATM to get cash and we paid \$14TOP to the Fisheries. Once we cleared in picked up a mooring from Beluga Diving (call them on VHF 09 or 26). – Jamala

July 2023: The approach is well signposted as you get near the actual harbor, leave green to starboard. The customs dock was already fully occupied waiting for fuel. Incoming boats were advised to anchor close to the dock, if possible. Several boats anchored including Wizard. However, the anchorage is covered in coral heads and most every boat had a major problem getting the anchor up. There is one

exception, an area 200m off the customs dock where the water is much shallower, 6m (instead of 30m) as it is near a sandbank and has no coral heads.

There was such a backlog of boats wanting to check in that Eduardo from Second Wind went to shore to pick up the official and ferried him from boat to boat to complete the formalities. Many thanks to Eduardo to help the other cruisers. Tip, do not anchor, just drift around and look out for the large red ferry. – Wizard

Dec. 2022: Customs is at **18°39.120S / 173°59.071W** for domestic and international clearance. They will also give you the needed form for duty free fuel. Arrange for the fuel truck by calling +676 70 972 or +676 70 824 (within 24 hours of departure). – Rainbow Safari

5.2.6.7 Hair Salons

There is a hair salon next door to The Yacht Shop with no name. – Sugar Shack

5.2.6.8 Hardware

Aug. 2023: There are two hardware stores in Neiafu.

PTH Timber: +676 71 212. Sosefo.fakaosi@pth.to. Located Taumu'aloto, Kameli Neiafu. Facebook.com/pthvavau.

EM Jones +676 70 298. www.emjonesgroup.com/vavau Located Hala Fatafehi Road, Neiafu. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0800-1630, Sat: 0800-1200, Lunch is 1200-1245. Located in the center of town, main road.

5.2.6.9 Internet

Aug. 2023: Digicel +676 876 1000 located next to Immigration on the 2nd floor of the blue roof OTTO.G.SANFT.VAVAU LTD. Building. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1700. Sat: 0830-1500.

TCC +676 20 000 is close to the post office. Main road, past center of town, on right side.

Café Tropicana will sell Digicel top up vouchers in any amount. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: We purchased (3) different SIM cards. The TCC data card (available at 18°39.375 / 173°59.16W) is the cheapest but it took 36 hours to work. Although our phone said 3G in the outer islands, the internet does not actually work. The Digicel e-SIM was easy to purchase but expensive and did not give us a good signal anywhere outside Neiafu. Our recommendation for extensive coverage and reliable signal is the physical data SIM card from Digicel. You can buy it both at Café Tropicana and at the Digicel shop. There have been shortages of SIM cards so if you see one, buy it. – Ana Maria.

Aug. 2023: Bella Vista offers free wifi for 30 minutes. – Nutmeg

July 2023: The Kraken bar and restaurant down at the waterfront has a dinghy dock and good wifi. Bellavista restaurant has free wifi during the day. See restaurants for more information.

Café Tropicana was not offering internet in July 2023. The Aquarium Café is no longer open. – Perigee

July 2023: I bought a Digicel SIM card but found the set up concerning. Top Ups were very difficult so we went back to the Digicel office early in the morning (reasonable strategy as no other customers were there) and they sorted everything out for us. You can use Digicel connection to hotspot other devices. The strength of the Digicel signal will not set any records but it works.

Café Bellavista both had good wifi. – SV Wizard

5.2.6.10 Laundry

Aug. 2023: Café Tropica uses rainwater with their front-loading machines and their grey water pit is 200m from the sea.

Bubbles Laundry +676 842 0748 Vanessa. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1700, Sat: 0830-1300. Located downtown, main road, next to Bellavista restaurant (mid-level). Normally you can drop off and pick up the same day (if you drop off early in the morning and she is not swamped). \$25TOP for wash and dry per load.

Aug. 2023: They are super friendly and very accommodating. She did a great job getting stains out and washing everything. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: They did a good job and had reasonable prices. – Nutmeg

July 2023: Bubbles is the place to go. Friendly with the same day turnaround (very nicely folded) if you get the laundry to them in the morning. One floor below Bellavista Restaurant. – Perigee

July 2023: Bubbles laundry is the place to go. Friendly with the same day turnaround (very nicely folded) if you get the laundry to them in the morning. –Wizard

5.2.6.11 Medial & Pharmacy

The hospital is a short car ride out of town. Reportedly very basic but helpful and friendly staff.

Universal Clinic and Pharmacy +676 70 213, +676 844 9018, siutakahehau@gmail.com. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1700, Sat: 0830-1300. Located on the main road, left from dinghy dock, on left hand side.

Aug. 2023: The pharmacist is so incredibly helpful! She sold us antibiotics, antihistamines, and a few other medications without a prescription. It is very nicely stocked pharmacy. – Sugar Shack

5.2.6.12 Office and School Supplies

Aug. 2023: Friendly Island Books Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1630. Main street, left side. – Sugar Shack

5.2.6.13 Port Authority

Port Authority, where you pay your port fee, is located in the same warehouse as Customs at Halaeval Wharf. From the main produce market (left from dinghy dock), continue toward wharf. Customs & Port Authority are located in the large, white, warehouse. Enter main doors, pass by customs (folding table on the right at the door), and just around the corner on your right is Port Authority.

In order to travel to Ha’apai or Tongatapu you are required to pay your port fee and fill out an Inter-Island Clearance form. The fee is based on tonnage. – Sugar Shack

5.2.6.14 Port Officer

The OCC Port Officer is Greg Just and he is the owner of Café Tropicana (+676 71 322, +676 881 2347, VHF 26/16). Greg is affiliated with the OCC, ICA, PCA, SSCA, CA and Noonsite. He publishes information for cruisers at www.vavau.to/portofficer.pdf. This document has the most up to date information for cruisers. Greg can arrange for cooking gas, fuel, laundry, water, taxi’s, tours, bike and car hires. He is also an agent or the Boat House Apartments. A fantastic resource.

5.2.6.15 Post Office

Tonga Post office is open Mon-Fri: 0830-1600. Located at the end of the main street, on the right-hand side (near the fresh market). I mailed postcards to the U.S. and each stamp was \$3.00TOP.

5.2.6.16 Rigging

There is a rigger in Neaifu who used to work for Moorings/Sunsail. Ask on the morning net for contact details – channel VHF 26 Mon-Fri: 0830.

5.2.6.17 Shipping Parts

NEW: A “TIN” is now required for receiving duty free parts. New as of early August 2023 all vessels wanting to ship duty free items into Tonga must obtain a Tax Identification Number (TIN). You can get this from customs when you check in, but you have to request it. If you have already checked in, then stop by customs in Tongatapu or Neiafu with your boat registration, passport, Tonga entry paperwork and make a request. It may take 24-48 hours to obtain the TIN.

Once you have your TIN you must include this on your shipping label and it is recommended to include it on the invoice as well to ensure a smooth clearance process.

Café Tropicana (Greg Just) and **The Boatyard** have great contacts and resources to import parts. They can get most parts in for almost any job. +676 71 322, +676 881 2347, VHF 26/16, greg@vavau.to.

Supposedly you can get ‘chandlery’ type parts shipped from NZ through Cater Marine.

sales@catermarine.co.nz. The contact there is Bob Fazio.

There is travel company, Jetsave Taufounua Travel, that has a large “FedEx” sign. They are not an official “FedEx” office, but they are the FedEx agent for Tonga. They can accept packages for you.

Located center of town, main road, right side of street.

5.2.6.18 Shopping

There are many “general stores” that sell home goods, some hardware, clothing, etc...all are located on the main street and all are open Mon-Fri: 0900-1600 (generally). For example, “S.F. Paea & Sons” and “Lili Shop” and “A & A Retailer”

5.2.6.19 Transportation

Taxis: Epenisa Taxi Service. +676 877 1826. There is a taxi stand area in the center of town (right side of street on the corner of Fatafehi and Kovana). There are also lots of taxis driving all around town.

Be sure to negotiate your price before you hop in the cab and carry small notes as they do not always have change.

There is another Taxi service called Ana Tevunga Services +676 887 2525 and Greg at Café Tropicana (VHF 26/16) can organize a taxi for you as well.

Primrose who is on the VHF morning net will also do taxi services. You can hail him on the net or stop by the fresh market and see him in person.

5.2.6.20 Visitors Center

Aug. 2023: The Visitor Center is located in the center of town, main road, right hand side. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1630, Sat: 0900-1300. Lunch 1230-1330. They have maps of Tonga and help you a variety of items They can also arrange tours. – Sugar Shack

5.2.7 Provisions

Nov 2023: In Neiafu, apart from stores already mentioned, there is a small Tongan store with good bread, eggs and basic commodities. They are really friendly. It does not have a name, but you can find it about 100m on your left, on one of the streets just off the main street, behind the Otto G. Sanft Vava’u Ltd building.

On Saturday morning, there are fruits and vegetable stalls throughout the town. It is worth walking around. – Pavic

Aug. 2023: There are several grocery stores in Neiafu as you walk down the main street, most do not have names (Chinese markets), but here are a few others:

- **China Fortune** Hours: Mon-Sat. Full range supermarket
- **JM Store** Hours: Mon-Sat. Full range supermarket
- **Otamoehe** Hours: Mon-Sat. Full range supermarket
- **Leiola Duty Free** Liquor and Crafts. +676 707 48, lucy.tonga@leiola.to. Duty free items once formalities are done. Clear out of Customs, bring paperwork & passports to store, shop, and then meet Leiola and your purchases at Customs afterward. You can pay by credit card. Be sure to ask which liquor is duty free because not all of it is duty free. Beer and wine are not duty free.
- **Neaifu Shopping Center** Hours: Mon-Fri: 0730-2200, Sat: 0730-2200. (just outside of town) Large supermarket, some hardware/electronics
- **Tina Burkes** (Mainly American Store, just outside of town)
- **Gutenbeills** Hours: Mon-Sat. Full range supermarket (just outside of town)

There is a large fresh produce market called **Utukalungalu Market**. They are open Mon-Fri: 0800-1600 and Sat. 0800-1230. You can place your order with Lily to get what you want and pick it up the next day. She can also provide a fresh tray of eggs.

Falaeu Deli +676 870 2788, VHF 26, <https://falaleudeli.com/>, Hours: Mon-Sat: 0900-2000. They have a good selection of meats and ready to eat meals (vegan & vegetarian too). Can meet any dietary requirements for 2 or 20. Run by two Canadians: Bear (Barry) and Charlotte). They do pizza, nachos, burgers. They will put together personalized passages meals for you in a few days' time.

Faleau Deli has nice pizzas and burgers. They will help with provisioning.

Ice: Café Tropicana has a commercial ice maker that uses filtered rain water. +676 71 322, +676 881 2347, VHF 26/16.

Bakeries: Several "markets" sell baked goods from the bakery. There are two bakeries. One is located on Tapueluelu Rd (main road through town, right at Vakaono: Fire Dept. & Police Dept., first left on Tapueluelu). The other is on Kovana Rd inside in the back of the market.

Aug. 2023: Provisioning is not as expensive as French Polynesia, but not as extensive either. – Jamala

July 2023: There are various small shops on the main street and on the street with the Fire Station. They're run by Chinese and each has a slightly different range of goods. Best to go to all of them.

Eggs are reportedly not rotated in the Chinese shops. Best to get them from the "Egg Lady" at the fresh produce market or get them the day the supply ship comes in.

There is a good fruit and vegetable market not far from the "Small boat Marina." Exit the car park behind the small boat marina and turn left. It is less than 200 meters down the street on the right. There is a mix of locally grown and imported produce. Locally grown cucumbers, tomatoes, papaya, watermelon, cassava, taro leaves, zucchinis, aubergine and bananas. Imported cabbage, carrots, capsicum, onions and potatoes. Garlic is available in the Chinese markets. Powdered Kava is also available at the market.

Prices are not always displayed so get a quote and compare prices. As of July 2023, there were prices we saw: 700g NZ cheddar cheese TOP 24, 125g butter TOP 7, 1L NZ milk TOP 4, whole frozen sirloin TOP 42/kg, paper towels TOP 8, 3 small or 2 large carrots TOP 5, 3-5 tomatoes TOP 5, 3 cucumbers TOP 5, 2 zucchinis TOP 5, 6-8 potatoes TOP 10, 5 onions TOP 5, 8-10 snake beans TOP 5, 1 pineapple TOP 10-18. Eggs TOP 1.5-2 each. Chinese stores sell boiled eggs so check before you buy. – Perigee

Dec. 2022: Provisioning was ok, the market was not as good as Nuku'alofa but much better than Pangai. There is plenty of fresh options, depending on what is in season or has arrived by ship. – Rainbow Safari

5.2.8 Restaurants

Bellavista Café and Restaurant (Italian) +676 71 035 VHF 26. Located on Fatafehi Road (left dinghy dock, left side). Hours: Mon-Sat: 0900-2200. Rated as one of the best places to eat in Neiafu. Italian and pizza. Great views and good breezes. Seafood, pizza, and lots of specials, wifi.

Café Tropicana +676 71 322, VHF 26, Tropicana@vavau.to. Located on Fatafehi Road. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0730-1400. Breakfast and lunch. They also sell ice and have catering options. They have good coffee. They make yogurt, grated coconut, sour cream, cream cheese, roti, chutney, jam and muesli. They sell coffee beans and ice. In addition, they will do deli and provisioning but to order, not frozen.

Kraken Vava'u +676 871 1755. Located on Fatafehi Rd. Hours: Mon-Fri: 1500-2300; Sat-Sun: 1100-2300. This a pub style bar and restaurant run by Aussie Andrew and Caryl. Right on the waterfront with a dinghy dock. Good food and healthy portions of wine! Though not cheap. They have a dartboard and quiz night each Thursday. Winners get a free drink. Sometimes they do a BBQ on Sundays. They are the most popular with the cruisers. Happy Hour 1700-1800, \$1TOP off drinks.

Mango Café +676 70 664. Located on Fatafehi Rd. Hours: Mon-Sat: 0800-2100, Sun: 1100-2100. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, full bar, and wifi. Adrian, the owner is very helpful. Waterfront restaurant with a brand-new floating dinghy dock and new stairs to the main street. Adrian is a retired pilot who hired professional chefs from Papua New Guinea. Excellent service and friendly staff. They are open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and will sell you croissants to take back to the boat. He may offer you water refills or lifts to the airport as well. They opened at the end of Q1-2023.

Coffee and Tees: +676 71 271, tongatees@gmail.com. Located near the BSP and Western Union. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0800-1700. Sat: 0800-1200. This great shop is run by Cindy Russell and she will bend over backwards to make sure you are happy. Not only do they serve coffee, breakfast, and lunch, but they have super cool, hand painted clothing and jewelry. And they will custom design your boat name and logo on a shirt, coozie, bag, backpack and more. Great food, friendly service

The Basque Tavern Tapas, beer and restaurant. +676 774 1098, www.thebasquetavern.com. Hours: Wed-Fri: 1500-1230am, Sat: 1500-1130p. Authentic Spanish cuisine and accommodation. They have a pool table and offer a great, cozy atmosphere.

Panda (Chinese) +676 870 9421. Located on Fatafehi Road. Hours: Mon-Sat: 0900-2100. Located on the waterfront of the Small Boat Marina.

Le Galion Bar and Grill +676 847 8818. Located just off main road on left side road heading to Small Basin Marina (on top of Panda Restaurant) with great views of the harbor.

Sam Restaurant +676 71 000, +676 845 6789, maamatoa@gmail.com. Located in the blue roofed OTTO.G.SANFT VAVA'U LTD building at the small boat marina. Hours: Mon-Sat: 0900-2200. Chinese cuisine with a VIP karaoke rooms.

Humpack Lodge (18°40.51S /173°59.11W) Open 7 days a week from 0600-2200 for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Owners source seafood directly from local fisherman. Good made-from-scratch food in a nice dining area on the veranda.

Ice Cream: Located next to Hepi Pizza on Pouono Road (BSP building on corner).

5.2.8.1 Restaurant Cruiser Reports

Aug. 2023: We ate at Mango Café which had only been open for 4 months. Adrian, the manager, is very nice and keen to ensure you have a good experience. The food was just “ok” in our opinion but they do have a nice deck with an enclosure to keep you dry when it rains. The Oti Oka (like poison cru) has peppers in it and is spicy so beware when you order. (However another cruiser told me that you can order the Oti Oka without peppers, if you want it mild).

Kraken is truly a cruisers bar. It has a giant ship in the center of it and the staff are lovely. Their food is pretty good, they have happy hour from 1700-1800 and a small cocktail menu.

Bella Vista is Italian but they also offer a few other items. This is supposed to be the “best” place to eat but we honestly found the dinner mediocre.

Coffee and Tees has a great breakfast and wide assortment of teas and coffees.

Basque is by far my favorite place. They have super tasty food and great atmosphere. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: We ate at Bella Vista a few times and the service and food was very good. They offer wifi.

We ate at Kraken; the food was excellent and service was good. They also have quiz night on Thursday.

Mango had good food and service. – Jamala

Aug. 2023: Kraken’s operator does his own deep-sea fishing. The quality of the fish he serves really shows this. The coconut fish should not be missed! When other places are out of fish, Kraken usually still offers fresh seafood. – Ana Maria

Aug. 2023: Mango Café: This became our favorite spot. They have a great dinghy dock, food and staff are fabulous. Everything we had for lunch and dinner was fantastic.

Bella Vista: This is a good lunch spot with nice service, good burgers and not bad fish (snapper) and chips. – Nutmeg

5.2.9 Activities

Aug 2024 – New Dive Operation in Neiafu. <https://axfactordive.com/> My name is Axel and I started the first SSI Dive Center in Tonga. It is a small Dive Shop uniquely located in Koko Bay, the southern part of the Neiafu Harbour. I visited as a tourist in 2015 to swim with the Humpback Whales, but eventually came back to Neiafu and bought some land to start a dive operation. We have a house reef and the No1 historic Dive Wreck in Tonga just meters in front of our property! – Soggy Paws

Aug. 2023: Here are just a few fun things you can do in Neiafu:

Hike up Mt. Talau where you will have spectacular views. From center of town, head left (dinghy dock, turn left into town, turn right on Vakaono (just past the fire dept and police station), turn left on Tapueluelu Road (there should be a “Mt. Talau” sign). This road will take you to the view point.

Beluga Diving located on Fatafehi Rd., www.belugadivingVava'u.com, info@belugadivingVava'u.com. Leave your dinghy at Mango’s, go up the stairs, turn right and then take the next set of stairs down.

Hike to a Cave: Take a nice walk to Veimumuni Cave (18°40.407S / 173°58.459W) Turn right from Mango’s dock, walk down the main road and turn left into the town of Toulā. Walk to the cemetery (on right), go through the gate and down the stairs to the cave. “bathing place of the maiden goddess Lei, who was well known for her elegance and beauty. – Ana Maria

Hakau Adventures with Laurie Boucher +676 889 8149, hakauadventures@hotmail.com, (on Facebook)

Coffee and Tees: +676 71 121. Is such a clever idea. The ladies will customize clothing for you (get your very own boat name on a shirt, shopping bag, back pack, or coozie or you can purchase any one of their local Tongan designs. Don’t forget to check out their rich and delicious coffee and food as well.

Aug.2023: We asked Cindy to make (2) long-sleeve shirts, (2) shopping bags, (2) backpacks, and a tank top. We emailed her our logo (she will take a pdf, jpeg, AI file) and the next day we had our very own screen print on our products. They do an excellent job, they are fast, reasonably priced and exceedingly friendly and they provide excellent customer service. Some of our friends picked among the 50+ local Tongan designs and had their items ready within a few hours (while they enjoyed a tasty lunch). – Sugar Shack

Church: Start off the day at St. Joseph's Cathedral for their amazing singing at 1000.

There is a Tongan feast on Sunday's at the Botanical Gardens. Call Primrose on VHF 26 to ask about it.

Café Tropicana organizes car, bike, & canoe hires. They book whale watching & dive trips. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: Vaka Vave Charters (+676 879 4436, vakavave@gmail.com, www.whalewatchswimtonga.com). They picked us up from our boat at 0730, lunch, and back around 1500. The cost was \$500TOP. They were excellent. Isi (skipper) and Muli (guide) take every precaution to follow the rules and ensure the whales are safe while providing a great tour. – Jamala

Aug. 2023: Ene'io Botanical Garden +676 867 1048 and +676 877 4795, info@eneiobotanical.garden, eneiobotanicalgarden@gmail.com or lucyfaanunu15@gmail.com, www.eneiobotanical.garden.com. The garden is owned by Lucy and Haniteli Fa'anunu. This was one of the best tours we have done in the Pacific Islands. I think everyone visiting Vava'u should do this tour! Lucy walked us around the beautiful 22 acres that her husband has owned and cultivated his entire life. It was opened to the public in 2006. Lucy was incredibly informative about plants, their uses and the Tonga way of life, their beliefs, and politics. I can only assume that Haniteli, who was off island when we visited is just as enthusiastic and informative. You need a reservation. The tour took about 2 hours but it be longer, we just ran out of time. It is 4 person minimum and the cost was \$150TOP each. We drove a rental car but you can also take a taxi. There is a protected beach area with a small café as well. – Nutmeg

July 2023: We went with Beluga Diving on a day with poor weather (sea state and squalls). They provided a wet suit and snorkel gear. We were a party of 6 and our guide was Bula and the boat captain was Date. We all struggled with the poor conditions, but Date pulled out all of the stops for us. We went quite a way out towards the NW and there we found whales. In total, everybody was able to snorkel on four separate occasions with Bula leading the way in the water.

There were quite a few whales around us and the biggest sighting was that of five whales together and then a quartet of whales.

Bula kept an eye on the group and kept us all together. There are strict rules in place as to how close you can go (no free diving) and there can only be four guests in the water at a time and you are always with a guide. We basically felt that we were watching underwater ballet of whales and they did not seem the least bit disturbed by our presence. It was inspiring.

We also saw several individual whales which did not come close to the boat. All of them were traveling fast to and from. We were served a sandwich lunch, biscuits, tea, and coffee. After the whales we visited the swallows cave where we snorkeled in. It was a great trip, well organized and we all felt well looked after. Highly recommend. – SV Wizard.

2012: 'Ene'io Botanical Garden +676 867 1048 +676 71 048, +676 771 5350, +676 777-9952. eneiobg@hotmail.com, www.eneiobotanical.garden

We arranged for Primrose (Taxi) to take us out to the Botanical Gardens at the other end of the island. We called ahead the day before to make a reservation for lunch (recommended, if you want to eat).

When we arrived, we were dismayed to find that Haniteli Fa'anunu, the Tongan whose passion for plants started the gardens back 50 years ago when he was a teenager, was not there. However, we were delighted to find that Lucy, his wife, was just as knowledgeable, and almost as passionate about plants.

Haniteli served for many years in the Tonga Ministry of Agriculture. In that capacity, he has been all over Tonga, and all over the world, collecting plants for the Botanical Gardens. His first passion is to preserve the diversity of native Tongan plants for future generations of Tongans. But the gardens also have a variety of imported plants as well.

The plants are well labeled with local Tongan names, as well as the common Western names, and their uses in Tonga. Many are medicinal and food value plants. Lucy explained their uses, and often the

preparation for that use, in detail to us. Lucy has taken an active role in helping the women of Vava'u produce and market their weavings, and she explained the whole (extensive) process to us.

During the 'Cruising Season', or when a cruise ship is in Vava'u, they also hold Tongan Feasts and other Tongan cultural events. Their beach is also popular with tourists and locals alike.

We had a great lunch there, too, complete with Ene'lo's home-made 100% organic taro chips (delicious!). This is a 'don't miss' visit in Vava'u.

Hiking Mt. Talau: At 131 meters, Mt. Talau is the highest point in Vava'u, but this is definitely not a tough hike. It is close to Neiafu town, and most of the hike is on paved or dirt roads. When you get close to Mt. Talau, the only hard part is finding the correct path up to the mountain.

Fortunately, our friends on s/v Forty-Two had told us that we should take the turn BEFORE the 'Mt Talau National Park' sign, not continue down the road next to the sign, like they did. This road apparently continues on around the base of the mountain, and does not go up to the top.

You know you are on the right path when you encounter 'The Legend of Mt Talau' sign (a minute or two further than the National Park sign). This sign explains the Tongan legend as to why Mt. Talau is flat on top. It is so typically Tongan (and quite cute).

The views from the top are outstanding, and we picked a great day for pictures. – Soggy Paws

2012: Diving. We spent a whole cyclone season in Vava'u and did a once a week dive trip with a small operator (who is no longer there). We documented all the dive spots we went to on our website. It's best to go with a qualified dive operator who knows the area (like the new in 2024 [Ax Factor Dive](#)), but if you are experienced and have your own boat, compressor, and equipment, here are all the places we dove in the year we were in Tonga. <https://svsoggypaws.com/tongadive/> – Soggy Paws

5.3 Vauleleva Bay (near Lotuma Island)

5.3.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: Extremely sheltered anchorage. We did anchor in sand but there is a lot of dead coral which is like rubble on the ground. Anchored in 12m. It was blowing 20kts outside & 3kts in this bay. – Jamala

5.3.2 Cruiser Report

Aug. 2023: You can dinghy to the Tongan Beach Resort and have a drink at the restaurant. They currently building a jetty for boats but I think it will be too high for dinghies when the tide goes out. You can have dinner here as well but you need to book in advance.

Mystic Sands is next door but it is a private resort and does not accept visitors. – Jamala

5.4 Vaipua Lagoon (Boatyard Anchorage) (Anchorage #4)

There are (3) moorings in this anchorage. Two are large and suitable for overnight. However, the one closest to the yard is only a temporary mooring for those boats waiting to haul out. It is not meant to be an overnight mooring and should not be used in strong winds.

5.4.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°38.663S /173°59.907W. Protection from SE: anchor north of Mt. Talau and SW of the boat yard ramp. Winds funnel here more than at Neiafu. Try to tuck up on the very northeast basin to get protection from strong NE winds, but the middle of the basin is quite deep. There are shallow reefs on all sides. It is hard to let out enough scope while still having adequate swinging room. – Ana Maria

5.5 Lotuma Bay (Anchorage #5)

5.5.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: **18°30.746S /174°00.484W.** Excellent protection from East/Southeast winds. Better protection than was reported on the same day in the Neiafu mooring field. The holding is mostly rock so not great for chain, terrible for rode. Uncomfortable once the wind shifts to the NE. – Ana Maria

5.6 Mala (Anchorage #6)

5.6.1 Anchorage

Do not attempt to pass over the shallows on either side of Mala as this area is full of bommies and depth can be as low as 1.2m at low tide.

Aug. 2023: Anchoring overnight, advised to anchor on the north in the lee of the island where the wind and tide are not so strong. Do not pass over the shallows on either side of Mala as they are covered in coral heads. There can be strong currents in this area on either side of the island. – Perigee

Aug. 2023: **18°41.446S /174°01.666W.** Great southeasterly protection. – Ana Maria

July 2023: **18°41.39S /174°01.48W.** We used some pearl floats to float our chain over the bommies. – Eastern Stream

5.6.2 Restaurants

Aug. 2023: Tongan Beach Resort +676 70 380, www.thetongan.com, accepts reservations at their restaurant. Situated on the island of Utungake.

Reef Resort +676 755 9279 www.reefresortvavau.com, mail@reefresortvavau.com. Situated on the island of Kapa, the Reef Resort re-opened July 2023 for dinner and lunch by appointment only. – Perigee

5.6.3 Activities

Aug. 2023: Many of the snorkeling sites were damaged by the 2022 tsunami, but there is healthy coral and reef fish populations between Kapa and Maia islands. Approximate coordinates: **18°41.34S /174°01.38W.** There is a nice white sand beach on the north east corner of Mala Island. The Mala Island Resort is run by Nasha (a Serbian sailor who crossed the Pacific in the 70's), his Tongan wife, Olivia and their kids. Lovely hosts! Olivia may cook dinner if you call ahead +676 876 8245.

July 2023: This anchorage was a great starting point to dinghy to Mariner's Cave at the north west side of Nuapapu Island and Swallows Cave. To be honest, I liked Mariner's Cave more as it is an underwater cave and you have to swim in. Swallows cave is quite touristy and lots of dive and whale watch boats stop here. There is another cave you can swim into next to Swallows cave and in the direction of the other bay. – Eastern Stream

5.7 Port Maurelle (Anchorage #7), Swallows and Mariner's Cave

There is a \$20TOP fee to anchor here whether you stay one night or multiple nights. However, if you anchor and move the next day to a mooring you will be charged an additional \$20TOP.

Ensure you have plenty of swinging room as the winds tend to be shifty in this anchorage.

Port Maurelle was named after the Spanish sailor who first anchored there. Really lovely with a sandy beach and crystal clear deep blue water. The islands are either raised limestone which provide lots of caves, chasms etc. to explore or the archetypal and idyllic white sand, beaches with coconut palms.

5.7.1 Anchorage #7

Payment to Anchor: As of Aug. 2023, there is a \$20TOP fee that needs to be paid to anchor here. This is a one-time anchoring fee whether you stay 1 night or 14 nights. However, if you move spots within the anchorage or move from an anchor to a mooring you will be asked to pay the fee again. They do not come by every day to collect the fee so there is a chance that you can stop here and pay nothing.

Aug. 2023: A polite gentleman came to us in a tender to collect an anchor fee. He said he was from the third island community. We paid \$20TOP. – Nutmeg

Aug. 2023: 18°41.980S / 174°01.788W. This is a deceptively large, well-protected and popular anchorage. There are two moorings close into shore which you can take or you can anchor in 5-25m with water being shallower on the southern side. There is a Special Management Area (SMA) on the northern side which means no anchoring and restricted fishing. It is clearly marked. We have seen up to 18 boats here. – Perigee

July 2023: 18°42.032S / 174°01.776W. Dropped the hook in 5.2m of sand between a few bommies before we pulled back and settled. We had very good holding (pulled back to 2k RPM). Our friends were here by themselves until about 3p. We arrived at 4p and there were 3 other boats. By the time night fell, there was a total of 12 boats. The late comers anchored in much deeper water (15-18m) but we all had plenty of swing room. Strong winds and big seas forecasted so people were hiding here.

Only 2 mooring balls were here and both had small monohulls on them. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: There are (2) mooring balls in good shape but they have short painters. There are a lot of bommies here with live coral. If you are anchoring, then be prepared to float your chain to protect the environment. – Jamala

Dec. 2022: This is a beautiful spot. There were at least three moorings and seemingly in good condition (the rope looked good at the surface; we did not dive on any of them). – Rainbow Safari

5.7.2 Activities

Aug. 2023: The snorkeling is less than average and there are not very many fish. The beach has significant amounts of dead coral washed up after the tsunami 2022. It is the closest anchorage to Swallows Cave which is best visited in the afternoon when the afternoon sun lights up the entrance to the cave. There are 3 villages on Kapa and each worth the walk. Tracks are muddy and slippery after the rain. It is a good place for paddle boarding as it is usually calm in the head of the bay. – Perigee

Aug. 2023: Coral is returning to the north side of A'a (approx.: 18°42.7S / 174°24.10W and the reef is quite active with smaller fish. – Ana Maria

Aug. 2010: Snorkeling around the island of Ava is great. I saw reef fish that I have not seen before, humungous sponge corals, blue and pink starfish, and a 2-3m black tipped reef shark that quietly glided passed me about 10m away.

Swallow's Cave is easily accessible by dinghy from Anchorage #7. It is a large high entrance that immediately opens out into a huge cavern with water some 5+ meters.

Best visited around 3pm-4pm, the afternoon sun pours in and lights up the water with the most intense shades indigo trailing off towards lighter turquoise at the edges.

Magnificent! It is possible to tie up the dinghy, swim about 2 meters and climb up further into the cave. It then comes to a large flat area where historically, feasts were held. Very high above is a hole in the roof through which food and drink would be lowered on the equivalent of a Polynesian dumb waiter. With a torch (flashlight), you could walk still deeper into the cave to a third but smaller cavern. All along the way, the ceiling is full of birds and the air of birdsong. Apparently, they are starlings, not swallows.

Mariner's Cave: Can be found using **waypoint** of 18°41.451S / 174°04.492W, and we were able to find it easily using that waypoint.

Mariner's Cave is accessible only from underwater and to find it you have to go along very slowly looking for the underwater opening! To get in, there is no other way but to scuba or snorkel. The lower entrance is at about ten meters, the upper at two. There is nowhere to anchor outside; ten meters from the cliff face the bottom drops off instantly from about 20m to 60/80m. So, you go along in your dinghy or with your big boat and while someone stays on board, you dive in and "do" the cave.

I duck-dived down the necessary 3m and swam the 4 or 5 metres until I saw the water above separate from the rock and then surfaced into this cave some 25m in diameter. WOW! That was exciting despite the fact that I dove deeper and for much longer all the time, there was something about there being only rock and no air above that added an extra dimension to the experience.

The only light in the cave comes through the submerged entrance.

Once inside, the air pressure increased and decreased as every swell from outside forced more water into the cave. With the increase in pressure, the air condensed into a fine mist that instantly disappeared a few seconds later when the swell receded.

Swimming out, I did not time the swell quite as well as I did on the way in so had to swim that little bit harder but it really was ok.

For people new to snorkeling, Mariner's Cave could be quite an intimidating experience but one that would never be forgotten. This is a **MUST DO** if ever you visit Vava'u. – Beaujolais

2010: Swallows Cave is a multi-chamber cave accessible only from the water. However, the water just off the cave is 250' deep, so one must anchor elsewhere and go by dinghy.

We were fortunate to be there in the late afternoon when the sinking sun lights up the multi-colored stalactites and the beautiful deep water and coral formations inside. There is also a dry cave accessible in one back corner, but we did not have shoes with us, so we could not explore. Although parts of the overhead contain the mud nests of the birds that live there, parts of the overhead are covered only by brush. At the turn of the 20th century, this cave was used to entertain important visitors, and entire feasts were lowered down in to the cave through the openings that are now brush-covered.

Also adjacent to Nuku and Port Maurelle, Ava provides some amazing snorkeling and diving, particularly along the western shoreline. The mid-afternoon sun highlights the natural colors of the coral and fish life, the depth dropping away to around 200 feet. – Passage

5.8 Nuku (Anchorage #8)

There is an anchoring fee to anchor and visit the beach.

5.8.1 Cruiser Report

2010: A tiny island with a cozy anchorage alongside an idyllic sands pit, Nuku is possibly the most photographed island in the Kingdom of Tonga. A perfect day stop for safe swimming and snorkeling for those beginners to gain their confidence. Nuku becomes a favorite with all who visit Vava'u. – Passage

5.9 Luamoko (Anchorage #9)

This is a day time anchorage as there is little protection. Anchor on the sandy shelf on the eastern side.

5.10 Aisea's or Lisa Beach (Anchorage #10)

Anchorage has good holding but ensure you have plenty of swing room as winds can be shifty.

5.11 Tapana (Anchorage #11)

5.11.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: There are moorings but we were not sure how secure they were so we anchored in sand to the left of the moorings. We did not go to shore here because it was blowing 30kts and we had torrential rain. – Jamala

Aug. 2023: **18°42.432S / 173°59.169W.** Good protection SE to NW. – Ana Maria

July 2023: **18°42.46S / 173°59.18W.** A protected anchorage from most wind directions. There are three long stay boats here that put some moorings out. Ask them about the conditions of the moorings before use. – Eastern Stream

5.11.2 Cruiser Report

Aug. 2023: Reports indicate the beloved Paella resort is no longer operating. – Ana Maria

July 2023: From the small beach you can walk to Pangaimotu village or through the plantations all the way to the north-west tip of the bay. – Eastern Stream

5.12 Tapana Island (Anchorage #12)

5.12.1 Anchorage

2010: Fangakima is on the western shore of Tapana Island, and it is well protected in all conditions except NW (we had south easterlies). – Passage

5.12.2 Activities

July 2023: **18°72.398S / 174°98.929W** Located at Lautala / Nukutahanga. This was a very shallow snorkeling area off a little motu that can be very affected by strong currents. Go during low tide, in calm conditions if possible. We had amazing visibility and there was a lot of good coral here. The fish were great and we saw a turtle and a school of squid. – Steel Away

5.12.3 Cruiser Report

2010: Just out of Neiafu is the lovely island of Kapa with its Swallows Cave, and a spectacular sight. Kapa Island is only about 4 miles from Neiafu, but it is a world apart. – Passage

5.13 Hunga (Anchorage #13)

5.13.1 Pass

July 2019: Hunga is a lagoon. Enter on the west side through the south pass. There is a rock in the middle of the pass. Keep the rock to port and go through the middle between the rock and the south shore. Hunga Haven (Ch 26 - Brian) has moorings directly across from the entrance. Cats can go in any tide and any time. Do not enter during SW or NW wind.

From Hunga Haven: The approach to the entrance is straight forward and you'll want to keep the rock that's in the entrance on your port side. When the rock is on your port beam, steer a course of 115 deg magnetic and that will line you up with a beach at the southeast corner of the lagoon. As you're entering the lagoon, there is a reef on your port side and this course will keep you clear of this. Once you are well into the lagoon the water depth increases. – Panache

Oct. 2005: Entry is on the west side through a very narrow opening through the rock complicated by a pinnacle planted in the middle of the pass followed by a dogleg to the right and shallow enough that at dead low tide a six-foot draft boat might touch. This daunting description got our heart rate up a bit (especially when we realized at the last minute that we were only one hour past low tide), but in fact entry went smoothly and we found only one other boat at anchor inside. – Tackless II

5.13.2 Anchorage

April 2012: We are currently tucked away in Hunga, an extinct volcano crater about 5 miles WSW of Neiafu. We wanted to visit this spot, as another old friend of ours said that Hunga was his preferred Cyclone Hole in the Vava'u area. And I've got to say, this looks more protected than either Neiafu or Tapanā. And it's a beautiful (but a bit remote) spot. The moorings that are available seem a bit light (we haven't actually dived to the bottom to look at what's down there, but the lines are not the huge lines we are used to from Neiafu and Tapanā). They cost \$15 TOP per night, payable to Ika Lahi Lodge (this fee barely pays for the annual upkeep expenses of the moorings).

18°41.59S / 174°07.69W We anchored between the two islands in the middle of the lagoon. There are a few 'bommies' nearby on the shelf, so nose in carefully, and make sure you have swinging room for the weather you expect while there. – Soggy Paws

2009: 18°41.56S / 174°07.75W. In 70' (good holding in sand). The narrow entrance to Hunga is daunting—the proverbial “between a rock and a hard place.” We'd suggest checking out the Moorings guide or getting local knowledge before entering. – Nine of Cups

5.13.3 Activities

April 2012: We did some snorkeling around in the two west-facing openings in the basin. It looked very diveable in both places. Snorkeling around just to the south of the main pass. Plus, there is some very interesting topography (pillars and overhangs). – Soggy Paws

Oct. 2005: One of the leads we had been given was to dive the snorkel site shown just outside Hunga's narrow pass. What a great dive! By chance we got the dinghy anchor down in the perfect place, a sandy spot at the head of an underwater ravine reaching seaward. The north side of this ravine was a long spur of rock cloaked with dozens of different kinds of hard corals, soft corals, leather corals, liberally bedecked with feather stars and bright green bubble algae and busy with fish of all sizes.

At its outer end it probably dropped down as deep as 80-90', but with the good viz the view from 40' was just great. The tip of the spur presented an “acre” of unblemished lettuce coral (sometimes called cabbage coral) -- a beautiful species with delicately-folded leaves that we have nothing like in the Caribbean. Through these leaves darted scissortail sergeant majors and other small tropicals, while above milled a large school of what back home we'd call boga. We worked our way back on the other side of the “finger” and saw more of the same to the north. We enjoyed this dive so much, we did it a second time the next day. – Tackless II

5.13.4 Cruiser Report

April 2012: Ika Lahi Lodge is a beautiful eco-fishing-lodge, run by Caroline and Steve, a very nice couple from NZ, who sailed this area for a long time before settling here 12 years ago to build their fishing lodge. They have 4 bungalows, and 2 sport fishing boats. Typically, they get groups of 6-12 who are crazy about sport fishing.

The lodge is one of the best-kept structures we have seen in the area--exceedingly well constructed, very elegant and upscale, and kept really clean and neat (even though it is off-season still for a couple more weeks). Since they are perched on the western edge of Vava'u, they are also in a perfect spot for

whale-watching. Caroline said that they have had several mama whales give birth right under their west-facing cliff lookout spot.

They invite cruisers come in for dinner, but prior arrangement is required.

There is no cell tower on Hunga, so cell phone service is almost non-existent in the harbor. (Ika Lahi says they've been promised one, but it hasn't materialized yet). We found that text messaging got through better than phone calls. It helps to stand high on the boat and be clear of the rigging. – Soggy Paws

5.14 Late Island

This is an uninhabited volcanic island. Technically, not part of the Vava'u group as the island is located 30nm to the West of Vava'u. It is forbidden to go ashore on this island as they are trying keep them rat free. The rats have been eradicated and there is a 6-month warning of taking of coconut crabs from this island. Permission must be given to go ashore.

5.15 Foeata Island “Blue Lagoon” (Anchorage #14)

5.15.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°42.609S / 174°08.321W. Around 10m. We had 10-12kt of wind from the NNW (yes, you read that right) and the swell wrapped around the reef making this a very roly anchorage.

We came with the sun right overhead and at high tide. The reef was easy to see and it was clearly identifiable on the satellite images. We did not have any difficulty coming into the anchorage which is almost surrounded by reefs.

18°42.72S / 174°08.38W is another anchor spot reported by another yachtie. – Sugar Shack

2019: Day only. Go in at low tide so you can see the hazards. The area becomes roly at high tide with confused seas. – Panache

5.15.2 Cruiser Reports

Aug. 2023: The white sandy bottom gives the water a beautiful turquoise glow making it very inviting. Keep in mind that the surrounding, shallow reefs don't provide much protection from the seas. And because there are reefs everywhere it would be super challenging to leave at night if the winds come up which is why most people consider this a day stop.

There is a resort on Foeata Island and it did appear to be open. We did not visit. – Sugar Shack

5.16 Matamaka (Anchorage #15)

5.16.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°42.355S / 174°5.546W. This is SW corner of Nuapapu) Offered great protection from a system with strong winds that clocked round from N to NW to W overnight. Mostly deep water but we anchored in a shelf with excellent holding. – Ana Maria

July 2023: 18°42.36S / 174°05.54W. We dropped the anchor at a fairly shallow sandy spot and were totally alone in the bay. With bad weather coming and winds from the north east turning till north west and south west we decided to hide here. This was a great spot for sitting out a storm like this and with more than enough swinging room. – Easter Stream

2009: 18°42.46S / 174°07.75W – 45' (good holding in sand) – Nine of Cups

5.16.2 Cruiser Report

Aug. 2023: The village hosts a Tongan feast fundraiser on Thursday nights. The fee is between \$80-\$100TOP and it is a fun filled experience. It is advised not to bring alcoholic beverages to this event as it is considered a family feast. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: The village of Nuapapu (northwest of Matamaka at 18°42.12S / 174°4.19W) hosts a good Tongan feast on Thursday nights around 1600. They serve roasted pig, lobster, crab, oat aka (Tongan poisson cru or ceviche) and fresh coconut. Cost is \$80TOP per person and \$40TOP for kids. The village needs school supplies so donations would be welcomed. RSVP for the feast with Primrose on VHF 26 or at the fresh market. He can also coordinate transportation from Neiafu. In calm weather you can anchor at #15, #16, #17 and dinghy to the feast. – Ana Maria

5.17 Vaka'eitu (Anchorage #16)

5.17.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°43.088S / 174°06.03W and 18°43.373S / 174°05.952W. Anchor in 12-20m. The bottom is mostly sand with some coral outcrops. Good protection in most conditions. Enter the anchorage by rounding the north of Lape Island. – Perigee

Aug. 2023: 18°43.356S / 174°6.003W. Great protection even in a mild northerly. – Ana Maria

Aug. 2023: There are no moorings in this anchorage. We anchored in 15m of sand to avoid going too close to shore where the depths drop quickly and lots of live coral live in this area. – Jamala

2019: There is a white buoy between the island and the shore. Pass between the buoy and shore, with buoy on your starboard side. When you go over the reef it shallows up to 3m. Can anchor in 15m. Do not go here in an E wind. Go in any tide and any time. – Panache

5.17.2 Activities

Aug. 2023: Snorkeling at the “Coral Gardens” between Vaka'eitu and Nuapapu is possible at slack water. There is a drop off on the western side of this reef which is reported to be good diving. Some adventurous soles swam over the reef at high tide and some less fortunate soles were bounced along the reef in the attempt.

Vaka'eitu is inhabited by David, his wife Hika and three of their 11 children who board in Neiafu during the week. They host a Tongan feast on Saturday nights, TOP100 per person. There are no longer any other resorts or restaurants on the island. – Perigee

Aug. 2023: A local named David, lives on this island with his family. They host cruiser dinners on Saturday around 1800. Advance notice is required as he will go shopping in Neiafu the day before. Cost for the feast is \$100TOP, bring your own liquor/beverages. The roasted pig is usually small and barely enough for everyone. David will also sell you fruit from his property. Lovely snorkeling at high tide, anchor your dinghy on the other side of the reef at coral gardens. – Jamala

Aug. 2023: The trails listed in the cruising guides are mostly overgrown. You can bush-whack your way through the old resort grounds by the sunken jetty in the southwest corner of the bay.

Interesting coral can be found on the eastern side of the island (18°43.35S / 174°5.28W). At high tide, you can go through the pass and walk on a beautiful white sand beach (18°43.36S / 174°5.30W). Coral on the west sides of Kulo island, Tangatasito Island, and Coral Gardens are mostly dead from the 2022 tsunami. Best snorkeling can be found with a short dinghy ride. Cross through Langito'o island and Lape

island and turn south. Location **18°43.922S / 174°05.027W**. Huge bommies with health coral. Some areas are shallower than others so swim around until you find the shallow bommies. – Ana Maria

July 2023: Although the Coral Gardens are off the Northern tip of this island, the reports we had were not good. The surf break over the reef is too large to get over. Some people took long dinghy rides all the way around the island to the north to get to the opposite side of the reef. But then they said that the coral did not look like it was in good shape.

We found a good spot on the eastern tip of the island off a little pocket of beach (**18°72.579S / 174°09.184W**). We saw lots of fish, a school of squid, and live coral. There is walking access to the south side of the island, where the beach is lovely for combing, walking, or hanging out. – Steel Away

5.17.3 Cruiser Report

Aug. 2023: The local family hosts a Tongan feast on the beach. The cost is between \$80-\$100TOP. The family allows cruisers to bring alcoholic beverages to the feast and it is loads of fun. They are also willing to trade for fruit so be sure to ask if they need anything. – Sugar Shack

March 2012: The big draw for us was the snorkeling/diving. On the west side of the Island was a wonderful reef with healthy coral and a huge variety of fish. In order to get to the west side, we had to make our way across to the outside of the reef. We did this once by swimming and several times by dinghy. Crossing on a relatively calm day around high tide seemed to work the best. – Shango

5.18 Lape Island (Anchorage #17)

5.18.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: **18°42.929S / 174°5.015W**. This has great SE protection and good holding. Better protection than it looks like it would be on the chart. There are no moorings remaining. – Ana Maria

5.18.2 Activities

Aug. 2023: The island no longer does Tongan feasts or much of anything for cruisers. Only 4 people live on the island and they are very nice, but quite limited in their mobility. – Ana Maria

5.19 Taunga (Anchorage #21)

5.19.1 Activities

Aug. 2023: **18°44.4S / 174°00.6W**. Offers protection from southerly and westerly conditions on a narrow sand bank. There are several coral outcrops close to shore. To the north there is a wider beach but protection and holding is reported to be marginal. – Perigee

Aug. 2023: **18°44.452S / 174°0.587W**. Great protection from westerly and southwesterly winds. Excellent holding if you tuck up close to shore. – Ana Maria

July 2023: Just below the island of Taunga is a small island called Ngau (**18°76.247S / 174°01.163W**). We snorkeled this spot and went back and dove it as well. The depth increases as you swim south around the edge of the reef. There are some beautiful bommies on the edge of the reef that are teeming with anemones, clown fish, and coral, but they were a little deep for snorkeling. We saw black tip sharks, a turtle, and many fish as well as coral. This site was a top place for us. – Steel Away

5.20 Ngau (Anchorage 23)

5.20.1 Cruiser Report

Aug. 2023: 18°45.316S / 174°00.627W. Decent snorkeling of small but active round reefs. – Ana Maria

5.21 Taunga South (Anchorage #24)

5.21.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°44.0S / 174°00.4W. A spectacular anchorage with fabulous vistas and one of the best beaches. There is good holding on a large shelf. Suitable for westerlies, north westerlies, and settled conditions, exposed to the south and southeast. – Perigee

Aug. 2023: Great protection from northwesterly winds. Beautiful, long white sand beach. – Ana Maria

5.21.2 Activities

Aug. 2023: Taunga is a pig free island and has a village on the north western side of the island. Snorkeling in the area is average but fun to explore. Whales (cows and their calves) visit the waters between Taunga and Ta'uta – the island to the east. – Perigee

Aug. 2023: Great for bonfires (be sure to clean up afterwards). Short dinghy ride to snorkel the reefs west of Ngau (sometimes labeled as Pau Island). – Ana Maria

5.22 Old Harbor / Makave (Anchorage #25)

5.22.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°39.247S / 173°58.28527W. Good protection from all but southerlies. The northwest area of the bay dries out at low tide so watch your charts. There is quite a bit of coral that tried to eat our chain so float your chain. – Ana Maria

5.22.2 Activities

Aug. 2023: The Kilikiletufua Wall in Makave village is in disrepair, but the village is full of friendly people. The small boat harbor is on the southwest corner of the bay. The channel is shallow and narrow, but there are ramps to pull up the dinghy. No floating dock for the dinghy. This harbor is as convenient to town as the Mango café dock. – Ana Maria

5.23 Eueiki (Anchorage #29)

This is a day stop only. Great exploring of caves and plant life.

5.24 Kenutu (Anchorage #30)

Eastern Vava'u

5.24.1 Pass

Aug. 2023: We left around 0930 from anchorage 39 (between Ovaka and Avalau) heading north east. Strongly advise making this passage in good sun and preferably light or calm conditions. As you pass Lautala Island and Nukutahanga there is a reef that you have to zig zag around. We crossed it at mid-tide and saw 4m below our boat. There are no markers and lots of isolated coral heads everywhere.

As we continued on, we passed by the southern corner of Ofu avoiding the very long reef that shoots out from this island before turn north. We then zig zagged to our anchor spot. – Sugar Shack

5.24.2 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°41.730S / 173°55.737W. dropped the hook in 4m of sand with really good holding. There were no bommies in our area. We were here on a very calm day (less than 5-6kts of wind) with 3 other boats all spread out pretty nicely. As one of the eastern most anchorages it is well protected from more winds except west. There were a lot of starfish on the bottom so be mindful and try not to pierce them with your anchor. Kenutu is an idyllic lagoon for an overnight anchorage. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: 18°41.95S / 173°55.74W. Good protection from easterly and south-easterly conditions. Best approached at low tide with the sun behind you. Kenutu is one of five islands bordering the eastern basin and is the only one with an anchorage. – Perigee

July 2023: 18°41.86S / 173°55.72W. We anchored in the middle of the second pool and had enough space for a 360-turn. One of the best spots we visited during our stay in the Vava'u group. Eyeball your way in through the reef and anchor in your own private swimming pool. – Easter Stream

5.24.3 Cruiser Report

Aug. 2023: Fun island to explore inland with a short hike/walk to the other side. Approach the beach, toward the right is a trail marked with a float that reads "trail." Follow the path to the other side to see beautiful, colorful cliffs, blow holes, and shallow turquoise waters. Don't be shy and explore. We found at least 6-7 small trails leading to different areas of the cliffs. One trail took us down to a gorge at sea level where unfortunately several pearl floats and trash were left. But it was cool to be at sea level watching the waves break on the rocks. Bring hiking/tennis shoes as the coral is hard to walk on.

During low tide you can walk to the islands both north and south.

There were lots of flying termites and flies so be sure to put your screens up at night. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: From this anchorage it is possible to explore U'muna, Kenutu, and Lolo islands by dinghy. The eastern side of these islands are spectacular rugged cliff faces. There is a path on Kenutu to the eastern side of the island with spectacular views. Lolo can be explored by foot at low tide.

Definitely worth the effort to get there. The snorkeling here is good. Being so far east it was less affected by the 2022 tsunami. The best snorkeling is to be found on the coral outcrops just west of the pass between Kenutu and U'muna to the north. – Perigee

July 2023: The views are great. From the little beach you can make a short walk to the other side of the island with great views. If you are lucky, a fisherman may pass by to sell you fresh caught fish or lobster. – Easter Stream

5.25 Maninita Island (Anchorage #31)

Sailingbird Guide - Pg 138

Southern Vava'u

5.25.1 VEPA (Vava'u Environmental Protection Association)

This is an uninhabited island. This island is rat free so please make sure you do not bring anything to the island or transport anything from the island. Check your belongings to make sure there are no "stowaways." If you do have mud, sand, critters or seeds. clean them off at the island before you leave. If you see a rat or cat or new species of ant contact VEPA at +676 740 1903 or +676 774 2716.

5.25.2 Anchorage

May 2012: We thought we had pretty good weather conditions to make a stop overnight at Maninita, on our way from Hunga to Ha'apai. However, when we arrived, the sky was overcast, there was rain

nearby, and the wind had picked up to 15 knots. We had the best nav-aids available, Google Earth charts and several sets of waypoints from other cruisers, plus lots of experience with reef navigation, but after sailing back and forth several times near the entrance, we decided against trying to get inside. We backtracked a few miles NW to Fonua One One, where we found a reasonable anchorage that is easy to get in and out. – Soggy Paws

Nov. 2011: 18°51.400S / 173°59.866W. We motored 2 hours south and east to Maninita Island, a very small anchorage with a narrow entrance. Ken's Guide chart lists entrances to the North and to the South around a reef. We tried to go into the North but were unsuccessful in finding the passage but we did find the reef. We backed out and went in the South entrance and had no problems getting in. There was barely room for us (46ft) and Slip Away (41ft). Inside we had easterly winds with waves breaking over the reef and hitting the stern making it a loud, uncomfortable anchorage. – Chesapeake

5.26 Euakafa (Anchorage #32)

Sailingbird Guide - Pg 122

Southern Vava'u

5.26.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°45.194S / 174°2.117W. Good in mild southerly, but holding is mediocre in a bunch of sand, coral and rock. Neither jetty marked in cruising guide or visible in some older satellite images is visible during low tide. – Ana Maria

Aug. 2023: We anchored in 5m, but we found that there was not enough room to swing if the wind shifted. So, we ended up leaving shortly after to avoid being over one of the many bommies. – Jamala

5.26.2 Cruiser Report

Aug. 2023: Best snorkeling is at the nursery on the northwest corner of the island (**18°45.329S / 174°02.515W.**). There is also some live blue coral (as marked on Navionics **18°45.886S / 174°02.319W.** but go at high tide as much of the healthy coral is on the outside fringe of the reef where the surf breaks at low tide.

There are reports of a tomb of a Tongan princess at the top of the island. Wifred, the swiss owner of the resort on the northwest side of the island, says the tomb has been wiped away by cyclones. A group of 12 cruisers tried to find the trail and tomb but couldn't find the tomb. There is bushwhacking trail from the Southeast corner of the reefs. Trailhead is at the very bottom of the southern tip of the beach on the eastern side of the island. A nice white sand beach can be walked from the northeast side of the island all the way to the west side of the island. – Ana Maria

Aug. 2023: There are many living bommies between sand patches. – Jamala

2010: Euakafa is a high island in the southeastern part of Vava'u. It is not inhabited, but it offers many other attractions. There is a great reef for diving on the east side of the island. There is ample shallow And it also the site of some interesting Tongan history/legend - the story of Telea and his queen, Talafaiva. The tomb of Talafaiva is found along the trail leading up the island.

Along the beach, there are obvious slabs of coral missing where they were taken for Talafaiva's tomb. The walls of the actual tomb appear about 8" thick. However, there is also a short vertical wall (about 8" high) surrounding the tomb, and that wall is said to enclose an area about the size of a football field. We were not able to explore its perimeter because of the thick brush, but we believe the "football field" estimate is probably accurate. The tomb is open and empty. Some say that Talafaiva was never buried in

it. Others say that her body was stolen by Lepuha. Others say that her body was stolen by members of her family. No one knows.

This island has plenty to offer despite it being currently uninhabited. – Passage

5.27 Fuamotu (Anchorage #33)

5.27.1 VEPA (Vava'u Environmental Protection Association)

This is an uninhabited island. It is forbidden to go ashore on this island as they are trying keep them rat free. The rats have been eradicated and there is a 6-month warning of taking of coconut crabs from this island. Permission must be given to go ashore.

5.27.2 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°47.421S / 174°00.417W. Good holding in a mild southerly. Most of the island is surrounded by deep water and coral, but there is a tiny patch of sand (big enough for one boat) and a sandy pathway for the dinghy all the way up to the island.

Nice secluded anchorage. Whales swam close to the boat all night. – Ana Maria

5.28 Lahiapo (Luahaipo) (Anchorage #35)

5.28.1 VEPA (Vava'u Environmental Protection Association)

This is an uninhabited island. This island is rat free so please make sure you do not bring anything to the island or transport anything from the island. Check your belongings to make sure there are no “stowaways.” If you do have mud, sand, critters or seeds. clean them off at the island before you leave. If you see a rat or cat or new species of ant contact VEPA at +676 740 1903 or +676 774 2716.

5.29 Fonua' One'One (Anchorage #36)

Sailingbird Guide Pg 136. Both Sailingbird and Moorings call this a ‘day anchorage only’.

Southern Vava'u

5.29.1 VEPA (Vava'u Environmental Protection Association)

This is an uninhabited island. This island is rat free so please make sure you do not bring anything to the island or transport anything from the island. Check your belongings to make sure there are no “stowaways.” If you do have mud, sand, critters or seeds. clean them off at the island before you leave. If you see a rat or cat or new species of ant contact VEPA at +676 740 1903 or +676 774 2716.

5.29.2 Anchorage

May 2012: 18°48.935S / 174°03.918W in the deep sand in 15 feet at the edge of the shelf. We were hanging in about 60' after letting out our anchor scope.

The anchorage we'd recommend for consideration as your jumping off point to the Ha'apai is Fonua One One (I'm pretty sure that One One is pronounced "onay onay"). It is only a few miles north and west of Maninita. On the north side of this island, off the west tip of the island, the reef extends far enough to the west that there is good protection from SSW through E. There is a dip in the middle of this spot that has a 15-foot sand shelf, with DEEP sand, and (just) enough swinging room in case the wind gets backwards. – Soggy Paws

5.29.3 Cruiser Report

May 2012: When departing to the south around the east end, make sure you miss the reef that extends north and east from the island, and also the large, breaking detached reef a couple of miles to the south and east. You can go between Fonua One One and the detached reef. The reef breaks pretty spectacularly, so you can see it easily in most sea conditions.

There was a strong current running north through the gap in the reef just ahead of us, which seemed to persist no matter what the tide was doing. We believe it was caused by the southerly swell breaking on the reef. – Soggy Paws

5.30 Fangasito (Anchorage #37)

5.30.1 VEPA (Vava'u Environmental Protection Association)

This is an uninhabited island. This island is rat free so please make sure you do not bring anything to the island or transport anything from the island. Check your belongings to make sure there are no “stowaways.” If you do have mud, sand, critters or seeds. clean them off at the island before you leave. If you see a rat or cat or new species of ant contact VEPA at +676 740 1903 or +676 774 2716.

5.31 Ovaka (Anchorage #38)

5.31.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°45.935S / 174°05.206W There is one mooring ball near the beach and the rest of the anchorage is pretty deep. We did not check out the mooring as a monohull was on it, but I imagine it needs to be checked before using. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: We anchored in 12m of sand but there was quite a swell and it was not comfortable in the night at high tide. – Jamala

July 2023: 18°45.1601S / 174°05.2420W We anchored in 5m of water on a sandy bottom with good holding. Between Ovaka Island and Avalau Island you find beautiful blue water to anchor. – Eastern Stream

5.31.2 Activities

Aug. 2023: If you go to shore during mid to high tide you can get across the reef protecting the beach. It is a small, but lovely beach. If you go to the left of the beach you will see a trail that leads to Sergei's property. He is a very friendly American who has lived on island for over 20 years.

If you go to the right of the beach and take the trail you will go to the village. The village is home to 15 people and 200 pigs. Super friendly folks willing to sell or trade fruit. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: There is a village here with a few fishing boats that come and go. – Jamala

July 2023: This snorkeling site was found just by looking at GoogleMaps (**18°75.495S /174°09.587W**). The edge drop-off into the deeper blue hole is great. Pay attention to the tides when going here. It is more enjoyable to go when the current is minimal at low tide in general. We saw a white tip shark cruising the edge here and lots of fish and good coral. – Steel Away

July 2023: In the deeper water the whales play around and it is possible to visit both islands. We did some snorkeling here at the reef but most of the reef is not in good condition. We did see a lot of fish though. – Eastern Stream

5.32 Avalau (Anchorage #39)

This is a protected area and you are not allowed to fish. Please see the VEPA section of this guide or read the posted sign on the beach.

5.32.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°45.145S / 174°05.172W. Dropped in 5m of water. The bottom did not look like it would be a good hold, but we pulled back on it with both engines at 2000RPM and she stuck really good. This is gorgeous turquoise water, but not much to snorkel around the boat.

There were 4 other boats (3 cats and 1 mono) at **18°45.0993S / 174°04.9271W** and there were 2 other boats closer to Mounu) at **18°45.000S / 174°04.830W**. – We had NNW winds at 10-12kts.

There were 2 moorings over near the other 4 boats. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: Friends of ours picked up a mooring ball here. But we could only see one. – Jamala

5.33 Ovalau Island

5.33.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: We anchored in 5m of sand with some very visible coral but flat on the floor. The bottom looks like hard coral with sand but it was full sand. – Jamala

5.33.2 Cruiser Report

Aug. 2023: Beware of large flying ants (termites that lose their wings). They come out at night and are attracted to light. They lose their wings once they land on the boat. We closed our hatches when it got dark to avoid having them inside. – Jamala

5.34 Mounu (Anchorage #41)

Sailingbird Guide - Pg 121

Southern Vava'u

5.34.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 18°45.01S / 174°04.3W. Despite looking exposed, the protection is surprisingly good. There are no moorings here anymore so sneak up on the sand bar and drop in 5-12m between Mounu and Ovalau islands. It shoals pretty quickly and there are a few coral heads to look out for. Further south and southeast is a large reef which provides the good protection. Can be a little bumpy at high tide. – Perigee

Aug. 2023: We anchored in the bay of this private island. It shelves dramatically and unlike the other side of the island it goes from 10m to 2m very quickly. – Jamala

5.34.2 Restaurants

Aug. 2023: We called Mounu Resort and asked if we could come for a drink. You can also go for dinner if you book in advance. Kristy, the owner was lovely and very welcoming. James prepared our drinks and we found this to be an excellent place, absolutely loved the few hours we spent there. Ring them on +676 755 4331 or +676 886 6403 or VHF 77 before heading to shore. – Jamala

Aug. 2023: Mounu Island Resort, VHF 77, www.mounuisland.com. Schedule a dinner reservation 24-hours in advance. \$125TOP. In July their VHF was broken. – Perigee

5.34.3 Cruiser Report

Aug. 2023: Mounu Island Resort is run by two sister who have continued the business after their parents passed on. Their parents pioneered swimming with the whales as a tourist attraction and they continue to offer swimming with the whale's tours. They monitor VHF 77 but their VHF was out of service in Aug. 2023. They welcome cruisers to their bar and a 3-course dinner can be arranged with 24hrs notice (TOP115).

Some good snorkeling on the reef can be found. However, it is patchy, so best to ask at the resort for guidance on where to go. Juvenile whales are known to visit the anchorage and swim around the boats. They can be quite playful. Best time to see the whales is August and September. –Perigee

2010: A delightful small island surrounded by a sandy beach, Mounu is the South Pacific island of your dreams. A new mini resort has been established on the western end of the island, call ahead on the VHF and make your reservation for a gourmet meal. – Passage

5.35 Mou'mua (Mu'omu'a) (Anchorage #42)

5.35.1 VEPA (Vava'u Environmental Protection Association)

This is an uninhabited island. It is forbidden to go ashore on this island as they are trying keep them rat free. The rats have been eradicated and there is a 6-month warning of taking of coconut crabs from this island. Permission must be given to go ashore.

5.36 Diving Vava'u

While 'rocks don't move', dives do change due to environmental issues (seasonally, cyclones, and warm water events), and dive operations change owners FREQUENTLY in Vava'u. So, in reading the pages below, take them as possibilities, but make your own assessments before you go diving.

5.36.1 Summary of Dive Operations in Vava'u

There are currently 5 commercial dive operations in Vava'u. Riki's operation was most economical, and most amenable to package deals for small groups.

Name	Certification Levels / Affiliation	Website	Contact	Gear Rental	
Beluga Diving	All Levels	belugadivingvavau.com	info@belugadivingvavau.com	Yes	
Dive Tonga	PADI All levels	www.divingtonga.com	shane@moorings.co.nz	Yes	
Riki Tiki Tours	PADI	www.divereport.com/dive-centres/915/-riki-tiki-tonga	+676 877 1066	Yes	Air Only

Air fills generally cost around \$10 TOP. Nitrox fills, if available, are likely to be expensive, because the O2 has to be shipped in from outside the country.

Beluga Diving - Tel: +676 70327, VHF Ch. 09. Mostly closed during low season. They were also not at all amenable to working out any discount deals.

Dolphin Pacific Diving - <http://www.dolphinpacificdiving.com/> Mostly closed during low season. They seemed to be a good operation and friendly people.

Riki Tiki Tours - Riki is a former Kiwi and a PADI dive instructor. He worked for another dive operation in Neiafu for a long time, but eventually acquired his own dive boat and works for himself. He prefers small groups, and would likely be the most economical operation for 2-4 divers. Riki also reportedly does the dive certifications for Dolphin Pacific. Soggy Paws did a number of dives with Riki in early 2012, and he runs a safe operation, and knows the Neiafu dive sites well. He does have rental equipment available in good condition, and can fill tanks. Riki operates out of an unmarked building just to the south of Aquarium Café. Best way to contact him is to go in person. His cell phone is +676 877 1066, but due to coverage issues he can't always answer, so be prepared to send a text (do not leave a message).

5.36.2 Soggy Paws - Summary of Dive Sites in Vava'u

We were fortunate to spend the 2011-2012 cyclone season hanging out in Vava'u and diving once a week. We took our GPS along to record the 'put in' position on most of those dives. In addition, we got a bunch of the normal dive site waypoints from s/v Two If By Sea, who had done dive charters in the area for a couple of years. We dove a few of the places by ourselves with dinghies.

We have summarized our experiences on our website, here: <http://svsoggypaws.com/tongadive/>

On that site are dive profiles, our opinion on the best way to dive the site, and pics and descriptions of the dives we did. Plus, downloadable copies of the waypoints, suitable for pulling into Google Earth and OpenCPN. I'm not going to duplicate all that info here.

Some dives are also covered by the Hacking Family, <http://hackingfamily.com/underwater/Diving/>. Ones with an asterisk (*) in the first column are those that are easy to dive for a cruising yacht with a dinghy and their own gear.

Most of these are grouped around the western entrance to Neiafu, because they are the favorite dive spots of the dive operations at Neiafu, who want to give you a good dive in the sometimes-screaming east winds, without using too much gas.

Most of these are also good snorkel spots, especially Swallows Cave and the Coral Gardens at Vaka Eitu, which are both 'Not to Miss' locations in Vava'u.



	Site Name	Latitude	Longitude	Description
*	Clan MacWilliam Wreck	18°40.348'S	173°59.351'W	400' Wreck in Neiafu Harbor 80-120'. Bouy on bow & stern
*	Swallows Cave	18°40.945'S	174°02.845'W	Nice cave for diving or snorkeling
	Mushrooms	18°40.285'S	174°03.403'W	Just across the way from Swallows Cave
	Sea Fans	18°39.664'S	174°04.040'W	East side of Tu'ungasika Island, in the North Shore area
	Split Rock	18°39.488'S	174°04.111'W	NW side of Tu'ungasika Island, in the North Shore area
	China Gardens	18°39.462'S	174°04.234'W	North side of Tu'ungasika Island, in the North Shore area. Beautiful coral structures.
	Fotula Rock	18°38.920'S	174°04.064'W	North Shore area. Deep dive, swim-through
	White Patch	18°38.920'S	174°04.064'W	North Shore area
	North Shore	18°38.329'S	174°03.968'W	North Shore area. Wall dive.
	Rhino	18°40.050'S	174°03.425'W	North Shore area
	Caddy Shack	18°40.263'S	174°05.067'W	North east tip of Hunga Island. Many swim-throughs.
	Shark Tooth	18°40.975'S	174°03.932'W	On the north tip of Kitu Island
	The Gap	18°41.296'S	174°04.170'W	North tip of Nuapupu Island. Pelagic fish, deep dive, swim-throughs
	Mariner's Cave	18°41.462'S	174°04.494'W	Northwest side of Nuapupu Island
*	Coral Gardens	18°42.630'S 18°42.971'S 18°43.396'S	174°06.144'W 174°06.231'W 174°06.336'W	West of Vaka'eitu (Anchorage 16). Beautiful reef and wall in 8'-50'. Great snorkeling too.
*	Langito'o Island Reef	18°43.668'S 18°43.835'S	174°05.490'W 174°05.336'W	South East of Vaka'eitu (Anchorage 16). Nice reef in 5'-45'
*	The Pagodas	18°43.990'S 18°44.242'S	174°05.044 W 174°04.911 W	South East of Vaka'eitu (Anchorage 16). Nice coral structures in 10'-60'

	Site Name	Latitude	Longitude	Description
	Ovaka Wall	18°44.668'S	174°06.972'W	(we didn't dive)
	Ovaka's Coral Canyons	18°44.698'S	174°06.626'W	Beach dive at the west end of Ovaka, in a coral area
*	The Nursery	18°45.328'S	174°02.544'W	Near Euakafa, Anchorage 32
*	Blue Coral	18°45.927'S	174°02.337'W	Near Euakafa, Anchorage 32
*	Little Knob	18-43.504'S	174-00.148'W	Near Tapana, Anchorage 11 or 12. Coral mound.
*	Hunga Pass	18°41.6'S	174°08.4'W	The south side of the pass into Hunga Lagoon
	Fonua One One			S Side of Fonua One One

5.36.3 A Dive Emergency in Vava'u

Soggy Paws: This account is from the Hacking Family website (2004), buried in the Private Dives section. I felt it was a useful account and worth elevating its visibility a little.

It was on the Clan MacWilliam wreck dive (in Neaifu Harbor) that our very experienced diving friend Kelcey, from Lady Starlight, with over 2000 dives, [got bent](#).

Kelcey and her husband Jim had dived the wreck about 9 times before, and were very cautious about not reaching their decompression limits. But, within minutes of surfacing after a dive she felt a sharp pain in her neck, then weakness in her right side and torso. Although they are classic signs of the bends, none of them could believe it was anything other than her normally cranky neck. She used the on-board oxygen for a while, then took a nap. The next morning she had to call DAN (Diver's Alert Network). The closest chamber, in Fiji, was in use, so she had to go to the big multiple chamber in New Zealand.

Although there was a specially equipped Lear jet/ambulance that could pressurize to sea level on alert in Melbourne, Australia, it couldn't get permission to land in Tonga. It was Sunday in Tonga, and NOTHING happens on Sunday. All the officials that could grant permission for a private jet to land in the Vava'u Group were at church. Kelcey waited at the hospital, on oxygen, until after midnight. Monday, the jet whisked her off to NZ, where she spent 9 hours in the chamber, and then again for the next 5 days.

She is not fully recovered (she still has weakness in her leg) but the hardest thing is not being able to dive again for a year (her doctors actually told her "never again").

Although they may never know what happened, and why she got bent when she was within the no-decompression limits, one suggestion was that she was dehydrated, having had a couple fast cups of coffee while running around town before the dive. In her haste, she failed to drink her customary liter of water before the dive. We all take note!

DAN membership, with the extra coverage for dive insurance (about \$130 USD per year for a couple), is a valuable thing to have for cruisers diving in remote locations.

6 Ha'apai Group - North to South

The Ha'apai group is comprised of 62 islands. The islands include barrier reefs, shallow lagoons, coral shoals, and even active volcanoes, but most are small low-lying coral atolls. The size of the smallest island is less than 1 hectare, and even the largest island is less than 18 square miles. The total land mass of the Ha'apai group is less than 43 square miles, and those islands are spread over no less than 4,000 square miles of ocean.

There are east-west passes between islands which somewhat separate islands in to groups. However, the Ha'apai islands are most obviously separated in to an east and west group. The eastern islands are a series of barrier islands running north-south, and the western islands are individual islands. However, the east-west passes between the barrier islands do define the 'soft' boundaries between the four groups of western islands.

Of the 62 islands in the Ha'apai group, only 17 are inhabited. On those 17 islands, there are approximately 8,000 people settled in 30 villages. As throughout Tonga, all but a few of the population are of Polynesian descent, and almost all are active members of a Christian church.

We've divided these islands into the Northern and Southern group.

Several atolls have no infrastructure but they do have resorts. Each resort is self-sufficient with generators, solar, and water tanks.

Income for these islanders is from agriculture and/or fishing. However, as in much of Tonga, the largest source of income is remittances from family members living abroad.

Much of the history of the Ha'apai parallels that of all of Tonga, but the Ha'apai also has a remarkable maritime history. The maritime history of the Ha'apai includes the well-known explorers Captains Tasman, Cook, and Bligh. It also includes the lesser known, but equally interesting, William Mariner. Recognition of these mariners is found throughout the Ha'apai group, especially in the administrative center of Pangai.

2019: It is good idea to plan your visit to the Ha'apai area during weather with stable trade winds. Of the many anchorages in the Ha'apai, there are none that provide good protection from westerly winds. Navionics charts are more or less reliable depending on the area. It is also advisable to use satellite photos for navigation. – Zoomax

6.1 Vava'u Environmental Protection Association

They focus conservation, education, community, and the future for Tongans. +676 751 9417, www.vavauenvironment.org. The SMA program began in 2002 through the Ministry of Fisheries with the objective to conserve the fisheries and marine resources for sustainable livelihoods and community benefits.

PLEASE pay attention to the protected and prohibited areas below. You are prohibited from fishing in within the yellow boundaries without a special permit and anchoring and fishing are strictly prohibited in the red striped area.



6.2 Northern Ha'apai Group

6.2.1 Ofolanga Island

Ken's Guide - Pg 98; Sailingbird Guide - Pg 88

6.2.1.1 Anchorage

Nov. 2011: 19°36.430S / 174°27.430W. We anchored in a sandy bottom with good holding and lots of surge. The water was murky but we could see the anchor. There was also plenty of room for other boats to anchor but it was just two of us. Inside we had an Easterly wind and waves came around the

corner on the bow for a comfortable anchorage, no rocking and rolling. Snorkeling was much better the second day, especially over some of the reef. It was a long swim to get island access. – Chesapeake

6.2.2 Ha'ano Island

Ken's Guide - Pg 102; Sailingbird Guide - Pg 86

6.2.2.1 Anchorage

Nov. 2011: 19°40.267S / 174°17.355W with an approach route of 72° T from 19°40.440S / 174°17.906W. – Chesapeake

Oct 2011: Our first stop was at an open roadstead that serves as a pretty decent anchorage off of Ha'ano Island. We had to drop the hook in over 50' of water but we were able to find a good sand bottom with few coral heads. We did some snorkeling that they said was fantastic. – Rutea

Oct 2011: 19°40.3S / 174°17.4W We had a leisurely overnight sail here. – Infinity

July 2006: Billed as a good rest stop, we picked our way in toward the mushroom-rock landmark. There were reefs everywhere, plus deep water until there wasn't, and, coupled with the chop from the southeasterly wind, there was little inviting about the place for our size boat. We turned and departed.

Shortly after sunset, the wind that was supposed to be well east, veered back into the southeast, just far enough that it wrapped around into the anchorage and set us a bobbing. As the tide came up it got worse and worse, with seas building to several feet, and Tackless II was pitching and rolling violently. Then, just to add interest, we started getting squalls with winds up to 25 knots. It was not a nice night.

Come daylight, it was clearly a bad idea to set sail. Instead we tucked our tail between our legs and struggled back south through squall after squall to Pangai's protected harbor. – Tackless II

6.2.2.2 Cruiser Report

Nov. 2011: Snorkeling here is the best so far –it's like floating through an aquarium chock full of huge thriving coral and a vast array of reef fish all in calm water. With the wide choice of reefs to float over this is a hard place to leave. Bonus...there is beachcombing with plenty of small shells. Ken's Guide describes Ha'ano well and again his waypoints were accurate. – Chesapeake

Oct. 2011: We've snorkeled the "mushroom rock" here, and passed over some beautiful coral formations and nice fish. We didn't see any big critters, but the boat next to us saw a zebra shark yesterday sleeping in the sand nearby their boat. These islands are quite low, and remind us of the low atolls of the Tuamotus in French Polynesia. – Infinity

2010: Ha'ano Island, about 8 miles north of Lifuka, was our first stop in the Ha'apai group. Although there are a few islands further north, they are also further west than we wanted to be. This was as far north as we could stop within the Ha'apai and stay near our intended course.

From the anchorage we could enjoy the beautiful coast and Pukutola Point. From a distance, the point appears uninhabited, but we had read about the fruit bats. We took the dinghy to the shallows to see them. There are hundreds of bats! They make a squeaking sound somewhat like a mouse - a very big mouse. Some of the trees were full of bats, and many more were flying around. Cool. – Passage

6.2.3 Lua Lafalafa Reef for Diving

6.2.3.1 Anchorage

Nov. 2011: 19°40.522S / 174°23.843W. Day stop only! - Chesapeake

2010: 19°40.413S / 174°19.971W. – Visions of Johanna

6.2.3.2 Activity

Nov. 2011: This is an open anchorage in the middle of the ocean and because the current went one way, the wind another, snorkeling was not easy. The water was clear and the island was full of birds, but there wasn't much to see underwater. We headed back to Ha'ano for more snorkeling. – Chesapeake

2010: We dove the Lua Lafalafa site, west of Ha'ano, by taking our big boat and anchoring. There is a relatively shallow (50-60') comma-shaped patch of sand just NW of seamount. The actual dive site is at 19°40.498S / 174°19.908W. The name is Lua Lafalkafa sea mount.

The "Arch". We did not dive there; it is located 19°37.801S / 174°29.002W. – Visions of Johanna

Lafa Lafa

The Lafa Lafa group comprises a series of four, distinct submerged seamounts. Being offshore and slightly exposed to prevailing currents they attract many of the larger species that divers want to see. 19°49.067S / 174°34.133W. Average depth 20m/65.6', max depth 25m/82', Current Strong (>2 knots), Visibility Excellent (>30 m).

Sharks, Rays and Turtles are not uncommon but may be difficult to sight through the profusion of schooling fish belonging to the Snapper, Parrotfish and Grouper families. Transient pelagics including Great Barracuda and Dogtooth Tuna scathe the mount facades, ever alert for an unsuspecting meal. Watch the small reef fish dive for cover as the open water predators make their periodic lunges.

The standard of coral health on the Lafa Lafa group, 3 and 4 in particular, is unparalleled in the entire Kingdom of Tonga and these dives deserve real recognition.

Currents can be a little tricky here and the dive is suited to more experienced divers. – WannaDive.net

6.2.4 Nukunamo

Ken's Guide Pg 104; Sailingbird Guide Pg 84-85

6.2.4.1 Anchorage

2019: 19°42.801S / 174°16.950W. Anchored in 7m on sand. Anchorage in front of a false pass between two islets. – Zoomax

May 2012: 19°42.81S / 174°16.9W. This is a nice little spot only a couple of miles south from Ha'ano. We used the waypoints in the 2 guides and a Google Earth chart closeup to get in here on a fully overcast day. Pretty easy entry. It was high tide, and we expected some swell coming from the gaps north and south of Nukunamo Island, but there was hardly any swell--certainly less swell from the S-SW than we had at Ha'ano.

There is plenty of room in good sand in 20-25' for 5-10 boats here. We only did a lunch stop here, but it would be a good several day stop in any winds from an easterly quadrant. – Soggy Paws

2009: 19°42.71S / 174°17.01W. 43' good holding, sand. – Nine of Cups

6.2.4.2 Activities

2019: Lush corals grow in the center, fed by the incessant rhythm of the tidal current. Fish abound, we even saw a leopard shark sleeping on the sand. – Zoomax

6.2.5 Foa

Sailingbird Guide Pg 84

6.2.5.1 Anchorage

July 2023: 19°43.343S / 174°17.274W in 4.5m of sand with good holding! We had to maneuver around several shallow areas (bommies) to get to this spot but it was worth the effort. We had several days of SE winds 30+kts and 3M seas and we were comfortable. We had the bay all to ourselves and a view of the sandy beach and beautiful trees. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022: 19°43.267S / 174°17.170W in 4m of water, sand with good holding. You need to set up your waypoints with the help of satellite imagery and carefully maneuver in past the coral bommies, but we never saw less than 2m of water. – Rainbow Safari

2012: 19°44.16S / 174°17.33W. It is protected from the SW-NE, and though quite a bit of scattered coral is visible on the bottom, we found a big sand spot where we could drop our anchor in the clear. We ended up anchoring in about 25 feet of sand, away from town, off a nice little beach with a landing from which one could walk or hitchhike into Pangai. We spent 2 days of squally SSE-SE weather anchored snugly here. – Soggy Paws

6.2.5.2 Restaurant

July 2023: Matafonua Lodge located in Faleloa (on Foa) offers great food and whale sightings are common just beyond the reef to the east. +676 69 766, info@matafonua.com, Located at the North tip of the island. – Steel Away

6.2.5.3 Activities

July 2023: The snorkeling through the pass is generally a drift snorkel that starts at a black fishing float and ends after the point off the lodge. If you go at low tide, there may be no current for an hour or two which makes it really enjoyable to hang out near the black float. We tied our dinghy to this float. It is a little tricky to navigate the bommies at low tide to get to the float though.

There is a deeper (10-12m) blue slot that some cruisers dove in near Matafonua Lodge (**19°70.681S / 174°27.644W**). There was a nurse shark in the bottom of the slot and some interesting fish. The coral was healthy around the edge. It is very accessible place to go by dinghy. – Steel Away

6.2.5.4 Cruiser Report

July 2023: We left Pangai, Lifuka at low tide around mid-day heading to Foa. We followed what looks like a channel on Navionics but in reality, the “markers” are really black poles or poles on cement blocks. Don’t get too close as they mark very shallow spots. Travel this area with good light and a lookout.

As we continued heading North, we were surprised to come across 5 small floats with small flags on them. Clearly marking fishing pods or spots. Thank goodness we had less .5m seas and could easily see these tiny markers. So, just be aware.

Matafonua Resort offers great pizza and cinnamon rolls. Matafonua VHF 14, +676 69 766 and vacation@matafonua.com or www.matafonua.com. They are located on the tip of the Foa island. They do request that you check in with them before coming to the resort as they will turn cruisers away if they are completely booked. But if they are not full, they may host you for lunch or dinner.

Sandy Beach Resort is the other resort on the north east end of Foa. +676 69 600, www.sandbeachtonga.com, vacation@sandybeachtonga.com, They were open and had guests as of August 2023. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022 - Matafonua Lodge & Sandy Beach Resort: We contacted Nina at the Sandy Beach Resort (vacation@sandybeachtonga.com). Nina and Darren own both Matafonua Lodge and Sandy Beach and are cruiser friendly. – Rainbow Safari

Matafanua was open, and the restaurant served excellent burgers, fries, pizza and cold beers. We spent quite a bit of time there as the anchorage was roly in the Westerly swell, and used Darren's brand-new Starlink set-up for unlimited free Internet! The beach is beautiful, the water clear, the snorkeling nice, and Leopard sharks in the pass.

We relied on our waypoints and track to leave Sandy Beach at sunrise, and were fine. – Rainbow Safari

6.2.6 Lifuka and Pangai

Lifuka is the island on which Pangai, the administrative center of the Ha'apai group is located. All boats passing through Ha'apai need to check in and out with Customs in Pangai on Lifuka.

Ken's Guide Pg 106; Sailingbird Guide Pg 50



6.2.6.1 Anchorage

Aug. 2023: 19°48.135S / 174°21.321W in 5 meters over sand (in between bommies) with good holding. This was just a day stop for us to check in to the Ha'apai group and do a small provision. I don't think I'd recommend this spot for an overnight as it is close to the channel and assume it gets roly when the ferries come and go. But for a quick stop it was great.

See our note on Foa anchorage as we travelled from Pangai to Foa.

Dinghy Dock is used by local boats and fishing boats so be kind, use a long painter. Also, note that the bottom step (there are 3 large cement steps or platforms) should not be used! During high tide for obvious reasons, but during low tide when it is exposed it is extremely dangerous and slippery. Use the 2nd step/platform. During bad conditions, 1-2 big boats can anchor inside the basin but there is not much room for more than that. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: 19°47.65S / 174°21.19W. We anchored in a good spot a little further out, but with no bommies. Make sure you do not anchor in the way of the ferry that goes in and out of the harbor.

We left the dinghy on the beach just north of the local harbor. – Eastern Stream

Nov. 2022: 19°48.072S / 174°21.299W in 5 metres over sand. This is too close to the harbour for a comfortable stay, as the big ferry ships will pass by about 100 metres away, but ok for quick access to town. The beach to the north of the harbour is convenient for a dinghy landing. – Rainbow Safari

2019: 19°47.750S / 174°21.273W. 7 mt on sand with a few bommies. – Zoomax

6.2.6.2 Yachtsmen Services

6.2.6.2.1 Fuel (Diesel and Gasoline)

July 2023: We found the “gas station” to the right of the dinghy dock on the waterfront. There were 2 pumps but the office looked completely abandoned and the station did not look like it had been open for a while. (see above map) – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022: Further south from the dinghy landing, is a small gas station, but the shore has coral rocks there so we had to lug the jerry can to the beach landing. – Rainbow Safari

6.2.6.2.2 Trash and Recycling

July 2023: The public garbage bins are to the right of the dinghy dock next to the picnic tables. They are not meant to accommodate multiple, large garbage bags so please be considerate when leaving behind your trash. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022: There are public garbage bins at the wharf. – Rainbow Safari

6.2.6.3 General Services

6.2.6.3.1 Auto Parts Store

July 2023: Vaitohi Enterprises (09) 60 764. Located on the main road. – Sugar Shack

6.2.6.3.2 Bank and ATM (Money)

July 2023: There’s a BSP ATM at PTH Timber. From dinghy dock, turn left, it’s on main road, on left side. **Western Union** on main road. +676 60 798. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1640, Sat: 0830-1230. (see above map for location) – Sugar Shack

6.2.6.3.3 Customs

Custom’s Locations: From the dinghy basin, turn right and follow the road until it dead ends. You can only go left. As you approach the main street you will see a sign that reads “customs” in front of a white building with a red roof (this building is Red Cross). Go behind the Red Cross (before the Digicel container) there is a dirt road, take it to the right. You will see a small building with customs inside.

Be prepared and print out your Inter-Island Small Craft Form ahead of time. They will be so happy.

July 2023: Super nice Customs agent! We did not know that we had to do an entirely new Inter-Island Small Craft Form so we had to complete it in their office. They were super patient and kind, but it would have been better to be more prepared by coming in with it already pre-filled out. We cleared in and out in the same day as we were leaving Ha’apai the next day. No fee was charged. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: Custom’s Check-In” Upon arrival in the Ha’apai group you are expected to check-in with the customs office in Pangai. You are not expected to do so immediately. We typically sail there as weather

allows, arriving within a week of clearing out from Vava'u or Tongatapu. The customs building is located at the base of the large red and white antenna tower. When you arrive at the red and white building, walk right past it and go to the unmarked grey building in the next lot to the east. The captain can do the check-in/check-out but they did ask to see passports for all crew. – Pogeyan

Nov. 2022: Other cruisers managed to clear in and out in one go. I did not get lucky. The official insisted that after clearing out we would need to leave Ha'apai in 24 hours. So, we cleared in and had to come back for the outbound clearance. There was no fee. Charlotte.Finau@gmail.com – Rainbow Safari

2019: The first stop must be in Pangai, for clearance, whether it is a full clearance (for those coming from another state) or a local clearance (if coming from another Tongan archipelago). The office is located at coordinates 19°48.490S / 174°21.050W. At the small market, near the dock where you can leave your dinghy, you will find a few fruits and vegetables – Zoomax

6.2.6.3.4 Hardware Store

July 2023: PTH Timber located on the main road. Hours: Mon & Fri: 0900-1600, Tues-Thurs: 0900-1500. Closed for lunch 1300-1400. They have a BSP ATM at the front of their store. Paint and general hardware items including wood. – Sugar Shack

6.2.6.3.5 Internet and Cell Coverage

Digicel shop is in a container next to their tower, and right by the customs office (with a very bleached sign: 19°48.498S / 174°21.053W). – Rainbow Safari

TCC is located on the main street (not the waterfront street). From customs, turn right, then turn left before the “Mystery Cross” sign.

Internet: We found internet at Mariner's Café in Pangai, at \$6 TOP per hour, and were also amazed to pick up a TPLink signal via our high-powered wifi, out in the harbor.

Cell Phone Coverage: We have a Diginet cell sim card we got in Neiafu. We were amazed to find good coverage all the way from Ha'ano to Lifuka.

May 2012: We were amazed to find **wifi** in the harbor at Pangai. We anchored just south of the 'fairway' leading into the harbor. – Soggy Paws

6.2.6.3.6 Office and School Supplies

July 2023: Friendly Islands Bookshop +676 23 787. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1700, Sat: 0830-1230. Located on the main road. – Sugar Shack

6.2.6.3.7 Transportation

July 2023: 7G Mart Motors and Rental Cars: +676 774 8884, fitugmotors@gmail.com – Sugar Shack

6.2.6.3.8 Visitor Center

July 2023: There is a small visitor center just off the main road. They did not have much inside, but they would love for you to stop by to say “hello” and sign their visitor book. – Sugar Shack

6.2.6.4 Restaurants

July 2023: There are several small places to eat in Pangai.

Mariner's Café +676 60 374 which is a few streets off the main road.

Tiger Inn restaurant located on the wharf in a giant warehouse type building. Hours: Daily 0900-2000.

Lucky Pot Restaurant which is in the same area as the fresh produce stalls. – Sugar Shack

6.2.6.5 Provisions

July 2023: We found 5-6 small Chinese markets on the main road and 2 on the waterfront road. They all carry slightly different items so if you are looking for something in particular you might want to visit all of them (it will take you all of 20-30 minutes). None of the shops had names and most said they were open Mon-Fri: -0800-1700 and Sat: 0900-1500 (roughly).

Fresh Produce Stalls by the wharf. We went in the afternoon and they were not really well stocked. Not sure if it was because a supply ship hadn't visited lately or the time of day. They did have bok choy, cabbage and a few beautiful wood carvings. But 3 of the Chinese stores had fabulous apples and a bag of mandarin oranges for \$5TOP.

July 2023: Pangai has a surprising number of small Chinese owned grocery stores. We counted five on our last visit. Some have little or no signage outside. They are all similarly stocked but the one labeled "Grocery 1" on the map seems slightly better and is the only one with eggs. If bread is available, it is found in a large, white plastic bin sitting inside the door of each grocery.

The vegetable market has vendors each week day but Saturday is the best. It opens at 0600 on Saturday and it is best to arrive early. – Pogeyan

Nov. 2022: There are three small Chinese stores on the wharf with basic supplies. The market on the south side of the wharf is small and after a public holiday long weekend there were just two stalls, one selling pineapples, the other selling cucumbers.

There is an ice cream shop on the main road. – Rainbow Safari

6.2.6.6 Activities

Nov 2022: Do not miss a visit to the Afa Eli Historical museum (opposite the customs). Virginia (a lady from the US lives here for over 20 years) created & maintains several museums on the island. You will enjoy talking with her! -- Rainbow Safari

6.2.6.7 Cruiser Reports

July 2023: The village of Pangai is still very small with dirt roads. The "main town" is on one road that runs north to south. Everything is on this main road or on the waterfront road. We never found the museum or the ice cream shop, but we did visit every market and the visitor's center. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: Pangai is a small village, where you visit customs or your inter-island permit. We did some general shopping here in the many shops and we found an ATM in the village – Easter Stream

July 2006: On our way back to Pangai later, we motored north from Uoleva to take in another historical anchorage, **Muikuku Point**. This sandy point projects west from Lifuka Island a mile or so north of Pangai. A large reef continues seaward from the beach making for that first tricky navigation we'd encountered upon our arrival here three weeks before.

Captain Cook anchored here on his three visits to the Ha'apai, and this was also the anchorage at which the privateer Port au Prince was attacked and burned in 1806, leading to the wonderful account of Tongan life by William Mariner, a fourteen-year-old clerk who was spared.

We anchored *Tackless II* well in in 20' of water and took the dinghy to a clear landing on the golden beach that stretched from the back of some houses in a grand curve out to the point itself. With the sun out, it was a beautiful walk.

Out on the point we discovered that Pangai's airport begins just a few feet inshore when the gooney bird (DC3) of Peau Vava'u Airlines roared to earth over our heads! – Tackless II

6.2.7 Uoleva

Ken's Guide Pg 108, Sailingbird Guide Pg 82

This island is great for southerly protection.

6.2.7.1 Pass (Ava Auhanga Mia Pass)

This pass is a major pass a few miles south of Lifuka, and directly south of Uoleva.

May 2012: We staged overnight in the anchorage just west of the N end of Tatafa as a front was approaching. Then we exited out the little pass, for a nice sail to Niue on the west winds (only 240nm).

Since we went out the Ava pass with westerlies, we can't comment on conditions in strong easterlies, other than it's big and wide. There is some current and some swell. I know of one boat that came in the big pass in pretty strong SE winds, who said it was not bad, and another who went out in easterlies who said it was terrible. It was a cakewalk in light SW. – Soggy Paws

6.2.7.2 Anchorage

July 2023: 19°50.552S / 174°24.304W. We dropped the hook in 5m of sand with excellent holding. Oh my goodness we finally found a nice calm anchorage with no swell! After coming from the south (Tongatapu) and stopping at Kelelesia, Telekitonga, and Tanoa we finally have no incoming south swell. Super pretty spot, away from the other boats which anchor closer to the village. Nothing but beautiful sandy beach and palm trees in front of us.

We sailed north from Tanoa, took a wide berth around Luangahu Island before coming back closer to shore to arrive at the above anchorage. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: 19°50.93S / 174°25.02W and closer to shore when the winds became stronger at **19°50.95S / 174°24.94W**. The bottom is sandy with scattered bommies, but great holding. Great protection from the north east to south east. – Easter Stream

Nov 2022: 19°50.893S / 174°25.007W in 9m of sand. Entering the bay was straight forward, mostly sand with a few bommies, but all deeper than 5 meters. We had some swell come over the reef from NW, which made the anchorage too wobbly to be great.

19°50.544S / 174°24.506W in 5 meters of sand with good holding. With a shift in winds we tucked in behind the reef. More protected than the bay, but with a swell from the West and thunderstorms it was still an uncomfortable anchorage.

19°51.470S / 174°25.191W. For Westerly swells try tucking in here. – we did not have a chance to validate this, but it is worth trying! – Rainbow Safari

2019: 19°51.057'S / 174°25.089'W. 9 mt on sand. – Zoomax

6.2.7.3 Activities

July 2023: Absolutely gorgeous walk around the entire island! I agree with Zoomax that this should be called the Island of Walks! You can walk barefoot, during low tide, around the entire island (about 6 miles). There were a few areas that you had to walk gingerly over some rocks, but not many and not horrible. Super beautiful, about 3.5hours depending on how fast you walk. It is so rare to see the windward side of an island where there is not a lot of trash! But there are not a lot of shells either. There are several cut throughs for those who get tired early. One is from the windward side to Sea Change Ecco Resort and the other is to Serenity Resort. You can use both shortcuts. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: On the island there are three small resorts. The one on the north side of the island specialized in kite surfing. It looked like all of the resort's welcome cruisers. We had a great dinner at Serenity Beach Resort (the resort on the south side of the island). Honest, fresh, and local food. Just ask

patty beforehand if it is possible to join for dinner. You can walk around the entire island, which is about 10 kilometers of beach. – Easter Stream

July 2023: With a bit more exploring by dinghy, you can find more good sires in this area. Unfortunately, we did not drop a pin on one of our deeper snorkels that was off the SW end of Uoleva near (19°85.228'S / 174°42.208'W). – Steel Away

2019: The island of walks! The windward side of the island has one of the most beautiful beaches seen in Tonga. In the pass south of Uoleva, manta rays are often found swimming in the current. Compared to watching them in a cleaning station, almost motionless, here they are moving fast, feeding, passing by you, in some cases brushing against you, totally indifferent to human presence. – Zoomax

May 2012: Wildlife, a charter, live aboard dive catamaran, pointed out a few dive spots for us. All of them should be considered 'position approximate'. – Soggy Paws

UOL001	S19°51.0145'	W174°25.8942'	
UOL002	S19°51.1970'	W174°25.8565'	
UOL003	S19°50.9484'	W174°25.6688'	
UOL004	S19°51.8299'	W174°24.9787'	
UOL007	S19°51.5861'	W174°26.7507'	
UOL005	S19°51.6959'	W174°25.9057'	
UOL006	S19-52.1060'	W174°25.5590'	
LeePatch	S19°47.8530'	W174°24.5222'	
UOL008	S19°39.1009'	W174°18.0439'	Caves and overhangs and nice diving here

6.2.7.4 Cruiser Reports

July 2023: There are several resorts on Uoleva and a kite surf school. Other than that, you can enjoy the true beauty and tranquility of a beautiful island with a sandy beach all the way around it. There are no other amenities or infrastructure on this island.

Kite Surf Tonga www.kitesurftonga.com, info@kitesurftonga.com, Offers all-inclusive packages that include room, board, and instruction.

Sea Change Ecco Resort +021 800 396, www.seachangetonga.com. Offer massages, whale tours, fishing expeditions and accommodations. We enjoyed several cocktails and dinner here. You have to make reservations and pay 24h in advance but Clint and Maria are super friendly and welcoming.

Serenity Beach Resort +676 787 7777, www.serenitybeaches.com, alohafrompatti@yahoo.com. Accommodations. We stopped in for a beer and although they eventually served us it was a bit of an ordeal. They are not accustomed to outsiders coming for food and drinks.

Taiana's Resort +676 883 1722. Dianaresort10@gmail.com, New owner Finau Molisi. Offers accommodation.

Other than the long walk around the island and the two short-cuts that go from the east to west there is not much to do here but enjoy its raw and natural beauty. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022: The beach however is amazing. A big, empty, golden stretch of sand with a varied green backdrop. The resorts are hidden in the trees.

From the beach we saw two big humpback whales repeatedly breaching outside the reef. We took our dinghy to the inside edge of the reef, saw them spouting and a big fluke. Not a close encounter, but we had not expected to still see whales on the 1st of December! – Rainbow Safari

6.2.8 Hakuata Island

6.2.8.1 Anchorage

Nov. 2022: **19°50.722S / 174°31.473'W.** in sand, 15m, had good holding but was bouncy in the prevailing westerly wind. – Rainbow Safari

6.2.8.2 Cruiser Report

Nov. 2022: We did a weekend excursion to the small, uninhabited island of Hakuata. It has beautiful sandy beaches and is a great spot for a beach fire and BBQ. – Rainbow Safrifi

6.2.9 Tatafa / Uiha / Luangahu

Ken's Guide Pg 110-112, Sailingbird Guide Pg 78-80

Anchorage are great for westerly protection.

6.2.9.1 Anchorage

July 2023: **19°54.29S / 174°24.94W** Dropped the hook in about 18m. This is a beautiful anchorage near the village of Felemea. – Easter Stream

2019: **19°52.724S / 174°25.325W.** 6mt on sand. Good anchorage if the wind turns to the NE. – Zoomax

May 2012: **19°52.44S / 174°26.09W.** This was in about 25 feet with good holding. We got in late and anchored within rowing distance of our friends. If we had better light and weren't trying to get within rowing distance, we'd have gone much further in to get better protection. This spot was OK, but not brilliant. We spent overnight in squally but not too strong winds out of the SW.

19°52.58S / 174°26.37W. The next morning, with wind 15-20 out of the SW, we moved just behind a reef, to get smoother water with which to load our dinghy on deck.

Our advice would be to visit one day in good weather and lay a track in and pick an anchor spot (though the best one might not be apparent until the wind is whistling out of the west!).

The CM93 chart was a little off here, but a midpoint waypoint for the narrow pass just west of Tatafa is 19°52.06S / 174°25.69, and it was relatively easy to pick our way through the pass in bad light (just before sunset from Uoleva) down to this anchorage, with a vigilant watch on the bow. There is usually at least one marker on that pass, as the local boats use it all the time going to and from Lifuka to villages in the south. – Soggy Paws

6.2.9.2 Cruiser Reports

July 2023: As at all of the islands in Ha'apai, there are a lot of pigs in the village. You can walk from Felemea to Uiha village, but there are also a lot of other paths that bring you to the plantations or the beach on the other side of the island. The first little shop you pass entering Uiha belongs to William and his family. William took over his uncle's vanilla plantation and is restoring it (season 2023). He taught us a lot about vanilla and the vanilla harvesting process. He sells delicious vanilla. – Easter Stream

2019: The reef in front of anchorage is healthy, fish abundant. You can reach the village of Uiha by dinghy. If you are lucky, you are able to buy some fruit directly from the locals, who pick them directly -- from the trees in their gardens. – Zoomax

6.2.10 Uonukuhifo and Uonukuhake (Lobster Islands)

Ken's Guide Pg 114-116, Sailingbird Guide Pg 74-78

6.2.10.1 Anchorage

July 2023: 19°57.89S / 174°29.55W we anchored in about 6m of water. – Eastern Stream

July 2023: This is a wonderful anchorage. – Steel Away

2019: 19°57.897'S / 174°29.590'W. 6m of sand, clear water, in front of a beautiful tongue of sand connecting two islands. Short stop, we didn't explore much. – Zoomax

6.2.10.2 Activities

July 2023: Great snorkeling at 19°57.999'S / 174°29.81'W just off Uonukuhifo Island. – Steel Away

6.2.10.3 Cruiser Reports

July 2023: Uonukuhifo and Uonukuhahaki (the locals call these two islands something different) are connected by a sandbar which almost disappears at high tide. No-one lives here, but locals come here to fish. If you have a good look at low tide, you can see some pigs on the beach. Uonukuhahaki is owned by a family from Uiha Island and they used to have a house or shed here. – Easter Stream

July 2023: The beaches are great for walking, beach combing, having sundowners and swimming in the south side of the lagoon. – Steel Away

July 2012: Pigs, cattle and fruit bats inhabit the islands, and groups of Tongans use the E end of Uonukuhahake overnight to break their journey.

It takes about 1½ hours to walk around Uonukuhahake. On the beach on the S side there is ½ of the centre hull of a small trimaran wrecked some years ago, whilst on passage from NZ.

We found some patches of live coral growing on the reefs around the anchorage.

Sailingbird's proposed track (p78) from Tatafa worked well, and their southern-most "shoal not on the chart" may possibly be the rocky patch at 019-56.564S / 174-27.918W. – Dream Away

6.2.11 Tofanga

6.2.11.1 Anchorage

2011: 19°57.518'S / 174°28.317W. We anchored in a beautiful sandy bottom, over coral, with good holding. Winds were 15+ and overcast. – Chesapeake

2009: 19°57.45S / 174°28.35W. This is a small, uninhabited island. Good beachcombing – Nine of Cups

6.2.11.2 Cruiser Reports

Nov 2011: Tofanga was the first island we had all to ourselves – for one day and night. Waves and current and slope of the beach made it hard to access the island from the anchorage side. We waited until slack tide to round the South point of the island and go into the lagoon side to get beach access. Some shelling and big whale vertebrae can be seen, along with the resident cows. It was strange having cows approach me on the beach. There wasn't much to see for snorkeling.

On our last day we took the dinghy over to Uonukuhahaki Island for a very, very long walk to the other end. The island is covered in thick brush with wild pigs and piglets running through and around an abandoned camp. – Chesapeake

6.3 Lulunga Group

The Lulunga Island group has five inhabited islands in several clusters, with lots of little uninhabited ones scattered around, and here the Ha'apai's two volcanoes loom much closer on the horizon.

6.3.1 Ha'afeva

Ken's Guide Pg 120-122, Sailingbird Guide Pg 68

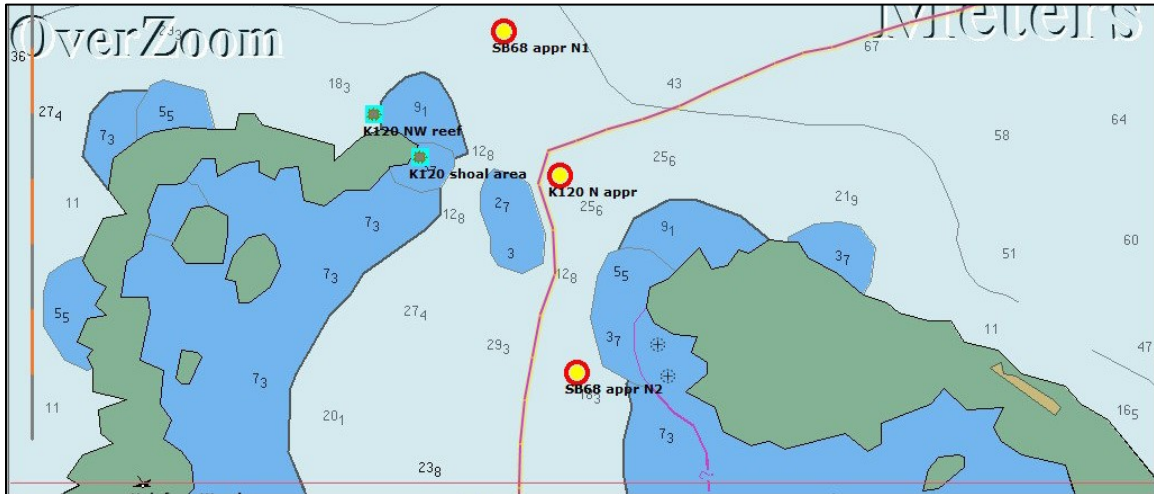
Anchorage is good for westerly protection.

6.3.1.1 Anchorage

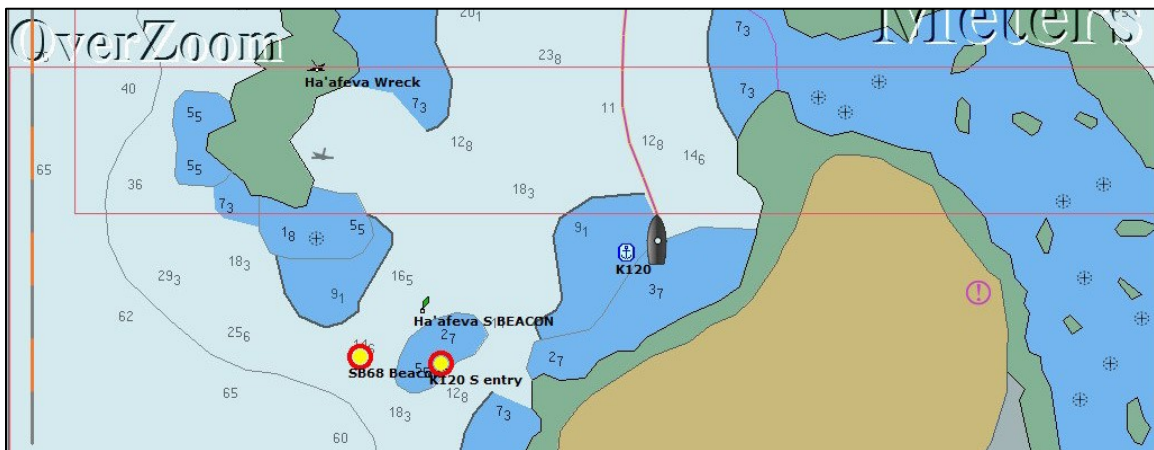
July 2012: The S beacon is at 19°56.503S / 174°43.371W.

The wreck is also misplaced on the chart, and is actually at 19°56.157S / 174°43.587W.

Below are two screen shots from OpenCPN, using the CM93 (CMAP) charts v2010, with Ken's and Sailingbird Waypoints plotted, and showing our track in. – Dream Away



Haafeva Track from Dream Away



2010: Ha'afeva was a nice surprise for us. We went there because it provides a relatively secure anchorage in a variety of conditions, so we thought we would explore and dive the surrounding islands with the confidence of knowing we could duck back in to Ha'afeva if conditions deteriorated. – Passage

6.3.1.2 Cruiser Report

Oct 2011: Coral dotted the sandy bottom and it made me anxious as it's very common for an anchor chain to get wrapped around a coral head, preventing the boat from retrieving its anchor - you never really know until you try to leave.

The cool thing about the anchorage at Ha'afeva is that there's a wrecked Korean fishing vessel that met its demise on a reef nearby. Since our dinghy is easy to deploy, we picked up Beth and Norm and the five of us snorkeled around the wreck and the reef responsible for sinking the ship. It was very interesting and at the same time a grim reminder of what can happen out there. – Rutea

6.3.2 Matuku

Ken's Guide - Not Covered, Sailingbird Guide - Pg 66

Anchorage is good for southerly protection.

6.3.2.1 Anchorage

July 2012: 19°57.402S / 174°44.641W. We poked our noses in here, and would expect to get good shelter from a SE wind. Matuku's anchorage -- a narrow sand ledge over a steep drop-off -- was protected to the south. – Dream Away

6.3.3 O'ua Island

Ken's Guide Pg 126-132, Sailingbird Guide Pg 62-63

Anchorage is good for westerly protection.

6.3.3.1 Anchorage

July 2023: 20°02.77S / 174°40.87W. We went here for protection from a strong north-west wind, which was a great choice. The anchorage is surrounded by a reef, that on the west side is shallow and wide. There are some poles to mark the route in, although not all are there anymore. On the satellite charts you can see the route to sail into the bay. – Eastern Stream

July 2012: Easy to follow the edge of the reef using Ken's waypoints, but one of the beacons is missing. We found good holding in the entrance to the pool.

The water was very opaque, so we couldn't see our anchor in 7m. When the anchor came up it was almost mud-like. We were there in good weather, and it is totally sheltered from northerly quadrant wind. A southerly quadrant wind might be felt, but the extensive reef should mitigate any swell.

Between Ha'afeva, Matuku, and O'ua a yacht should find good shelter from every wind direction. – Dream Away

6.3.3.2 Cruiser Report

July 2023: There is a little village on the island and we found some decent snorkeling on the outer reef. – Easter Stream

2012: One boat we knew weathered the same storm in Oua in the Ha'apai group. He was alone in the reef-locked anchorage off Oua and did very well although he was exposed to winds of about 50 knots. At one point, the wind shifted from one moment to the next, and his anchor dragged for 30 meters before catching again. It helped that he was the only boat in the anchorage!

In general terms, I would seek shelter from a serious storm in Vava'u (Neiafu or Tapanu) first, Nuku'alofa as a second choice, and if I were stuck in the Ha'apai group with a storm coming and no other choice, then I would head for Oua.

Paper charts do not show an entry through the reef at Oua, but it is there and in fact marked by several poles as described in Ken's Guide.

Follow the well-marked channel to the South anchorage inside the lagoon for easy access to the village and the calmest and one of the roomiest anchorages we found in the Haapai! The reefs all around may give you a comfortable night. – Namani

6.3.4 Lekeleka

6.3.4.1 Anchorage

2019: 20°03.850'S / 174°37.214'W in 10 mt on sand. This anchorage is suitable only in calm conditions. It is not protected by dry land, only by reef. The anchorage is spectacular, feels like standing still in the middle of the sea. The water, calm on the surface, thanks to the massive reef that stops the waves, just below is a whirlwind of tidal currents. – Zoomax

6.3.4.2 Cruiser Report

2019: Swimming upstream is frustrating, every meter is hard won, but the 'descent' is one of the most beautiful sensations one can experience, it feels like flying at speed through the transparency of the crystal-clear water, over the coral formations and the fish that inhabit them. – Zoomax

6.3.5 Wickham Reef

Ken's Guide - Not Covered, Sailingbird Guide Pg 65

6.3.5.1 Anchorage

July 2006: It was a beautiful morning with hardly any wind at all, perfect conditions to anchor on a reef system far from any island, and so we motored ten miles south and to look for an anchoring spot on Wickham Reef's north side. – Tackless II

2003: 20°04.017S / 174°45.575 in 15ft of good sand in the small bight. – Sloepmouche

6.3.5.2 Cruiser Reports

July 2006: Sandy, of Impetuous, described Wickham Reef as "the best dive in the Ha'apai." Wickham Reef is a stand-alone reef structure some three miles long bordering the north side of a five-mile swath of open water dividing the Lulunga island group from the southernmost section of the Ha'apai.

Don and I loaded up and dinghied around to the SW corner and dropped down on the healthiest bank of coral I have seen in a long time. Beautiful hard corals interspersed by soft corals covered great humps, dimpled deeply by gorges, that sloped away southward to deep water. Plenty of the usual colorful tropical fish populated the coral and several white tips skirted by us. – Tackless II

6.3.6 Limu Island

Ken's Guide Pg 134, Sailingbird Guide Pg 72

6.4 Southern Ha'apai Group

6.4.1 Nomuka Iki

Ken's Guide Pg 136; Sailingbird Guide Pg 60

6.4.1.1 Anchorage

July 2023: 20°16.55S / 174°48.23W in front of the beach in 12-15m of water. Depending on the wind you have lots of choices where to anchor. – Easter Stream

2019: 20°16.689'S / 174°47.908'W, in 7 mt on sand. Suitable only in calm conditions, protected from prevailing winds only by reef. Difficult to reach the island at low tide because of dense coral in front of the beach.

Nearby Nomuka, an island with about 500 inhabitants and a large lake in the center, was heavily damaged by the tsunami caused by the eruption of the submerged volcano in 2022. – Zoomax

Oct. 2011: 20°16.56S / 174°48.28W. We're presently anchored on the south side of Nomuka Iki island (we did not go to Ofolanga), between reef systems around us. – Inifini

2003: 20°16.742 / 174°48.035W. We arrived in 30+ kts and rough seas and were happy to find shelter from the worse in the reef protected anchorage. Our new 70 lb Bugle anchor held us well in 15ft of good sand against 30kts and up to 38 kts gusts the next 48 hours! – Sloepmouche

6.4.1.2 Cruiser Report

Aug. 2023: At low tide you can walk around the island. Part of the island is now sand instead of bush/forest. This is the result of the tsunami in 2022. – Easter Stream

2010: Nomuka Iki is a small uninhabited island just off Nomuka Island. The larger Nomuka Island is inhabited, and somewhat like Ha'afeva, the area around the two islands provides safe anchorage in various conditions.

Near shore is the remains of an old prison and the wreck of the Takuo. The Takuo was a fishing vessel that foundered on Hakaufisi reef during a storm, and some of the men died. The hull later washed ashore on Nomuka Iki where it remains as a reminder of how treacherous these reefs can be. – Passage

July 2006: The Bounty anchored in the mile-wide roadstead between Nomuka and Nomuka Iki and took on water from the fresh springs at the base of a hill near the present-day village. Today's cruising boats actually anchor in the more accessible depths of Nomuka Iki, a small island shadowing Nomuka's south west face and wrapped around by some extensive reefs. – Tackless II

6.4.2 Tanoa

6.4.2.1 Anchorage

July 2023: 20°17.532S / 174°38.060W. We dropped in 5.5m of sand and had great holding! This is a small island surrounded by reefs. Be careful on entry, watch navionics and satellite charts which were accurate. We had S-SE winds and had a bit of a swell coming over the reef making it a bit roly. After three previous nights in roly anchorages we decided to leave Tanoa the next day. – Sugar Shack

6.4.2.2 Cruiser Report

July 2023: In a continued effort to find an anchorage without a swell we arrived after high tide. It was lovely until the next high tide in the middle of the night. But the little island or shall I call it a bump in the middle of the pacific, is lovely. A small beach goes around half the island. There are lots of birds nesting here and you have a nice view of the village located on Fonoifua. – Sugar Shack

6.4.3 Mango Island

Ken's Guide Pg 138; Sailingbird Guide Pg 59

6.4.3.1 Anchorage

2003: Deep anchorage (50-60') on the North side of this small island with less than 50 inhabitants. – Sloepmouche

6.4.3.2 Cruiser Report

2003: A short (20min) and easy walk to the summit of a small mountain gave us great photo opportunities. – Sloepmouche

6.4.4 Lalona Island

Ken's Guide Pg 144

6.4.4.1 Anchorage

2003: 20°20.449S / 174°31.344W. We anchored in 15ft of water, good sand between 2 breakers and the reef. Easy island to walk around. – Sloepmouche

6.4.5 Telekivava'u Island

Ken's Guide Pg 142, Sailingbird Guide Pg 70

6.4.5.1 Anchorage

2003: Protected anchorage inside the tiny "lagoon" which could accommodate maybe 4 yachts at once. Anchor in 8 to 10 ft of sand with loose coral rubbles. The holding is not that great and we wouldn't chance it in more than 25 kts! – Sloepmouche

6.4.6 Telekitonga

6.4.6.1 Anchorage

July 2023: 20°23.808S / 174°32.170W. Anchored in 14m of sand/coral. Pretty good hold as we pulled down 2k RPM to ensure a good stick. We thought this would be a perfect anchorage with our south winds and swell but as it turned out the waves and swell wrapped around the island and reef. There are reefs all around which actually created standing waves which in turn made it super rolly. – Sugar Shack

6.4.6.2 Cruiser Notes

July 2023: This is a beautiful island. During low tide you can walk all around the entire island about 2.6miles. Bring shoes as the sand turns to coral, then rock, then limestone. On the back side was a local squatter or maybe a fishing home. We did not approach but it looked like someone was living there. Wish we could have stayed longer than one night as it was super pretty. – Sugar Shack

6.4.7 Kelefasia

Ken's Guide Pg 146, Sailingbird Guide Pg 56

6.4.7.1 Anchorage

July 2023: 20°29.731S / 174°44.343W in 8.5m questionable holding on the NE side of the island. We dropped the hook twice and our spade anchor skipped, but on the third time stuck. Another catamaran with more guts than us, anchored much closer in to shore. When we explored by dinghy the reefs seemed to close for us so we decided to stay where we were despite the rolliness.

Winds and Sea directly out of the south making the normal anchorage (on the SW side) very uncomfortable so we moved to the eastern side but we still found it a bit rolly. – Sugar Shack

Nov 2022: 20°30.133S / 174°44.434W, Depth around 6.5m. The anchorage is round and patch roughly 200m diameter, surrounded by coral. Inside is a sandy ground at a fairly even depth around 8m, good holding. It is a little wobbly at high tide, but ok.

The entrance can be a bit hairy, with reefs and rollers on both sides, and an unmarked, narrow channel. Aim for an outside waypoint of 20°30.222S / 174°44.846W. Then enter the channel from 20°30.190S / 174°44.672W and head straight for the anchorage. – Rainbow Safari

2019: 20°30.119'S 174° 44.442'W. The anchorage is small, for 2-3 boats at most, if you want to be safe. The bottom is sandy with a few bommies here and there. The island is of rare beauty. It is uninhabited but apparently privately owned. On land, chickens and pigs live freely. Protruding from the beach is a tongue of sand that appears and disappears with the tide.

Kelelesia is an island to be approached with great caution because it is surrounded by shallow waters, not well marked on charts, and unpredictable currents. It helps to plot the approach route using satellite photos, but it is also necessary to get there on a nice sunny day. – Zoomax

6.4.7.2 Cruiser Reports

July 2023: Super beautiful island with large limestone cliffs and white sandy beaches. We were told a few years ago that this island was a beautiful lush forest covered in vegetation. But the tsunami wiped it out. However, not knowing what it looked like before, we found it stunning none the less.

Kelelesia is a privately owned island and it is up for grabs. You can purchase this island for a mere \$6 million USD. It was a gift from the king to a Tongan family a few generations back. The owners do not live on the island year-round, but they graciously welcome boaters to anchor here year-round.

The first thing one notices about Kelelesia is its dramatic prominent bluffs. These are different from any others we have seen in Tonga. And the anchorage faces these bluffs - beautiful... Reportedly there is also good diving just outside the anchorage. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022: Just a day's sail from Nuku'Alofa, this very scenic, uninhabited little island, nicely breaks up the sail to Ha'apai. It has stunning cliffs you can climb for a view and lots of birds.

Do not bring your picnic to the beach – we had boobies hovering, almost touching our heads.

The anchorage is a round patch roughly 200m diameter, surrounded by coral. Inside is sandy ground at a fairly even depth around 8m, good holding. It is a little wobbly at high tide, but ok. The entrance can be a bit hairy, with reefs and rollers on both sides, and an unmarked, narrow channel.

Aim for an outside waypoint of 20°30.222S / 174°44.846W.

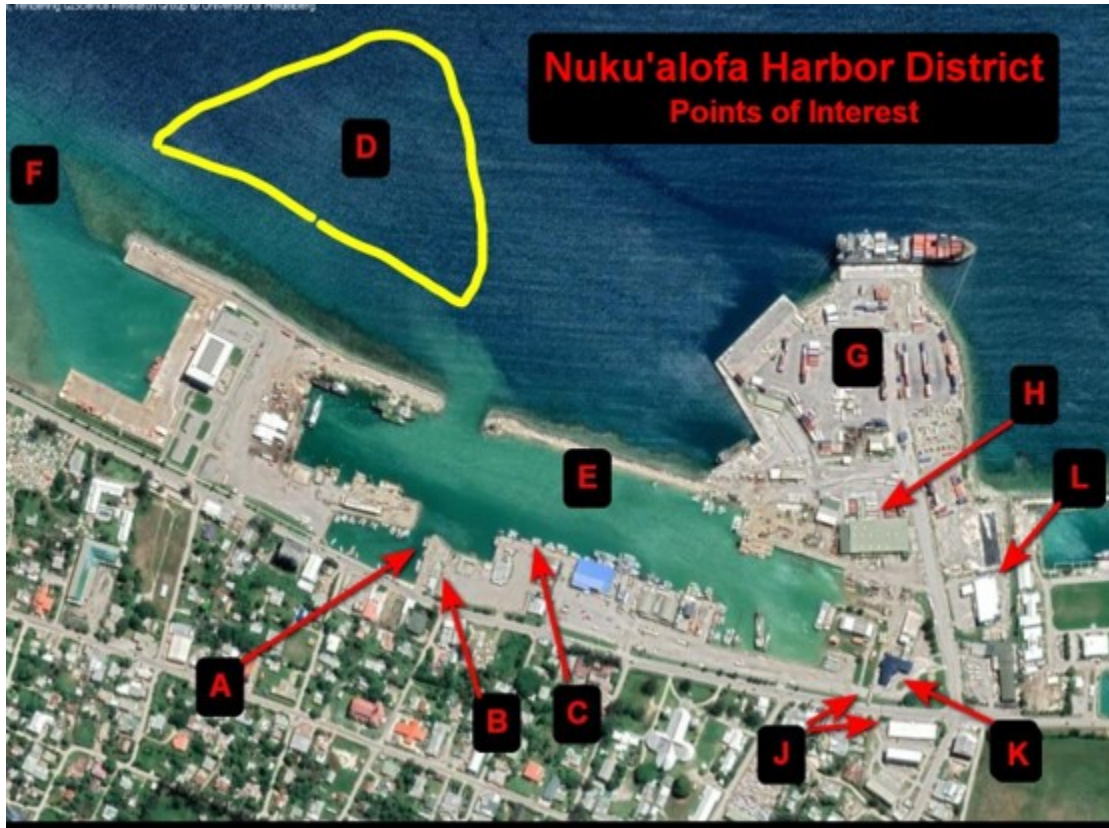
Then enter the channel from 20°30.190S / 174°44.672W – Rainbow Safari

7 Tongatapu

Tongatapu is the southernmost island group in Tonga. It is also the name of the island on which Nuku'alofa - the capital of Tonga - is located.

Tongatapu - meaning "sacred south" - is the government and cultural center of Tonga. The Tongatapu group - approximately 160 square miles - comprises one third of the land mass of the Kingdom. Approximately two thirds of the Tongan population live on these islands in 60+ villages. Depending on the source, there are between 30 and 46 islands in the group (just how big does a rock have to be to be called an island?). Much of Tonga's early known history occurred in the Tongatapu group. Today, the capital of Tonga remains in Tongatapu.

7.1 Nukualofa



7.1.1 Passes

July 2023: We entered through the Egeria Channel (on the NW side) despite having SE winds. We were about 20nm north of our cross track which was pointing to Egeria when Golf Harbor Radio strongly suggested we change course and enter through the Piha pass. The problem being we had one rudder and would have had to motor into the winds for over 40nm on one rudder in 2.5m seas. That did not seem appealing so we continued on to Egeria and had no issue with current, wind, or waves (even with one rudder). Navionics and our satellite charts were accurate and got us in with no issues.

A friend of ours on Yana, a trimaran, lost their engine and had to sail into the Piha pass. We met them out in the pass with our dinghy to assist, but they had no problems sailing in with 12-15kts of wind and 1.5m seas. Charts were well marked and the channel was lit. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022: Without seeing any shallow depths, we sailed along the main Ava Lahi shipping land and arrived in front of the basin by 0900. – Rainbow Reef

7.1.2 Anchorage & Fuaa Harbor/Basin

2023: Q-Dock: The informal “Q” doc location is at the entrance to the small boat harbor marked “A” on the map. This berth location can be a challenge when SE trade winds are above 10kts. The sea wall is rough concrete and the tie points are limited to three ship size bollards. If it’s clear, location “C” is easier to access, but the tie points are very limited. As far as I can tell, no entity controls these transient berthing locations. They are first come, first served.

Anchorage “D” for formalities If you cannot side-tie in the harbor, you will need to make previous arrangements with Port Control and you will have to ferry the officials to and from your boat.

Anchorage “F”: For provisioning runs or a short stop, we have anchored in “F.” However, the harbor pilot will ask you to move if you linger too long or overnight or are too far to the north, obstructing traffic from the freight terminal “G.”

Med-Moor “E” the harbor told me that yachts are permitted to med-moor along the seawall marked “E” on the map. He cautioned that the concrete bollards on the seawall were destroyed by the tsunami and subsequent earth work. The port authority does plan to replace them, but no schedule is set. – Pogeyan

July 2023: 21°08.119S / 117°11.161W in 15m good holding. We arrived at first light with one rudder. We politely asked the port captain if we could anchor just outside the basin since we were concerned with our ability to maneuver safely inside the basin with high winds and limited space. They agreed. It was a bit roly, but we were only here for a few hours to clear customs – Sugar Shack

May 2023: Fua harbor They require Med-mooring but they don’t provide any secure way to tie lines to the breakwater. We tied to a half-buried tire and a large piece of coral, neither of which gave us any confidence whatsoever. When we cleared out the Officer In Charge in the Customs office mentioned there was some government investment in the wharf coming up, and they would be putting some bollards in so sailing vessels can Med-moor properly. – Oh Joy II

Nov. 2022: 21°08.110S / 117°11.110W. Anchored in 20m with good holding, off the harbour wall. – Rainbow Safari

7.1.3 Yachtsmen Services

7.1.3.1 Cooking Gas (propane)

July 2023: Very few places will have adapters so if you have your own adapter you can easily get your tank refilled at any one of the numerous fuel stations or at Home Gas or Gogas Tonga or at PH Timber and hardware. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: Pacific Energy refills propane tanks, but they do not have adapters. They are located a half kilometer walk east of the harbor. Look for their tank farm on the right. – Pogeyan

7.1.3.2 Fuel (Diesel & Gasoline)

July 2023: We needed some gasoline (about 60-70L) and some of our friends said that it is best to get a taxi to take you to the fuel station. So, we hired Olini Sapoi (he is an agent too) +676 771 2330. He said if we have time, he can do a mini-tour and take us to the Stonehenge which was on the other side of the island. Sure, why not. He took us by several other noteworthy places and gave us a lovely narrative along the way. Our last stop was the fuel station where the attendant filled our jerry cans and we filled Olini’s car. They only accepted cash so be prepared.

Both basins in Tongatapu and Neaifu are scary for fiberglass boats. They are concrete walls with marginal means to secure your boat. You have to go to the dock to receive fuel at both locations and you need a minimum order of 200L to pre-order the truck (at least 24hs in advance). It is also advised to follow up on your reservation of the fuel truck as it often gets lost.

As of Aug. 2023, duty free fuel was \$2.12TOP/Liter. In Fiji, the standard price is \$2.37 (which is about \$2.53TOP). So, in my personal opinion, worth the extra money to avoid the scary, concrete walls. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: In past years, I have arranged for Pacific Energy to drop drums of diesel at the harbor. This came with a hand pump to dispense into jerry cans. On our latest visit they were not able to do this because of a shortage of empty drums. They will delivery diesel with a tanker truck and dispense directly into your vessel if you are purchasing more than 1000L. Pacific Energy is half kilometer walk east of the harbor. Look for their tank farm on the right. Propane refills are also available here. Aside from bulk

amounts from Pacific Energy, diesel and petrol purchases involve a taxi ride to the Total station located about .75 kilometers south of the harbor. – Pogeyan

May 2023: We heard from another boat (Boat #1 to arrive this season) that getting duty-free fuel is a massive hassle requiring at least four hours of moving from one office to another and back again for various stamps and approvals. They reported that once all this was done, the actual re-fueling was easy. A truck from a nearby petrol station brought a 200-liter drum to the wharf and hand-pumped it into the boat. Apparently, the minimum purchase is 200 liters. We decided not to buy duty-free fuel, just pay the duty, as our tolerance for this kind of time-wasting is low. We were also skeptical how much money we'd actually be saving since we'd just bought fuel duty-free in New Zealand and it didn't appear, we saved any money at all. It was still bloody expensive. In Nuku'alofa we took jerry cans to a petrol station and filled them. – Oh Joy II

Oct. 2012: It was also no problem getting duty free diesel on the fuel dock with a form we were given by customs. We were also able to fill up with clean, potable water at the fuel dock. So, we can give Nuku'alofa top marks as a place to clear out of. – Namani

7.1.3.3 Trash and Recycling

July 2023: Unfortunately, there is no recycling in Tonga. There are also no large trash bins for cruisers. However, there are 2-3 standard trash cans. Please do not throw several large trash bags in the bin filling them up as they only empty them every 2-3 days. – Sugar Shack

7.1.4 General Services

7.1.4.1 Agent

Olini's Yachting Services. +676 771 2330. sapoiolini@gmail.com, Facebook Messenger either Olini's Yachting Services or Olini Sapoi.

July 2023: The Island Pacific Rally used Olini's services during the 2023 rally and so did we. He is very friendly, helpful, and eager to please. If you need help with anything, want a tour, shipping items in, or just a friendly local, give Olini a call! -- Sugar Shack

7.1.4.2 Banks & ATMs (Money)

July 2023: The nearest ATM is marked "J" on the map. On our first visit we did not have local currency so the official gave me a ride to the ATM. On our last visit, we fell short \$25 and they gladly took NZD to make up the difference. – Pogeyan

July 2023: There are several banks ANZ, BSP, and Westpac that have ATMs. You can find several in the center of town (to the right of the dock and up 2 blocks). However, there is also an ANZ bank with an ATM and a BSP ATM (large container, not a building across from ANZ) within walking distance (to the left of the docks). I highly recommend going to BSP ATM as they charge the same fee but they have a much higher per day limit. You can take out as much as \$2000TOP for the same fee as ANZ but they limit you to \$900TOP. – Sugar Shack

May 2023: There are several ATMS including an ANZ Bank right near Fuaa Harbor. Some places accept credit card but their credit card machines are often broken. Cash is more easily spent than credit. – Oh Joy II

Nov. 2022: BSP and ANZ ATMs are available at the east end of the harbour basin. – Rainbow Safari

7.1.4.3 Customs

Raise your Q flag and call Port Authority on VHF 14 as you enter Tongan waters. They will instruct you as to where to go.

Nuku'alofa Port Authority listen on VHF Ch. 14. Port authority will generally arrange for all of the officials to meet you at the dock.

There is a Yacht Clearance Berth (combined with the fuel & water dock) in the small boat harbour at Fua. This is directly in front of the entrance. Alternatively, if you have issues, you may ask permission to anchor just outside the basin and dinghy the officials back to your boat for formalities.

Everyone is friendly and helpful and clearance can be completed in two hours or less.

Boats are only cleared between 0830 and 1630 Monday to Friday and may be boarded by Immigration, Ministry of Health, and Agriculture officials. Fresh fruit, vegetables, some herbs and non-commercially packed eggs may be confiscated and destroyed.

Yachts are not cleared in or out at weekends, or during lunch 12:30-13:30 (except by prior arrangement). If arriving outside normal hours, anchor with the Q flag flying at the Pangimotu anchorage and wait until office hours.

No one should leave the vessel until contact with officials has been made.

Certain areas in the approaches to Nuku'alofa are prohibited for anchoring and these are marked on the chart.

All Yachts are required to get a Local Movement Form "inter-island permit" to sail between Tongatapu, Ha'apai, and Vava'u.

Aug. 2023: If you plan to sail to Ha'apai and or onward to Vava'u you must obtain a Local Movement Form. It is super easy to do. First, you must pay a fee to Port Authority, then bring your receipt and the Local Movement Report (prefilled if you can) to customs to get your stamp.

Port Authority: Turn left from the docks and follow the long chain link fence. About 1/2 mile down the road, on the left-hand side is a white building with a blue roof that has a large sign "Port Authority." Go inside to the 2nd floor and turn left to the "Cashier." They will ask you to complete a form and pay your fee. We paid \$64TOP for our 15ton Catamaran. Grab your receipt and go to Customs.

Customs Office: From Port Authority, turn left into the parking lot, then turn left onto the side street (perpendicular to the main road). On the left-hand side is a large green warehouse building (do not cross the street to the building with Customs written on it). Once at the large green warehouse building, go in through the large double doors until you see offices straight ahead. Enter the left office and ask to clear out to go to Ha'apai or Vava'u. – Sugar Shack

Aug. 2023: Customs reception desk +676 740 0686 and email addresses for the three boarding agents are: Sione: kinivaka@gmail.com; Sau: sp.niulala@gmail.com; Felefonu: felefonu68.mapakaitolo@gmail.com. The clearance agent has a newly assigned office at the NE corner of the Customs building. You can walk around to a door just outside his office to check for him which is marked "L" on the map. The office was marked "consultant" when I visited. If no one is there, check at the rightmost reception window in the entrance lobby of the customs building.

We have cleared in 3 times at Nuku'alofa and each time it's been a challenge making initial contact with the border authorities. Channel 16 is not consistently monitored. We've listened to boats hailing for hours on end with no response. We did learn on our last visit that the harbor pilot monitors channel 14 and can notify customs of your clearance request.

Officials drove us to the ATM to get local currency. Our total clearance fees were about \$150TOP.

Bio Security will take your trash for a fee. Each visit we were subject to different levels of scrutiny regarding food stuff. Twice we were asked nothing. On the last visit we offered up one of our pantry cabinets and our refrigerator. After a glance, the agent said we would be OK if we eat all of the food containing meat by the end of the day.

Inter-Island Clearance: When moving between Tongatapu, Ha’apai, and Vava’u island groups you must first visit Port Authority to pay your port fee, then you will need to visit customs to complete an internal movement report. You will receive a copy of this “zarpe” which you present to Customs when you arrive at the destination island group. Port Authority is location “K” on the map. Visit the cashier on the 2nd floor. Our fee for a 12-ton vessel staying for several days was \$50TOP. – Pogeyan

7.1.4.4 Hardware Stores

Aug. 2023: There are two hardware stores:

PTH Timber and Hardware +676 23 290. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0800-1700 Sat: 0800-1400. Located on Taufa’Ahau Road.

- We found a bolt we needed in a tile store. We wouldn’t have thought to check the tile store for bolts but a local was helping us figure this stuff out and took us there because he knew they had bolts. If you can’t find what you need at the obvious places, start checking the less obvious.

EM Jones has some very basic supplies for mariners. +676 23 422, emjoffice@emjonesgroup.com. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-1700 & Sat: 0830-1230. www.emjones.com. Located between Wellington Road and Taufa’ahau Road

7.1.4.5 Internet

July 2023: Since we have starlink on the boat we decided to only get one SIM card for my phone and we went with Digicel because it had more coverage than TCC across the island groups. Digicel has a huge office right across from the Talamahu Market. +676 876 1000. Hours: Mon-Sat: 0800-1700. We went on a Saturday which was a HUGE mistake. I advise you to avoid Saturdays at all costs as they are busy.

We paid \$5TOP for the SIM (which you can get any market). It came with 4gigs but it expired in 4 days. So, we decided to get a voucher for \$20TOP which came with 7gigs and expired in 30 days. You can get the Sim card at the information desk on the left, but if you want the voucher you have to wait in line. The great thing was she set it all up for us which was easy. Digicel App does not work well on iPhones but it is fine on android.

Or just buy a SIM & top up voucher at a local Chinese store and figure out how to load it. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: Digicel and TCC are the two carriers covering Tonga. We had SIM cards from both companies during our pre-Starlink visits. This proved to be useful at some of the remote areas in Ha’apai where only one carrier provided a signal. – Pogeyan

May 2023: There’s Digical, UCall and Vodaphone available as of May 2023. Olini recommended UCall because “Digicell is weak when the wind is blowing.” Since we are only planning to stay here as long as needed to make the repair to the big boat engine (about two weeks total), we got UCall with mobile calling and 15 GB of data. Total cost, including \$5 for the SIM card, was \$50 Tongan. (We also still had our One NZ SIM cards, and they were active for about \$5US per day in Tonga, in addition to the cost of our regular plan. Service via One NZ was much stronger and more consistent than UCall, but not sure if it’s worth the additional cost.) – Oh Joy II

Nov. 2022: We bought Digicel SIM cards at \$6TOP at the Ding Dong Shop. – Rainbow Safari

7.1.4.6 Laundry

July 2023: Erima Laundromat +676 775 8534 has drop and pick up services from 0800-1700. Located on Hala Salote Street (one street off the main street). – Sugar Shack

7.1.4.7 Pharmacy

July 2023: Sausini Pharmacy and Clinic. Pharmacy +676 22 955 or +676 773 7636 suniafifita1@gmail.com. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0830-2030, Sat: 0830-1500.

Clinic Dr. Fakakovikeatau +676 22 955, +676 771 8683 tfakakovikaetau@gmail.com Located on Hala Salote St. (one street off the main street). Hours: Mon-Fri: 1700 until late. Sat: 1100-1300. – Sugar Shack

7.1.4.8 Shipping

NEW: A “TIN” is now required for receiving duty free parts. New as of early August 2023 all vessels wanting to ship duty free items into Tonga must obtain a Tax Identification Number (TIN). You can get this from customs when you check in, but you have to request it. If you have already checked in, then stop by customs in Tongatapu or Neaifu with your boat registration, passport, Tonga entry paperwork and make a request. It may take 24-48 hours to obtain the TIN.

Once you have your TIN you must include this number on your shipping label and it is recommended to include it on the invoice as well to ensure a smooth clearance process.

July 2023: DHL +676 27 700. dhltongainfo@gmail.com. The DHL office is located on the main road behind the ANZ bank. From the dock, turn left and they will be on the right-hand side about ¼ mile down the road. – Sugar Shack

7.1.4.9 Transportation

July 2023: Taxis: Olini +676 9 771 2330; Lata +679 849 8511; Tomasi +679 847 8886.

Bicycle Rentals: ANT Bicycles Tonga +676 720 6535 ant.bicycles.tonga@gmail.com. – Sugar Shack

Car Rentals: Fab Rentals+676 23 077, after hours +676 777 730. leeintonga@gmail.com, Located on Salote Road – Sugar Shack

July 2023: Our favorite taxi driver is Inoke +676 777 8939. He owns a taxi company and works for the government auditing taxi permits. His son operates a commercial laundry and he is happy to pick up/drop off loads. Lata +676 849 8511 and he has a van that can accommodate 6-7 people. Tomasi +676 847 8886 and Rachel +676 887 7041 have sedans. We never used Olini +676 771 2330, but other speak well of him. – Pogeyan

Nov. 2022: Taxis are not readily available on the streets. To get a taxi you need to call +676 23 919. We paid \$6TOP from the market to the harbour basin.

7.1.5 Provisions

July 2023: The Talamahu Market (large open-air market with red roof) is amazing. Turn right from dinghy dock, past International Dateline Hotel, make your next left and go up 2 blocks. It will be on the right. The market is open Mon-Sat but Saturday is the best day. There is also a huge craft market attached to the produce market.

Along the main street (to the right of the basin) you will see loads of street vendors that sell produce including watermelon, papaya, bananas, carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbage, etc...

Molisi Supermarket is across from the fresh market on Salote Road. Hours: Mon-Thur: 0830-1830, Fri-Sat: 0830-2000. sales@molisi.to and they are on Facebook. There are loads of small mini-markets along the main road and in the center of town.

Costlow has permanently closed.

Butcher: Frankie's Butchery. Tel: +676 25 561. On Salote Road. wholesalemeatstonga@gmail.com. Hours: Mon-Sat: 0900-1800. Decent selection of meats.

Lion Liquor is located right across from the dinghy dock. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: The vegetable market in downtown Nuku'alofa is the best in all of Tonga. We have found it's best to visit towards the end of the week. There are also quite a few handicraft and souvenir vendors on the second floor of the market and the west side of the market.

There is surprisingly good set of road-side vegetable stands within walking distance of the harbor. It is about 1 bloc west, right across from the new ferry terminal.

There's not much to distinguish the various Nuku'alofa grocery stores now that Costlo is no longer in business. There is a grocery (and ATM) across the street from the vegetable market. We did most of our shopping there since it's conveniently close to the market for a single taxi ride. – Pogeyan

May 2023: There are a lot of smaller grocery stores right near Fuaa Harbor. You can find basics as well as frozen meats, frozen fruits and vegetables in these shops.

Further into town is the Molisi Supermarket. This shop is a little bigger and carries a wider variety of foods that will be familiar to US, NZ and AUS cruisers. We were shocked to find flour tortillas. Another report here from 2018 said there was a Cost Low grocery store just outside of town. This has closed.

For fresh fruits and vegetables, buy at the stalls lining the main road along the waterfront. We found these really well-stocked with apples, oranges, bananas, kiwi fruit, baby bok choy, onions, long beans, eggplant, peppers, potatoes, cucumbers, carrots and more. I read somewhere that agriculture is rich in Tonga because the ash from volcanoes has created rich soil. I don't know if this is true; real sure there are no apple or orange groves in Tonga. Regardless, these sellers had good quality freshies and we were grateful. – Oh Joy II

Nov. 2022: We shopped at the market in town, which had a good selection of produce and at Molisi supermarket across the street. We visited the Costlo supermarket, but the big warehouse-style shop was almost empty. It seemed they did not restock throughout Covid, but said that containers were scheduled to arrive in December 2022. – Rainbow Safari

7.1.6 Restaurants

July 2023: There are loads of places to eat in town. Here are just a few:

Friends Café and Tourist Center +676 27 323. Hours: Mon-Fri" 0730-2200. Sat: 0800-1930. Located on Salote Road. Food was adequate in our opinion but the place was packed and full of life.

Waterfront Café +676 25 260. Hours: Mon-Sat: 0800-2100. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner. Located on main street (left of dock)

Ngutulei Bar & Restaurant +676 22 666. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0800-2200, Sat: 0800-1130, Sun: 1100-2100. Located at the docks

42 Evergreen (Chinese) +676 21 563. Hours: Mon-Sun: 1000-2130. Located on the docks.

Nauti Ruby's Bar & Restaurant +676 27 808. Hours: Mon-Fri: 1100-0100, Sat: 1600-1200am. Located on the docks.

Pizzeria Royal +676 27 808. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0730-1500. Located on the docks

Billfish Bar and Restaurant: +676 24 084. Hours: Mon-Fri: 1000-0100, Sat: 1400-2330. Located on main road, left from docks

Ice Cream: Right across the street from the dinghy dock is a house that has a large open window where you can buy the most delicious ice cream! She serves HUGE scoops too.

Taste of Italy +676 771 2345, <https://tasteofitalyintonga.weebly.com>, (Wellington Road, a side road off main street). Italian wines and deli food.

There are several places to eat at the Talamahu Market as well. – Sugar Shack

July 2023: There are several restaurants in the vicinity of the harbor. In our opinion, the Waterfront is the best restaurant in Tonga. The Billfish is a good place for “bar food” and a beer. Nauti Ruby’s installed a pizza oven since we were here last and they seem to know how to use it. There’s also a good Fish n Chips takeaway called “Something Fishy” in the harbor area.

In the downtown area, Friend’s Café is the go-to for lunch. Further west, Little Italy used to be our favorite, but on our recent visit, we received mediocre service and barely warm food. – Pogeyan

May 2023: Nuku’alofa has no shortage of dining options. We enjoyed trying many spots both in town (a solid 30-minute walk from Fuaa Harbor) and near the wharf. Billfish near the wharf is a happening spot with locals and expats. Friendly Café and Tourist Center in town served great food. We went twice to Chand’s Curry House also in town. – Oh Joy II

July 2017: Looking for nice Italian wine, sold by an Italian, go to Taste of Italy +676 771 2345, Lalita Building (Wellington Rd. a side street of the main street), sells also delicious cheese, salami and pasta. His son runs the upmarket restaurant RobyAnne, at the street right behind the palace. – Spunky

7.1.7 Activities

July 2023: There are a lot of fabulous things you can do in the capital city! They have a wonderful large fresh produce market called Talamahu that I highly recommend you visit. In addition, you should stop by to see the Royal Palace, the Royal Tombs, Ha’amonga Trilithon “The Stonehenge of the Pacific”, Captain Cook’s landing site, blow holes in the south, and the Tongan National Center. Another cool thing to do is to visit the Anahulu Cave +676 871 6759 <https://g.co/kgs/xTifK5>. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022: We booked a one-day tour of Tongatapu’s sights with Hamala Tours. Hamala’s number is +676 842 6900. We paid T\$400 for six of us in a van, driver and Hamala’s explanations in fluent English – he grew up in Utah.

It was a great day out and left us with a much better understanding of Tongatapu. Highlights for us were learning more about the 2022 Tsunami on the Northwest panhandle coast, where it completely washed away all the resorts and Anahulu cave. – Rainbow Safari

7.1.8 Cruiser Reports

May 2023: We left New Zealand for Tonga on April 22 2023 and arrived at Tonga on May 1 2023. We were Boat #3 to clear in to Tonga this season.

While on passage we had some engine trouble and couldn’t run the engine higher than 1,000 rpm without overheating. Tonga clearance guidelines say to come into Fuaa Harbor and tie up at the wharf for clearance procedures. However, with engine trouble, we knew we wouldn’t feel comfortable entering the small harbor in winds 20-25 knots so I emailed Sau (at customs) about our issues and requested permission to anchor at Pangaimotu Island, then dinghy ashore to clear in. Sau responded “Noted, and no problem...”

After anchoring I hailed the Port Authority on VHF 14 and 16 and got no response. They hailed us later and thus commenced our on-again off-again relationship with Customs. I learned later that their VHF was broken and that’s why they’d hail us, ask a question, then disappear for the day. In the meantime, we were recovering from the passage and launching the dinghy. We couldn’t get the dinghy engine to

start and after two full days of working on it we admitted defeat. It needed a new carburetor, and none would be found here in Tonga.

I joined the Facebook group **Tonga Expats and Locals** and finally found a water taxi to take us ashore four days after our arrival. During this time, I was in daily contact with Customs via email to Sau and occasional, frustrating VHF conversation with Christian. They understood our situation and were very patient. They were also absolutely unhelpful with requests for a water taxi or outboard engine repair.

From the Tonga Expats and Locals Facebook page I found **Olini Sapoi**, who offers his services as Olini's Yachting Services. He eased everything about our clearing in, search for a new outboard engine, fresh vegetable shopping, SIM card and ice cream. He lived in Hawaii and Utah at different times and his English is impeccable.

He drove us around from about 11:30am to 3:30pm and we paid him \$50/hour Tongan. For context, he told us later he was working as night security for \$6 TOP/hour, so our rate made it well worth his time to prioritize us. We also bought him lunch, a bunch of bananas and ice cream.

Before we left Tonga, we gifted Olini a spare hand-held VHF. He was excited to be able to contact incoming vessels to offer his services. We told him to monitor VHF 14 and 16 when he was at the wharf. You might try reaching him this way if you're unable to use Facebook Messenger or phone. – Oh Joy II

7.2 Pangaimotu & Big Mama's

July 2023: Even though they welcome cruisers they are no longer able to offer food. They will chill beers and soda if you alert them ahead of time. They also welcome you to the beach to hang out chat, play games and volleyball. It is a true shame to see the tsunami damage to this beautiful spot.

Big Mama's Phone +676 771 5762 or +676 886 5233. – Sugar Shack

May 2023: Pacific Rally boats report that Big Mama's re-opened in May 2023 and is again welcoming cruisers. Yachties are welcome to anchor off and come to the beach. – Viki Moore

7.2.1.1 Anchorage

July 2023: **21°07.516S / 175°09.715W** in 15m good holding. There were about 7 other boats here and we all had loads of swing room. – Sugar Shack

7.2.1.2 Cruiser Reports

July 2023: We went ashore and walked around the entire island at low tide which was lovely. We then sat under the tent at Big Mama's and enjoyed a cold beer and coke. During our 4-day stay at this anchorage we saw many pangas bringing guests to Big Mama's for a day of fun in the sun.

Unfortunately, they are not able to provide food, laundry, or taxi services. – Sugar Shack

Nov. 2022: Previous notes in the compendium point to Big Mama's on Pangaimotu Island as a resource for everything from beer on a sandy beach to laundry services. Big Mama's was seriously impacted by the tsunami of 2022 and it's hard to see what remains. It's unclear whether Ed and Ana plan to resurrect this popular spot. We used the water taxi a couple of times to get from our anchored boat to town but did not go ashore at the resort. Locals reported they were closed while they sorted next steps.

After completing clearance in the main harbor, it was Friday afternoon and we were ready for some relaxation after the passage. We anchored off Big Mama's on 11m sand, clear clean water, and dinghied ashore. Ana was there to welcome us and chat, but the restaurant, unfortunately, was severely damaged by the Tsunami following the Hunga Ha'apai eruption in January 2022 and was closed when we were there. – Rainbow Safari

2010: In the Tongan language, 'pangai' means royal, and 'motu' means island. So pangaimotu means 'royal island'. It is, indeed. The King of Tonga owns all the land throughout the kingdom other than a few small parcels that have been given away.

However, the Queen is related to Earl and Anna, and she has granted them permission to live and run a business on the island even though the King retains ownership of the land itself.

Pangaimotu Island is just over one-mile northeast of the harbor in Nuku'alofa, but it feels a world apart. It is a small palm-covered island with a sandy beach completely surrounding it. There is a secure, albeit deep, anchorage on the SW side of the island just in front of Big Mama's. — Passage

7.3 Fafa Island

Fafa Island is 7.5km NE of Nuku'alofa.

7.3.1 Anchorage

Nov. 2022: **21°05.392S / 175°09.433W** in 6m of firm sand, south of Fafa Island. No big bommies, clean bottom. Approach with care as there is a partially submerged line of buoys connected by a thick mooring line about 50m to the West of the anchorage coordinates. A nice, quiet spot with protection from northerly winds.

The Fafa Island Resort was washed away by the Tsunami. A few broken foundations remain of the restaurant, all villas have disappeared. — Rainbow Safari

7.4 Malinoa

7.4.1 Cruiser Report

2010: Malinoa is just a dot on the chart about six miles north of the harbor in Nuku'alofa. It is very tiny - probably just a few acres - but what it lacks in size it makes up for in beauty. It is lightly wooded, and a sandy beach surround it. There are substantial coral reefs all around it, and there are plans to turn this island in to a protected marine preserve.

It took some effort to navigate our way in, but it was well worth the effort. We had to go in quite close to find a sandy patch in which to drop our anchor, and we ended up dropping in only 18 feet of sand. The crystal-clear water revealed spectacular corals all over the bottom, but we did not get in.

We had a calm quiet night here before heading to the bright lights of the 'big city' (a relative term) of Nuku'alofa. — Passage

8 Minerva Reef

There is an EXCELLENT writeup about Minerva Reef—things to do while you are there. Currently posted here: <https://www.ghradio.co.nz/flotsam.html>

It's a good idea to poke around for other stuff you might be interested in on the Gulf Harbor Radio site.

8.1 North Minerva

8.1.1 Pass

July 2023: We arrived at North Minerva pass at mid-day with about 20-25kts of SE winds and 2m seas. We had a little incoming tide, but other than that the pass was really easy and well charted. — Sugar Shack

8.1.2 Anchorage

July 2023: **23°39.09S / 178°53.63W** in 18m good holding. There were 2 other boats when we arrived but they were pretty far away from us. They ended up leaving the next morning so we had the entire reef to ourselves for several days.

North Minerva is a much more comfortable anchorage than South Minerva. The reef comes up a little higher offering just a smidge more protection. – Sugar Shack

Oct. 2011: **23°39.480S / 178°54.191W.** – Here are the waypoints that s/v Infini used in October 2011. They were spot-on.

Approach: 23-36.635 S / 178-56.418 W
Entry: 23-37.267 S / 178-55.959 W
Inside: 23-37.390 S / 178-55.749 W

Infini reported good protection in the anchorage, and plenty of room to anchor. – Infini

8.1.3 Activities

July 2023: Many cruisers before us bragged about the abundant crayfish that they caught on the outer reef. But we searched a few times and they totally alluded us. – Sugar Shack

Sept. 2011: The diving and fishing outside the reef is exceptional but do go a little way from the entrance. This area has been fished quite hard by everyone over the years.

North Minerva is a much better short term stop than South. I spent 6 weeks there this year but only a week in South. South is quite a bit more rolly and North has the advantage of a beach at low tide on the SW reef. It can be a bit painful if it is blowing a gale though.– Cooee Too

8.2 South Minerva

There is a light on the SE corner of the reef. It flashes about every 2-3 seconds.

8.2.1 Pass

July 2023: We arrived at the South Minerva pass around mid-morning. We decided to go north of the large bommie (23°56.007S / 179°07.789W) and no issues with depth. There was very little current and no incoming waves. We had about 25kt SE winds and 3m seas. – Sugar Shack

Sept. 2011: South Minerva isn't as well protected as North as the reef isn't as wide or as high, but the fishing is better and the lagoon is smaller. Also, the entrance is much wider with a large coral head in the Northern part. This gives 2 entrances. The Northern one is about 100m wide and the Southern 600m. The Northern one is pretty much in the middle and it is also deep right to the edges.

South Minerva, North entrance: outer 23°55.899S / 179°07.875W and inner 23°55.957S / 179°07.647W

So. Minerva, So. entrance: outer 23°56.176S / 179°08.193W & inner 23°56.279S / 179°07.923W.

The Southern pass is much wider at 600m and is also deep. I went quite close to the reef on the South side so my track is for that but don't go any further south. That is to starboard on the way in. I did this so that I could see the reef on my right but I couldn't see the reef on the other as it is so wide. I have no idea if there are any obstructions in the middle to Northern part of this pass. There is a big coral head a fair way inside the entrance on the south side but it is very obvious. – Cooee Too

8.2.2 Anchorage

July 2023: 23°56.54S / 179°07.419W in 18m good holding. The reef in South Minerva is not as high as in North Minerva so there is not nearly as much protection. We are in a catamaran and found it to be pretty roly. But the water was gorgeous and so very clear. – Sugar Shack

8.2.3 Activities

July 2023: We took our dinghy outside of the main pass and went around the western part of the figure 8 in the reef. There is a “dinghy pass” around 23°56.270S / 179°09.05W where you can enter. We went at high tide with the sun bright and could clearly see the reef. There was a strong outgoing current and it was a super chilly day so we did not explore below the water. But it is gorgeous. – Sugar Shack

9 Appendix A - Useful Tongan Words and Phrases

It is not necessary to learn to speak Tongan when you visit the Friendly Islands. English is the second language here and almost all Tongans have some exposure to it. At the Aquarium Café, all of our staff speak English, but it might be helpful to learn a few Tongan phrases. Tongans are always very impressed when a visitor tries to speak to them in their native tongue.

Even just learning to say *mālō e lelei* (hello) and *mālō* (thank you) will be much appreciated.

In Tongan, a consonant almost always indicates a new syllable and the vowels have a slightly different pronunciation than they do in English. For example, "a" is pronounced as "ah", "e" is said as "ay", "i" is said as "ee".

9.1 Everyday Greetings

English	Tongan
Hi. (Informal)	Mālō e lelei.
Hello (Formal)	Mālō 'etau lava.
How are you?	Fēfē hake? (Idiomatic)
Fine, thank you.	Sai pē, mālō.
How about you?	Fēfē koe?
Very Good.	Sai 'aupito.
Are you ok?	Sai pē?

9.2 The Basics

English	Tongan
Yes	'lo
No	'ikai
Thank you	mālō
Thank you very much	mālō 'aupito
No, thank you	'ikai, mālō pē
Excuse me (said when passing in front of someone)	tulou
Please	kātaki
Sorry	fakamolemole
Please, help me	kātaki, tokoni mai
What is the Tongan word for _____?	Ko e hā e lea faka-Tonga ki he _____?
I am here. (An appropriate response when someone calls your name)	Ko au.
What's that?	Ko e hā ē?

Sorry, what is it? (say it again)	Fakamolemole, ko e hā koā?
Where is the toilet?	Ko fē e falemālōlō?
I have a question.	‘Oku ‘i ai ki’i fehu’i.
I am tired.	‘Oku ou hela’ia.
I am Taua. (name).	Ko Taua au.
Sorry, I don’t understand.	Fakamolemole, ‘ikai mahino.
Let’s begin.	Tau kamata.
Time to rest.	Taimi mālōlō
Let’s pray.	Tau lotu.
Do you know how to speak English?	Ke poto he lea faka-pālangi?
I speak a littleTongan.	‘Oku ou lea faka-Tonga si’isi’i pē.
An expression of grief, excitement or concern	‘Oiauē!
Stop it!	Tuku ia!
Don’t.	‘Oua
It’s ok/ Never mind.	Sai pē ia.
Just joking	Fakakata pē
Just wandering around	‘Eva pē.
Of course.	Ka ko toe hā.
Oh, how sad!/pitiful	Faka’ofa.
Man!!	Masi’i!
Really?	Mo’oni?
Good-bye - (said to someone who is going, when you are staying, informal)	‘Alu ā.
Good-bye - (said to someone who is staying, when you are going, informal)	Nofo ā.
See you later. (informal)	Toki sio.
Bye Rose - (good bye to a person using his/her name).	Lose ē.
Good bye - (said to someone who is going, when you are staying, very formal)	Faka’au ā
Yes, is the common response to all the farewells above.	‘Io! but pronounced it like this “loooooo”

9.3 Tongan Numbers

Numbers	English	Tongan
0	zero	noa
1	one	taha
2	two	ua
3	three	tolu
4	four	fā
5	five	nima
6	six	ono
7	seven	fitu
8	eight	valu
9	nine	hiva
10	ten	hongofulu
20	twenty	uanoa
30	thirty	tolunoa
40	forty	fānoa
50	fifty	nimanoa
60	sixty	ononoa
70	seventy	fitunoa
80	eighty	valunoa
90	ninety	hivanoa
100	hundred	teau

9.4 Monetary Related Phrases

English	Tongan
dollar	pa'anga
cent	sēniti
How much is it?	'Oku fiha?
Eight dollars	Pa'anga 'e valu
Ten cents	Sēniti 'e hongofulu
Two dollars and ten cents	Pa'anga 'e ua sēniti 'e hongofulu

9.5 Shopping and Groceries

English	Tongan
How much is it?	'Oku fiha?
Chicken	Moa
Mutton	Sipi
Beef	Pulu
Fish	ika
Breadfruit	