



## Samoa – FAQs

<http://www.samoa.travel>

### **Best time to go**

Samoa's peak holiday period is Dec – Jan when Samoans living abroad visit home. The weather is warm and tropical all year round, with two distinct seasons – the dry season running from May to October and the wet season from November to April (this is also cyclone season). Samoa's climate is hot and humid with an average daily temperature of 29 degrees Celsius and ocean temperature in the low 20s. In the eastern and south-eastern parts of Samoa, trade winds will bring year-round cooling breezes late afternoon and early evening. The most popular time of year to visit Samoa is during the dry season, but if you visit during the wet season, a light raincoat is an essential item of clothing.

### **Language**

The local language is Samoan however English is also spoken (although somewhat stilted in less 'touristy' locations).

### **Currency/Money**

The tala (dollar), divided into 100 sene (cents), is the unit of currency. Ask for smaller denominations, such as \$5, \$10 and \$20 tala when you purchase Samoan currency as large denominations can cause difficulty during small monetary transactions, particularly outside the larger settlements.

Tipping is generally not expected or encouraged. However, if a guest wishes to leave a gift for good service then you are welcome to do so directly with the employee or the hotel reception.

ATMs are not readily found outside the capital. Debit cards and credit cards are commonly accepted.

Retail pricing is substantially lower than that in Australia – general groceries are quite inexpensive e.g. \$5 tala (AUD\$2.80) per beer stubbie, \$5 tala for ladies' sunglasses from the market.

### **Time Zone**

Samoa switched to the western side of the International Date Line in 2011 and is 3-hours ahead of Sydney time.

### **Driving**

As of 2011, Samoans drive on the left side of the road. The speed limits are 40km p/h within villages and 56km p/h outside built-up areas.

Every visitor to Samoa who wishes to rent a vehicle must apply for a Temporary Drivers Licence, which costs around \$21 tala for one month. To qualify for this, you must have a full Drivers Licence from your country of origin. You will not be issued a Temporary Driver's License if you have a Learners, Restricted or Provisional Drivers Licence.

Road and street signs are scarce. This makes for an adventure when trying to track down specific sights and locations – feel welcome to ask a local for directions.

Be aware that fuel is readily available in and around Apia but is scarce elsewhere. There is a single fuel pump on the Main South Coast Road, within the Sa’Anapu Conservation Area on the local road map. Returning a rental vehicle to the airport with a full tank of fuel requires a little fore-planning, particularly if you are not near Apia at the end of your trip!

Be aware that domestic pigs, poultry and dogs roam freely. Animals and people frequently walk by the roadside so caution needs to be taken when driving.

### **What to Pack**

Summer weight clothes plus a jacket for possible breezy evenings are appropriate all year round. Footwear is mostly thongs or slides, even in more upmarket establishments. (Leave your heels at home!) Reef shoes and snorkelling gear are available from most accommodation if you prefer not to pack these. Pack a beach towel if luggage room permits, and a small quick-dry bath towel in case your fale accommodation does not provide this. If you plan to attend a Samoan Church service (a great cultural experience), be aware that the dress code is white and ladies should wear a dress or skirt (jeans/shorts are not appropriate).

As Samoa has a strong cultural structure and Christian faith, tourists are asked not to wear bathing suits in Apia or in villages.

### **Mobile Phones**

There are two main telecommunications providers in Samoa: Digicel and Bluesky Samoa. Both providers offer extensive coverage. Prepaid SIM cards are available at Faleolo International Airport and at outlets in Apia.

### **Electricity**

Most of the electricity in Samoa, particularly for the main grid, is generated from diesel and hydropower. A very small amount of electricity is produced from biomass (coconut residues) and solar energy resources.

Australians do not need a power adaptor in Samoa as their power sockets are of type I (Australian Standard). The standard voltage is 230 V and the standard frequency is 50 Hz.



### **Vaccinations / Immunisations**

No vaccinations are required to enter Samoa unless you are arriving from, or transiting through, an area infected with yellow fever within 6 days.

### **Insect-borne diseases**

There is no risk of catching Malaria in Samoa, but there are occasional outbreaks of Dengue Fever. Dengue Fever is transmitted by a daytime-biting mosquito, and travellers are recommended to apply a tropical strength insect repellent to avoid the risk of transmission.

### **Poisonous insects/animals**

There are no poisonous insects or animals on land in Samoa. If you go diving or snorkelling in Samoa, keep an eye out for the Crown of Thorns starfish, Cone Snail (Cone Shell) and Lion Fish. These are venomous marine creatures which should be avoided and never touched or handled.



*Stonefish*



*Crown of Thorns Starfish*



*Cone Shell*



*Lionfish*

### **Quality of drinking water**

The water in Samoa is generally safe to drink, although it is recommended that travellers purchase bottled water, which is widely available. Ice used at most eating spots, nightclubs and bars is generally prepared from treated water, and is therefore usually safe to drink – but if in doubt, ask your waiter first.

### **General health & safety**

Samoa is one of the safest travel destinations in the world, boasting a low crime rate, no terrorist activity, and very few diseases to worry about. However, we still recommend that you apply the same common sense approach to your health and safety as you would at home, by not leaving valuables unattended, and investing in both travel insurance and a basic travel first aid kit.

### **Getting between the Samoan islands – Upolu and Savai'i**

The Samoa Shipping Corporation runs the passenger/vehicle ferry between the main islands of Upolu and Savai'i. The ferry departs from the Mulifanua Wharf on Upolu near the international airport, so if you are travelling from Apia, allow 45 minutes for the journey. The ferry departs from the Salelologa Wharf on Savaii for the return journey. The trip takes just over one hour each way and it pays to arrive early at the wharf to purchase your tickets.

Check with your accommodation hosts or online for sailing times. One way passenger fares are ST\$6 for child 2–12 years and adults ST\$12. Vehicle charges (depending on the size of the vehicle) are between ST\$80–\$110 each way