

The Cook & Samoa Islands (and Niue) Compendium

A Compilation of Guidebook References and Cruising Reports



The anchorage at Suwarrow, in the Cook Islands--off Tom Neale's dock

Rev 2024.1 – August 2024

Please help us keep this up to date by sending your info in!

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The current home of the official copy of this document is <http://svsoggypaws.com/files/>

If you found it posted elsewhere, there might be an updated copy on our website.

Revision Log

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

Rev	Date	Notes
2024.1	08-Aug-2024	Update on Palmerston, Cook Islands by Migration, and from Tartaruga on shipping packages into American Samoa via USPS
2023.4	06-Nov-2023	Update on Apia Samoa from Rowan
2023.3	13-Sep-2023	Update on Raratonga from Nutmeg
2023.2	10-Aug-2023	Corrected URL for Cook Islands Tourism Site, update on Pago Pago
2023.1	02-June-2023	Update on Penryhn from Afrikii
2019.1	28-July-2019	Eagle's Wings account of 5 weeks in Beveridge Reef (in 2015). Pago Pago clearance update from Quasar. Updates in some weather links. Niue and Suwarrow updates from Begonia (from 2017)
2018.1	31-May-2018	Updates on Aitutaki, Palmerston, and Beveridge Reef from Noonsite and s/v Sanuk
2017.3	04-Sep-2017	Updates from Duplicat and Noonsite on Apia, Samoa and Suwarrow
2017.2	17-June-2017	Updates from Spunky on Palmerston and Niue
2017.1	06-Jan-2017	Adding Starry Horizon's blog link.
2016.2	01-Nov-2016	Filled in a report on Pago Pago from 2013. Updated Soggy Paws' Sailmail address.
2016.1	01-Sep-2016	Starry Horizons update Beveridge Reef and Niue. Addition of Gulf Harbor Radio for Voice Weather
B.5b	25-Nov-2012	A little more provisioning info in Pago Pago. Update on where to find stuff from s/v Zephyr
B.4	24-June-2012	More Niue Info
B.3	30-May-2012	Rag SSB Net info, Niue updates
B.2	11-May-2012	Some updates on Am Samoa
B.1	15-Jan-2012	Updated Cover Photo
A.4	21-Oct-2011	Tonga stuff moved to Tonga Compendium, added bus schedule for Apia. Immigration issues for non-US passports in American Samoa
A.3	25-Sep-2011	More info on Apia, Samoa.
A.2	22-Sep-2011	Updates on Niue from YOLO. A note from White Princes about waypoints in Asau, Western Samoa. Added the Northern Tonga section
A.1	14-Sep-2011	A few updates on American Samoa
A	01-Sep-2011	Initial version, extracted from the Societies Compendium, Still very rough at this point!!

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1 Introduction

This guide originally started out as a way for s/v Soggy Paws and a few friends to organize notes and various internet sources on the Tuamotus, prior to our cruise there in Spring of 2010. Later, it became a way for us to pass on what we've learned while cruising the area in 2010 and 2011. Now it has migrated from the Tuamotus, to the Marquesas, to the Societies, and now the Cooks and Samoa, and Tonga. If you haven't found our other 'Compendiums', they're available online at <http://svsoggypaws.com/files/> It 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 places that the guides don't cover.

1.1 Organization of the Guide

East to west.

1.2 Overview of the Cooks and Samoas

1.2.1 Crossing the Date Line in Western Samoa

From [Noonsite](#): Note on International Date Line: Since 2011, Samoa has been on the New Zealand side of the International Date Line. If you arrive from the Cook Islands or French Polynesia you will skip a day. None of the cruising guides mention this, but as the Samoan authorities do not clear boats at the weekend, it is worth planning for. American Samoa, however, is still on the French Polynesian side of the Date Line.

1.3 Weather Between French Poly and Tonga

1.3.1 General Weather Conditions July – September

The weather in the Central South Pacific during cruising season is dominated by the South Pacific Convergence Zone, and big winter storms passing well south of the area. The South Pacific Convergence Zone will bring rainy unsettled weather. The big highs will bring "reinforced trades".

David on Chameleon, "the weather guy" in New Zealand used to talk about the 30-30-30 rule for predicting reinforced trades. If there's a 1030 MB or higher high, around or south of 30 S, you can expect winds exceeding 30 Knots.

1.3.2 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, as of 2012, spelling is wrong, but this is correct)

Saildocs: send nadi.fiji

<http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/data/raw/fz/fzsz50.nstu.cwf.ppg.txt>

(this is a 5-day f'cast for Am Samoa, which I treated as a 'Samoa Waters F'cast')

http://www.met.gov.to/index_files/routine_forecast.txt

(this was hard to find, tho' I don't know why - the Tongan waters f'cast, done by Nadi and tweaked at Nukalofa airport)

See also: Weather Sources in the Societies Compendium

Soggy Paws - 2011:

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

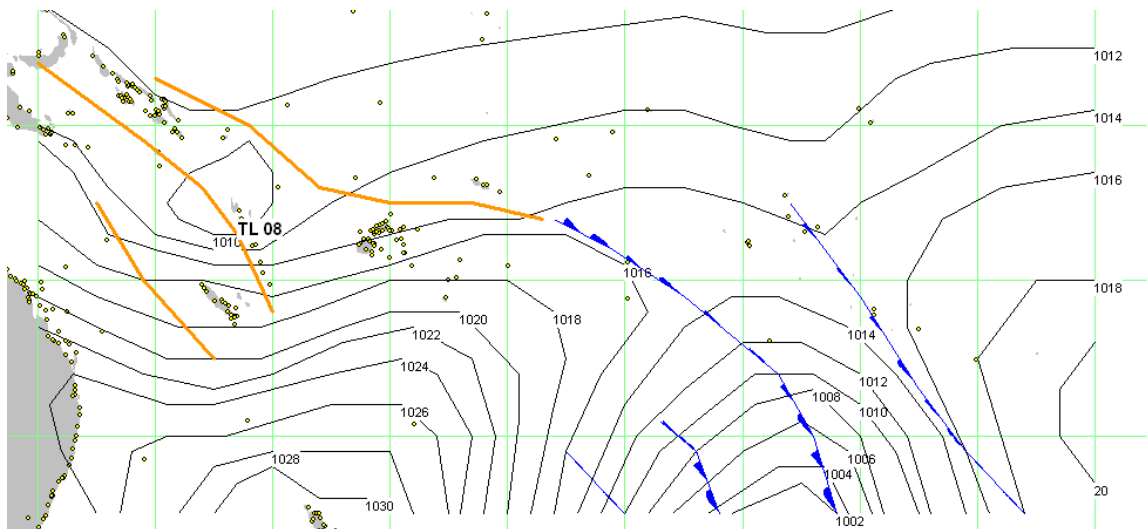
1. A spot forecast for the location we were in—every 6 hours for 10 days
2. A ‘local’ GRIB file that gave a fairly detailed forecast for a reasonably small area for about 5 days
3. A ‘wide range’ GRIB that watched conditions approaching well to the west and south of us. The area we requested was 05S-40S,175W-140W, 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.

We also got the Nadi Fleet codes daily, but rarely looked at them unless we were puzzled by the current wx.

We found 6 possible sources of weather useful while away from internet in this area

1. **The Fiji Met office** produces 2 products that cover the area, one is the ‘Fleet Code’—a coded text file that can be pasted into a software program that will decode the codes into a surface analysis chart that covers from New Zealand east to about 120W. Download the Fleet Code program on the Pangolin website www.pangolin.co.nz before you get out of internet range. The saildocs request is `send fleet.nadi`.

The second product is a text version that is not coded. The saildocs request is `send nadi.sopac`.



The Nadi Fleet Forecast as Decoded by PhysPlot

Note: OpenCPN v4.0 and above also includes a ‘Fleet Code Viewer’ plugin. Download (free) from <http://opencpn.org>

2. **NOAA Hawaii** also produces a text forecast that covers the area. It is a ‘High Seas’ forecast and really only gives locations of fronts and such, and major areas of wind. The SailDocs request is `send FZPS40.PHFO`.
3. **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 French Poly. Then, no one, including the French, Fiji, or NOAA weather offices do a very good job of predicting what the wind will do in any given location.
4. **New Zealand Weather Faxes**

They only have one transmitter in NZ, so each product is broadcast on a different frequency every 15 minutes starting at xx00 (5Mhz), xx15 (9Mhz), xx30 (13Mhz), xx45 (16Mhz daytime, 3Mhz nighttime). All times are Cook Island Local times. (-10UTC)

PRODUCT	TRANSMISSION TIMES (Local) & Freqs				
	3247.4	5807	9459	13550.5	16340.1
1200 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL	0645	0600	0615	0630	
1800 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL		1200	1215	1230	1245
TRANSMISSION SCHEDULE		1300	1315	1330	1345
0000 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 30		1400	1415	1430	1445
0000 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 48		1500	1515	1530	1545
0000 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 72		1600	1615	1630	1645
0000 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL		1800	1815	1830	1845
0600 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL	0045	0000	0015	0030	
TRANSMISSION SCHEDULE	0145	0100	0115	0130	
1200 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 30	0245	0200	0215	0230	
1200 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 48	0345	0300	0315	0330	
1200 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 72	0445	0400	0415	0430	

(subtract 1.9 to get dial frequency)

5. 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

On the Web

The full Hawaii schedule is available as a text email via Saildocs or online at <http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/fax/hfhi.txt>

The Streamline is available at this URL:
<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/stream.gif>

And the Significant Cloud Features here:
<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/neph.gif>

The Sat Photo is here: http://aviationweather.gov/data/obs/sat/intl/ir_ICAO-F_bw.jpg

Getting the Hawaii Faxes via Email from Winlink or Iridium email

From s/v Whoosh: Here are the files I've been sampling using NOAA's FTP file server because I don't find these in the Winlink catalog and Sailmail won't offer graphics files/attachments.

This just boils down to sending an email to winlink with some special commands in the body of the email. They require opening up your file size limit (to 40K in some cases) but one or two are practical with a good connection, without using up all one's time. These are the same products available via wxfax IF propagation supports getting them in a viewable, usable form, and IF the timing fits the crews' other plans. So the FTP option is just another arrow to have in the quiver.

PJFB10.TIF - Pacific Wind/Wave Analysis 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)

PWFE11.TIF - 24HR Pacific Wind/Wave Forecast 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)

PJFI10.TIF - 48HR Pacific Wind/Wave Forecast 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)

PWFA11.TIF - Pacific Streamline Analysis 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)

QYFA99.TIF - Tropical Surface Analysis 40S-40N, 100W-120E (Most Current)

PBFA11.TIF - Significant Cloud Features 30S-50N, 110W-160E (Most Current)

PYFE11.TIF - 24HR Pacific Surface Forecast 30S-50N 110W-130E (Most Current)

PYFI11.TIF - 48HR Pacific Surface Forecast 30S-50N 110W-130E (Most Current)

To get any of these, you address an email to:

ftpmail@ftpmail.nws.noaa.gov

No subject; use the following format with one or more files listed:

```
open
cd fax
get PJFI10.TIF
quit
```

I'm finding that connecting to the Winlink Hawaii station must be done the evening before I do a morning weather report (in order to connect) - do either of you pull down winlink files in the early a.m.? For me, this means using some stale f'cast products (e.g. that streamline analysis) but doing so seems better than not having it altogether.

1.3.3 Weather Sources – Voice

The best source of voice weather for the SW Pacific is the new **Gulf Harbor Radio** net, which is now on 8752 kHz or 8779 kHz or 8297 kHz. (In that order depending on interference).

The net operates Monday through Friday at 1915 UTC (07:15 NZST) from May 1 to 25 November.

Once you get to the Central South Pacific, you should be able to start picking up the Gulf Harbor Radio daily broadcast out of New Zealand. David does a morning voice broadcast with conditions in the cruising areas north of New Zealand.

2019: The latest info on Gulf Harbor Radio scheds and frequencies is available on this website:

<http://www.yit.co.nz/gulf-harbour-radio>

Note that if you don't have a radio, but have internet, David is livestreaming his daily broadcasts on Youtube. (follow the link on their website)

David uses position reports submitted on the website Yacht In Transit (YIT) <https://www.yit.nz> to cover the areas that cruisers are currently in. So, go to YIT and register and save the information on sending in Position Reports to YIT. That way David knows that boats are in the area wanting weather updates, and your weather report helps with feeding the weather forecasting mechanism.

1.3.4 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)

New Zealand Met

Current surface analysis:

<http://www.metservice.com/national/maps-rain-radar/maps/sw-pacific-recent-latest>

Surface Forecast Series (30, 48, 72H)

<http://www.metservice.com/national/maps-rain-radar/maps/sw-pacific-future-series>

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).

Australia Met

And here's for Australia. There may be a more user-friendly page, but I found this that seems to list all the products:

http://www.bom.gov.au/inside/itb/dm/idcodes/tables/current/difacs_products.shtml

NOAA Charts in Color from Hawaii

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

Current Streamline and Streamline Loop:

<https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/graphics/stream.gif>

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

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

Satellite Pictures

This is likely available on a marine weather site somewhere, but here's the link I use for Pacific Satellite:

http://aviationweather.gov/data/obs/sat/intl/ir_ICAO-F_bw.jpg

This picture is very low bandwidth, and is updated about every 15 minutes, and if you download and save successive files, you can get a fairly nice moving satellite picture.

FIJI Met Office

Fiji Met Office Maps and Satellite page

<http://www.met.gov.fj/sat-map.html>

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

Bob McDavitt's Weekly Weathergram

<http://weathergram.blogspot.com>

1.3.5 Understanding the Weather Patterns

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

1. 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 online: [Waypoint Books](#) [Bluewater Books](#)
If you can't find it, email Bob at bob@metbob.com
2. Jim Corenmans "Letters from the South Pacific" originally published in the late 1990's in Latitude 38 Magazine. Copies of this series of articles are floating around among boaters, and 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 from here: <http://svsoggypaws.com/files/index.htm>
3. David Sapiane's Weather for the Yachtsman. David is a professional weather forecaster (now retired) and a cruiser. You can download his good advice here:
<https://www.ghradio.co.nz/weather.html>
4. 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
5. Check the Pacific Puddle Jump 'Files' section on Weather, there are usually some good, updated documents there. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pacificpuddlejump/>

1.3.6 Professional Weather Routing

Generally, the South Pacific runs outside of cyclone season are not too difficult, but just to add some info for those of you who worry about weather for the Pacific crossing.

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 him for detail 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 legs of their trip. Ken did a good job for them. Check out their services: <http://locusweather.com/> or contact them via email at forecaster@locusweather.com

1.4 Yachtsmen's Services - Overview

1.4.1 Money

The currency in the Cooks and Nuie is NZ dollars. In American Samoa, it is the US Dollar. I think Western Samoa has it's own currency. In most of the smaller islands/atolls in the Cooks, and in Nuie, there are no ATM's, and banking hours may be limited. If you're not stopping in Rarotonga first, you might want to try to get some NZ dollars before you go.

Some places in the Cooks will accept US dollars if you do not have NZ dollars, but it would be good to check the current exchange rate online before you leave French Polynesia. Having a printout of the exchange rate would be a good way to settle any discussions about exchange rates.

1.4.2 Diesel and Gasoline

Fuel is available for sure in Rarotonga, Pago Pago, American Samoa, and Apia, Samoa.

Fuel is scarce in the other islands/atolls.

In 2011, the price of diesel between Pago Pago and Apia seemed about comparable, and not that much better in price from duty free fuel in Bora Bora.

1.4.3 Propane

Propane is reportedly available in Rarotonga, Niue, and American Samoa (maybe other places but no positive reports yet).

1.4.4 Groceries

Rarotonga has good provisions. Aitutake has a supermarket and fresh fruits and vegetables are available.

Pago Pago and Apia have grocery stores and fresh air markets.

1.4.5 Water

1.5 Getting Visitors In and Out

Most cruisers are doing crew changes in Rarotonga (Kiwi's) or American Samoa (US).

In Raro, the primary airline is Air New Zealand which flies to Auckland and Christchurch, New Zealand, Fiji, Tahiti and Los Angeles. Blue Pacific flies to Christchurch, New Zealand on Wednesdays only. Air Rarotonga services most outer islands on a regular basis.

There is a weekly flight into Niue.

1.6 Communications

1.6.1 VHF

Be aware that on high power, a good VHF will transmit 25 miles. 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, low squelch. Make sure you are aware which channels are automatic low power (ie 17), 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 18 or 68. Conversely, in a crowded anchorage, transmission on high power on channel 18 or 68 may 'bleed' over to channel 16.

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).

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.

1.6.2 SSB Radio Nets

With most English-speaking boats only passing through, most nets in this part of the Pacific do not persist from year to year.

In 2011, the transient nets were on 8131 (0800 in the morning) and 6224 (1630 in the evening). As the boats started arriving in Pago Pago and Tonga, they had trouble continuing to check in. After more boats were in Tonga and Pago Pago, the nets were shifted an hour later. 8Mhz worked much better with the distances, but needed relays to fill in for the closer boats. 6Mhz was a little stretched for these distances, later in the day or earlier in the morning would have worked better for 6Mhz.

As of about 2014, Gulf Harbor Radio net started up and eventually replaced the popular, but now defunct Rag of the Air net. This is primarily a weather net, run by a retired weather forecaster living in NZ. It operates now on 8752 kHz or 8779 kHz or 8297 kHz. (In that order depending on interference).

The net operates Monday through Friday at 1915 UTC (07:15 NZST) from May 1 to 25 November. (verify this on their website: <https://www.ghradio.co.nz/>)

The bottom line is to ask around as you meet other cruisers. If you can't find a net that suits you, start one. Be prepared for it to fall apart as boats reach Tonga/Samoa, as both Neiafu and Pago Pago are HF 'black holes' where it is hard to hear anything, both because of noise and terrain.

If you're a ham, for longer passages, we always checked in with the 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.

1.6.3 Telephones & Cell Phones

My US-ATT GSM cell phone picked up Blue Sky in American Samoa with no problem. However, trying to call long distance to the US produced an error voice message. You can buy a local Blue Sky Pay-as-you-Go sim card in American Samoa (see Pago Pago services).

From a web search in 2018, Blue Sky also operates the cell phone service in the Cook Islands, and on populated islands (Rartonga and Aitutake for sure), you can buy a local sim, or roam on you major carrier sim (\$\$\$). Internet (but probably not cell phones) is even available in tiny Palmerston now also.

1.6.4 Internet Access

There is internet access available in the larger Cooks islands, and both Samoas.

Internet in Pago Pago harbor is easy and cheap... \$20 for a week's unlimited service, with signal strong enough to pick it up onboard, or free at McDonald's. This is literally the best and cheapest internet in the entire SW Pacific.

There is also internet access via Wifi in Niue.

1.6.5 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.

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!!

1.7 Diving

Nearly every island in the Cooks has good diving--better than most of French Polynesia, and most have dive shops that will be happy to show you a good time. See comments in specific sections.

1.8 Haulout, Storage, and Repair Facilities

In Rarotonga, there is no slipway, but yachts up to 15 tons can be lifted out by crane, but cradles are not available.

American Samoa offers some boat support facilities like a boat yard capable of hauling the big tuna fishing boats, and some supplies of the sort needed by the fishing industry (chain, rope, etc) but does not have much in the way of supplies for pleasure boats.

There is a good/new marina in Apia, Samoa. All yachts entering Apia must go to the docks, unless there is no space.

1.9 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 Pacific Tsunami Warning Center website is located here:

<http://ptwc.weather.gov/>

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.

1.10 Cruising Information Sources

We are indebted to the people and organizations below for documenting their experiences and sharing them with us. We hope they don't mind that we've gathered their comments into this document to share with other cruisers who don't have internet

A few details about the boats are included, where we know them, 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.

1.10.1 Helpful Island-based Websites

Cook Islands Tourism site: <https://cookislands.travel/home>

Niue Yacht Club's Website: www.nyc.nu

Palmerston Island: www.palmerstonisland.net

American Samoa Tourism site: <http://www.americansamoa.travel>

Niue: <http://www.niueisland.com/yacht-club/>

1.10.2 Cruiser Reports

Heart of Gold (late 1990's) - We are indebted to Jim and Sue Corenman for their Letters from South Pacific, originally published in Latitude 38 in the late 1990's, referenced in our Weather section, but also which contain a bunch of still-relevant information about cruising in the South Pacific.

Ocelot (The Hacking Family) (2005) - This is a family traveling around the world on a catamaran. They have done a great job documenting where they've been and what they've learned.

<http://hackingfamily.com> or <http://svocelot.com>

Tackless II (2004-2005) - Tackless II (T2 for short) is a 44' CSY center cockpit cruiser (5.5' draft). They headed west from Bora Bora in 2005.

<http://www.thetwocaptains.com/logbook/southpacific.htm>

Baraka (2008) - Baraka arrived in Tahiti in June of 2008 and left the Societies for Cooks/Samoas in August

<http://svbaraka.com/societieslog.htm>

Mata'irea (2007) - <http://matairea.blogspot.com>

They transited through French Polynesia and the Cooks/Samoas in 2007

Iron Bark (2007) - They transited through French Polynesia in 2007.

<http://anniehill.blogspot.com/>

Migration (2008-2009) - Migration is a trimaran with a beam of 25' and 4'9" draft. They entered the Cook Islands in 2009 from Bora Bora, and stopped in Aitutake, Beveridge Reef, and Niue.

Most of their comments in this booklet come from Bruce's website. Bruce has also contributed a few comments via the PPJ Yahoo Group.

<http://brucebalan.com/migrations>

Migrations 13 covers their time in the Cooks.

Mr John VI (2008) - These comments came from a PDF file floating around on the web called 'Mr John's Guide to the Dangerous Middle', or Mr John's blog. It seems to be a compendium of his own experience in 1987 and revisiting in 2008, and shared experiences from other yachts. It is a very useful guide and it includes some sketch charts which are not included here, so Google for it and download a copy for yourself.

[www.clubcruceros.org/polynesiaguide/The Dangerous Middle.pdf](http://www.clubcruceros.org/polynesiaguide/The_Dangerous_Middle.pdf)

Mr. John IV is a Bristol 35.5 with a fairly shallow draft (for a monohull). He has a tendency to want to anchor in shallow water, so if you have boat with a draft over about 5 feet, take care!

Mr. John also has a blog, where they elaborate more on their experiences at each place.

<http://yachtmrjohn.blogspot.com>

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

<http://www.nineofcups.com>

Visions of Johanna (2010) - Visions' blog is here: <http://vofj.blogspot.com>

Visions is a 62' custom racer/cruiser with a 8 knot average cruising speed and a 6'8" draft.

Soggy Paws (2011, 2012) - Soggy Paws went through the Cooks and Samoas in Aug/Sep 2011, and doubled back to catch Niue from the Ha'apai group of Tonga in June 2012.

Soggy Paws is a CSY 44, a 44 foot monohull with a 5.5' draft.

Soggy Paws' blog is here:

<http://svsoggyaws.blogspot.com>

Whoosh (2010) - Whoosh's major contribution is the weather information, as he was one of the volunteer "weather guessers" for the Puddle Jump group of 2010.

You can find Whoosh's log at: <http://www.svsarah.com/Whoosh/WhooshUpdateLog.html>

Slipaway (2011) - Jan and Rich on Slipaway came through this area in 2011

Slipaway's website is <http://slipaway.net/>

Periclees (2011) - Angus and Rolande on Periclees passed through Cooks and Samoas in Aug/Sep 2011.

<http://www.sailblogs.com/member/periclees/>

Mahina Tiare III (2010/2011) - John and Amanda Neal run a custom Offshore Sailing Experience business call Mahina Expeditions. They have criss-crossed the Pacific and shared their experiences on their website and on noonsite.com.

<http://www.mahina.com/>

Sete Mares (2011) - Sete Mares is a 60' catamaran. John and Marie-Andrea cruised through the area Aug 2011.

<http://www.sailblogs.com/member/andreatsea/>

YOLO (2011) - "YOLO" (You Only Live Once) is a 42 foot PDQ catamaran owned by Karen and Jason Trautz. They spent one month in the Cook Islands, stopping at the little-visited Penrhyn, and Suwarrow., and also at Niue, where they wrote a very thorough summary of their experiences at Niue.

<http://yolotrautz.blogspot.com>

Reflections (2011) - Reflections is a Valiant 37, with about a 6' draft. Gene and Sherry did a Pacific circuit a long time ago, and set out again from Hawaii in 2011. They passed through Suvarrow and the Samoas in September/October 2011.

Zephyr (2012) - Bill and Tracy on s/v Zephyr puddle-jumped in 2011, crossing through the Cooks via Suvarrow, but skipping the Samoas. They spent the 2011-2012 cyclone season in Fiji (Vuda Point) and then visited Pago Pago (via Tonga) in Oct/Nov 2012. Their current blog is here:

<http://www.sailblogs.com/member/svzephyr/>

Starry Horizons (2016) – Amy and David on Starry Horizons cruised through the Central South Pacific in 2016. Their website/blog is here:

<http://outchasingstars.com/>

Spunky (2017): Robert and Aneke arrived in March in the Marquesas with their sailing yacht Spunky, a 43 foot Morgan. By June they passed through the central Cooks, stopping at Palmerston and Niue. They are taking a short sabbatical from working life, and plan to island-hop to Australia and sell the boat and go back to work in the Netherlands in late 2017.

Duplicat (2017):

Sanuk (2017): Ilse and Stefan passed through the Cook Islands in 2017 on their 40 ft Lagoon Catamaran. Sanuk has 1m20 draft.

1.10.3 Pacific Puddle Jump Yahoo Group

This is a 'group' on Yahoo where the people gathering in South and Central America meet to share information about crossing the big puddle. Fortunately, many previous years' jumpers come back and share their information with the newbies. A good source of information, but not very organized, and full of bloat from people who ask the same questions over and over again, without doing any research of their own.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pacificpuddlejump/>

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 Yahoo and then sign up for this group. Be sure to explore the Files and Links pages, there is lots more information there.

1.10.4 Noonsite

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.

<http://www.noonsite.com>

1.10.5 Seven Seas Cruising Association

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.

<http://www.ssca.org>

1.11 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).

What we have done here is cross reference which guide covers which atoll, since none of them cover all the atolls.

1.11.1 *Charlie's Charts of Polynesia - Charles and Margo Wood*

Charlie's Charts of Polynesia: Charles and Margo Wood, 5th ed 2005

1.11.2 *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.

1.11.3 *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.

1.11.4 *Landfalls of Paradise – Earl Hinz*

Landfalls of Paradise, Earl Hinz, 4th Edition, 1999, University of Hawaii Press.

2 Passage Reports

2.1 *Bora Bora to Suvarrow*

2.1.1 *Soggy Paws - August 2011*

We left Bora Bora in light winds and motorsailed to Mopelia overnight. We spent a nice 4-5 days in Mopelia, diving and hanging out, and waiting for the wind to fill in. The first day that we had winds over 10 knots, we left Mopelia for Suvarrow, for a total distance of 570 miles. We had idyllic sailing conditions, with wind first from the NE and then switching to SE after a couple of days, with a 16 hour motoring-in-calm in the middle. The wind switch permitted us to sail on a broad reach on two different tacks for a nice comfortable sail all the way to Suvarrow.

2.1.2 *Iron Bark - August 2007*

We left Bora Bora in a brisk F5, which lasted for the first couple of days, giving us 308 miles. By noon on the 23rd, we had the topsail drawing and a red-footed booby joined us for the night. Later that evening, the strop for the peak halliard chafed through leaving the gaff supported only by the topsail sheet. Trevor took down main and topsail leaving us to continue under boomed out staysail. The booby watched the whole show, quite unperturbed. In the morning, Trevor donned his climbing harness and using a pair of rock climbers' ascenders (a far superior system to a bosun's chair), went aloft to fit a new strop. The following night the wind went round in circles, eventually settling down to F2/3 from ESE; our

day's run was only 63 miles. We sighted Suvarov on 27 August, but the wind had started to increase and Trevor was dubious about going in to the anchorage. It was too late to get in that day, so we hove to for the night to see what the morning would bring.

At daybreak, with F5 from S of E, we decided to bear away for Samoa, but an hour later, the sky cleared and the wind was obviously decreasing, so we changed our minds.

Early that afternoon, we sailed in through the pass and after having motored round for about 20 minutes, finally found a spot to anchor among the 18 other yachts there.

2.1.3 Tackless II – 2005

Should in fact I get to yachtie heaven, I do hope that the nasty passages are somehow excised from the experience. I know... I know, those are the parts that make the arriving sweeter, but both these two captains and almost every other cruiser we talked to in Suvarrow could do quite happily without the shakedown we underwent for three of the six days it took to reach the atoll from Bora Bora.

Our course carried us through a northern branch of the South Pacific Convergence Zone (SPCZ), where equatorial north-easterly winds bump into the southeast trades. We alternately experienced high winds, no winds, confused seas and heavy rain, making for a generally unpleasant passage. We had stuff shaken from shelves that had ridden there uneventfully since the Virgin Islands, and, as for the leaks, well, it's just too depressing to talk about T2's leaks, the bane of Don's existence.

Our last day was fine sailing, of course, at least until nightfall when it went dead calm. We hove to for the night about twenty miles out, well clear of the atoll's eastern reefs, and at about 5 AM fired up Perky to motor on in in time for slack tide and good light in the pass. During the night, two other boats we'd not known were out there materialized out of the dark, and the three of us entered the pass one behind the other and found places to drop the hook in between the four boats already there.

2.2 Niue to Tonga

2.2.1 Soggy Paws - 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.

As we approached the northern tip of Vavau, Tonga, on the morning of the 2nd day, we put out our fishing line, and caught a nice Mahi Mahi.

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.

2.2.2 Mr John VI - September 2008

Niue slipped astern soon after we slipped the mooring and departed under sail, the first hour was good, a spanking breeze and a smooth sea; then we started to pick up the swells that were hooking around each end of the island, the sea built on top causing a 'washing machine' motion that had us rolling gunwale to gunwale at times. This motion seemed to continue well after Niue vanished below the horizon, the wind remained at almost twenty knots whilst we rolled on into a very dark night under double reefed mainsail and a little Genoa poled out to starboard; it was uncomfortable but we were covering distance quickly.

We were expecting the wind to swing around to the north slowly and allowed ourselves to get well north of track so that when this happened we'd come back down slowly without having to adjust sails; that strategy worked so well, it was afternoon on the following day when the pole had to come down and we went up on a beam reach. The wind shifting into the north was a good indication that we were being approached by a front line; this we had been expecting and we assumed from what we'd seen in the forecasts that we'd have a little motoring to do when it went through. We were also expecting heavy rain cells and some squalls along with the passage of the front; thus as afternoon gave way to evening, we furled away the Genoa and moved onto the small inner headsail.

At about 2000hrs Paula called below that there was a little rain coming so I struggled into a rain jacket and went on deck, in that short space of time the squall line hit us and the wind went from ten to forty knots in a matter of seconds; I rushed up forward and dropped the jib to the deck as the rain sluiced over us, driven horizontally by the wind. It was like standing in front of a fire hose, the force of water and wind was enough to knock you over and my rain jacket was having zero effect. Returning to the cockpit we pointed her up into the wind with the Vane Gear and heaved the mainsail in tight so that the boat was fore-reaching at minimal speed; there was time now to hide from the rain and watch the wind speed indicator as it hovered around the forty-five knot mark and seemed fixed there, not wanting to come down at all.

We remained like that for the best part of an hour; me, huddled under the spray-dodger, ready to attend any problems whilst Paula plied me with coffee and chocolate biscuits. A short time later we were down to twenty-five knots and the wind had worked its way around to the south so we freed off the main; resuming our westerly course.

Just twelve hours after our little blow, we were forced to start the motor as the wind died to nothing and we could see, on the horizon, the north-eastern headland of the Vava'u Group; we had, at last, arrived in the Kingdom of Tonga and as far as I was concerned, completed our crossing of the Pacific. Motoring into Neiafu Harbour we found well over one hundred boats, many of which we had already met or heard on the radio during our voyage, they had all gathered here to prepare for the final leg; the passage to New Zealand.

2.3 Tonga to Niue

2.3.1 Soggy Paws - June 2012

We had reluctantly skipped Niue on our "puddle jump" last year because we stayed so long in Suvarrow that we just ran out of time to do everything. Also, the problem with going to Niue from Suvarrow was the length of the journey. It takes about 5 days, so you burn your weather window enroute, and then you arrive and the next system is on you, bringing bad wx to Niue (sometimes).

But 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".

2.4 Suwarrow to The Samoas

2.4.1 Suwarrow to Apia - Sapphire of London - September 2006

Our passage to Samoa was just a pleasure. We were blessed with four days of easy tradewind sailing accompanied by blue skies and puff ball clouds. These conditions have been unusual as we are often directly in the path of the South Pacific Convergence Zone which often brings pouring rain for days and violent squalls. The first couple of days were relatively fast with 15-20 kts from astern but then the wind dropped as did the seas and the last two days were slower but more relaxed as well. We entered Apia Harbour after dark aided by a full moon and clearly visible leading lights. After making our way through the reef pass we anchored next to our friends in the anchorage.

2.5 Palmerston to Niue via Beveridge Reef

2.5.1 Sanuk - July 2017

Between Palmerston and Niue is Beveridge Reef: about a circle of 2 nautical miles (3.6 km) diameter, within 7 meters deep coral with a broad sandbank of 2 to 3 meters depth and then the reef with its breaking waves ... From the high seas you only see the splashing white foam of breaking waves that pop up from nowhere, except for the west side a 200 meter strip where the waves do not break: the pass.

Our GPS indicated that we would arrive at the south of the reef by 5:00 pm, and the sun was going down at 18:20. Our Navionics maps only indicated the reef as a shallow spot without detail, the same for OpenCPN (we did not have a satellite photo of the reef), but we did have an accurate report with drawing and GPS coordinates from a certain Mr John VI.

Because of a wide arch we came to the pass at about sunset, and although there was a three-quarter moon visibility was poor. In retrospect we had to turn around and continue to Niue - and afterwards we also made a new rule: no navigation on new terrain in the vicinity of land after sunset - and we only entered a us unknown reef on gps. Ilse made me promise that if something went wrong I would not say: I'm sorry, I could not help it. There was little current, a 15 knots of wind with a small swell, but it remained blind. With three knots on the ground we followed the course of MrJohn, and once inside we threw the anchor as soon as possible and waited for the next day's sun (somewhere in the middle of the atoll). But the weather gods were not with us.

Yet the water was so incredibly clear that we could shift to the sandbank on the edge. We passed many coral columns and although they looked extremely high in the clear water they all remained 2 to 3 meters below the surface. Sanuk has 1m20 draft.

On our lonely parking space in the ocean we had a ray of sunshine during our two days on the spot so that we could take spectacular pictures of this very special place. With Flipper we sailed to the reef at about 300 meters, and we saw lots of fish and beautiful coral. Despite the bad weather it was one of the best snorkeling experiences.

But it is still a double affair: back and forth between Sanuk and the reef the engine of flipper should not fall out, because then the wind will drive you away, and with rowing you will not get back to the boat. And there is no other boat in the area, only sea. That is why Ilse was relieved when we sailed back through the pass, on our way to our next destination at 150 nautical miles: Niue, one of the smallest parts of the world.

2.6 Beveridge Reef to American Samoa

Eagle's Wings – August 2015: Just left Beveridge Reef, bound for Pago Pago. Great sailing on broad reach.

Day 2: 22-27knts ESE. 2-3m swell from the ESE. 50% cloud cover. Barometer 1018 and falling.

Broke line for 2nd reef last night. Sailing with 3rd reef for now. Air temp warmer. Nice sailing!

Day 3: 22-28knts ESE. 3m swell from the ESE. 50% cloud cover. Barometer 1016 and rising.

Making our way toward Pago Pago. May heave to if can't make harbor during daylight.

Day 4: 18-25knts ESE. 2-3m swell from the ESE. 50% cloud cover. Barometer 1015.5 and rising.

We hove to for 15 hours starting late yesterday afternoon. We are underway again. We should get in to Pago Pago harbor today. The seas are very rough (short period waves).

Day 5: Arrived in Pago Pago early this afternoon local time. Difficult to get anchor to set in bad bottom (hauled up fishing lines and plastic bags). Met lots of friendly cruisers.

3 Cook Islands

Tackless II on Routes through the Cooks: The Cook islands are scattered in two main groups over two million square miles of ocean. Only five of the Cooks have passable anchorages, and although they lie across the usual routes west from French Polynesia, they are so spread apart that most cruisers choose only one to visit. And a hard choice it is to make.

Does one sail SW to **Rarotonga**, the lushly mountainous primary island and center of the Cook Islands, and/or nearby Aitutaki? Here is where most of the Cook Islanders live, and I've heard it said that the Cook Island dancers are the best in Polynesia.

Or there is the fascinating **Palmerston** Island a little closer to the rhumb line from Bora Bora to Tonga. Renowned for their hospitality, all Palmerston's inhabitants are descendants of one Englishman who settled on the island in 1862 with three Cook Islander wives and with them fathered 26 children!

Alternatively, one could tack way north to visit the less-visited and more tropical **Penryhn** Atoll?

Or do you choose the uninhabited atoll **Suvarrow**? Originally called Suvarov after the Russian ship that first visited it, Suvarrow was made famous by a book called *An Island to Oneself*, by New Zealander Tom Neale. Neale lived the hermit's life on Suvarrow's Anchorage Island from 1953 to 1978, charming the occasional yachties that found their way there, and thereby founding one of those nautical traditions that is irresistible to seafarers. Perhaps in recognition of this lure, the Cook Island government made Suvarrow a nature preserve and bird sanctuary with a caretaker/park warden stationed on the island, much less as a government official, than as a host to carry on Neale's role.

I, of course, wanted to do it all, and some boats do, starting south in Rarotonga and then working their way north all the way to Penryhn. But, there is so much to see to the west before the next cyclone season, that we, like most cruisers, realized we had to pick just one, and, after all our time in French Polynesia, the retreat to nature called strongly to us. So many of our diving friends in last year's group had written glowingly of Suvarrow and it's long-time caretaker Papa Joane, it just seemed too special to miss.

3.1 *Cruising Yachts Guide to the Cook Islands (2009)*

COURTESY OF COOK ISLANDS PORTS AUTHORITY. Downloaded from a website somewhere, probably Noonsite.com

General: Local time is GMT - 10.

The official currency is the New Zealand Dollar (NZD).

Business hours are 0800 - 1600 Monday to Friday and 0800 - 1200 Saturday.

Banking hours are 0900 - 1500 Monday to Friday and 0900 - 1200 Saturday.

Public Holidays

- New Year's Day
- 2 January
- ANZAC Day: 25 April
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Queens Birthday: 1st Monday in June
- Constitution Day: 4 August

- Gospel Day: 26 October
- Christmas Day
- Boxing Day 26 December

Links: The following web sites will provide more information on the Cook Islands in general and cruising in particular:

- **Cook Islands Tourism** <https://cookislands.travel/home>
- **The Cruisers Global Website** <http://www.noonsite.com/>
- **Cook Islands Weather Site** <http://www.met.gov.ck/>

3.1.1 Ports of Entry

- **Rarotonga:** Avatiu Harbour - 21°12' South, 159°47' West
- **Aitutaki:** Arutanga, - 18°51' South, 159°49' West
- **Penrhyn:** Omoka – 08°51' South, 158°03' West
- **Pukapuka** - 10°50' South, 165°50' West
- **Manihiki:** Tauhunu - 10°25' South, 161°03' West
- **Manihiki:** Tukao - 10°22' South, 161°02' West
- **Atiu:** Taunganui - 19°59' South, 158°08' West

3.1.2 Formalities

Clearance: For clearance, the captain must present the passports, clearance from the last port, crew list, as well as a general declaration and details of the yacht.

Yachts may not visit any other islands in the Cooks than those mentioned as ports of entry without permission from Customs and Immigration. At all these islands, the captain should check in with Customs and the Resident Administrator.

No person is to proceed ashore until the vessel has been cleared by Customs, Quarantine has issued a Bio Security Clearance for the vessel and Health has issued a certificate of pratique for the vessel. Heavy penalties apply for not meeting this requirement

Immigration: If entering in Rarotonga a permit for up to 31 days will be given on arrival. This can be extended, on a monthly basis, up to three months maximum. Fourteen days before the permit expires one should apply for any extension. Proof of adequate funds may be requested for extensions.

In Aitutaki and other ports of entry, a 31 day permit will be given on arrival. Extensions have to be obtained in Rarotonga. If crew disembarks from the yacht, they must notify Immigration and provide evidence of a means of departure from the Cook Islands.

Customs: A list of firearms must be produced on arrival and these will be impounded until departure.

Animals have to be confined on board until eventual clearance to land by the Quarantine Officer.

Agriculture and Quarantine: Animals, plants and fruit will be inspected as the Cook Islands are free of serious diseases and pests, and their economy depends very much on agriculture. Fruit and meat may be confiscated, so it is advisable not to arrive with a lot of fresh supplies. Fortunately good local fruit is available. All vessels entering the Cook Islands require a Bio Security Clearance which will be issued by the Quarantine Inspector when he boards your vessel.

Health: Yachts must leave the "Q" flag up until cleared by Port Health, who will visit the yacht and provide pratique.

Fees: Port dues are payable at the Ports Authority in Rarotonga prior to departure and are assessed on the length and type of vessel. The fees are:

Monohull Yacht NZD 2.20 per metre per day

Multihull Yacht NZD 3.00 per metre per day

Motor Yacht NZD 2.50 per metre per day or NZD 0.60 per Gross Tonne per day (whichever is greater)

There is also a mooring fee of NZD 5.00 per day at Aitutaki.

All persons departing the Cook Islands are required to pay departure tax of NZD 55.00 per person (NZD 15.00 for children under 12).

Visa extension fee amounts to NZD 70.00 for 3 months per person.

Restrictions: Cruising yachts are not encouraged to remain in the islands during the cyclone season, which is from the start of November to the end of March.

All anchorages are weather dependent as are the harbours and depending on forecast weather vessels may be required to clear the harbours for their own protection.

To visit Suvarrow Atoll National Park, one should obtain permission from the resident Park Administrator.

3.1.3 Avatiu, Rarotonga

CHART NZ 9558

Avatiu is the principal port in the Cook Islands. About 150 yachts call at Rarotonga each year. Beware of out - of - date guidebooks that still recommend Avarua Harbour, which has not been used since the hurricane of 1987.

Berthing instructions can be obtained from the Harbour Master who can be contacted on VHF Ch 16, or through the Coast Station Radio Rarotonga (Call sign ZKR), which maintains a continuous watch on VHF Ch 16 and also on HF SSB 2182 and 4125 KHz.

Yachts should fly their quarantine flag until cleared by Port Health. Customs and Immigration formalities can be attended to at the Harbour Master's office. Documents required are:

- clearance from the last port,
- the vessel's Registration Certificate, and
- passports for all on board.

Any firearms must be declared and deposited with the Police for the duration of the vessels stay.

A permit for 31 days will be given on arrival. This can be extended up to 3 months by application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration.

Water is available on the wharf. Diesel fuel can be delivered. LPG bottles can be filled.

There is no slipway, but yachts up to 15 tons can be lifted out by crane, but cradles are not available.

Yachts are not encouraged to stay in the harbour during the cyclone season from December to March.

Fresh fruit and imported goods are in plentiful supply. Chandlery supplies are very limited, but can be obtained from overseas within a week if required.

Telecommunications

- Telecom Cook Islands is open 24hrs daily for long distance calls.
- Phone cards are available.
- Telecom uses the GSM mobile system.
- Numerous Internet cafes are available.

Air Travel

- Air New Zealand flies to Auckland and Christchurch, New Zealand, Fiji, Tahiti and Los Angeles.
- Blue Pacific flies to Christchurch, New Zealand on Wednesdays only.
- Air Rarotonga services most outer islands on a regular basis.

3.1.4 Aitutake

CHART NZ 955

Vessels drawing up to six feet can negotiate the long passage into the small boat harbour in Aitutaki lagoon. Larger vessels can anchor in 10 fathoms outside the reef; but this is not recommended in westerly weather.

Fresh fruit and vegetables and imported goods are in plentiful supply.

3.1.5 Penrhyn

CHART NZ 945

There is good anchorage outside Taruia Passage. Large vessels can enter the lagoon and anchor off the village of Omoka, but it is advisable to employ a local pilot as there are numerous coral heads in the lagoon. It is possible to lie alongside the wharf at Omoka, but there can be considerable surge in south - easterly weather.

The village of Te Tautua on the eastern side of the lagoon is worth a visit and provides a sheltered anchorage in easterly weather.

Being a lonely atoll, supplies and facilities are very limited in Penrhyn. Water can also be in short supply at times. There is satellite communication to the outside world. Air Rarotonga flies in once a week. Pearl farming is the main industry on the island.

3.1.6 Suwarrow

CHART NZ 945

This atoll is a national park and nature reserve and is uninhabited except for a Ranger/Administrator on Anchorage Island.

Anchorage is inside the lagoon on the western side of Anchorage Island. Yachts calling at Suwarrow without first clearing at Rarotonga, Aitutaki or Penrhyn will be charged a fee of USD 50.00 for a visit.

3.1.7 Other Islands

Pukapuka, Nassau, Manihiki, Rakahanga, Palmerston, Atiu, Mitiaro, Mauke and Mangaia

Prior to visiting the remaining islands in the Cook Islands, vessels have to clear at a port of entry and advise Customs and Immigration of their intention to visit one of the other islands.

There are no harbors at any of these islands and all vessels are required to anchor off. Good holding can be found off most islands, but the anchorages are very dependent on the weather and a vigilant watch should be kept.

All the islands are friendly and welcoming of visitors. If departing from Rarotonga expect to be asked to carry supplies to some of the islands.

3.2 Penrhyn

Tom Robinson's (the rower) lengthy 4 part blog on his stay here is a very informative read:

<https://www.tomrobinsonboats.Thanks!>

3.2.1 Afriki – May 2023

We arrived in Penrhyn (Tongreva) early May, 2023, came through the easy, short pass named Taruia, on the NW side and picked our way through the bommies in good sunlight and anchored in front of Omoka village. (Recommended spot **08-58.700S 158-03.100 W**).

Formalities: The check-in people (customs, immigration, bio security, health and agriculture) came out to us within an hour and were super friendly organized and professional. For our 43' monohull and two people the cost was \$150NZ plus \$2.50NZ per day. We did not have to check in beforehand with the central government in Rarotonga as Penrhyn has removed themselves from that process, nor did we need to inform Penrhyn of our planned arrival date, just show up.

Sundays are for church so there is no check-in or work of any kind and Saturday, you may or may not get checked in.

Money: Presently there is no ATM so you have to bring foreign currency in cash. We had \$US which they would only trade 1:1 as it is difficult for them to get rid of the \$US themselves. (NZD preferred).

Internet: There are WiFi hotspots and you can buy vouchers with a password to get you connected. The Vodaphone guy is a mile or two out of town but you should be able to catch a motorbike ride down to him pretty easily.

Presently there are 189 people living in Penrhyn with 28 of them living across the lagoon in Tetautua. We are the first cruising sailboat to stay awhile in 3 years (there was a guy, Tom Robinson, who is rowing his way across the Pacific, who stayed 4 months and had left before we arrived).

We have found this place to be very special. Maybe because there is so little tourism (15 sailboats visit in a "busy" year) we have found the people to be so open and enthusiastically welcoming. The lagoon is vibrant with life (great spearfishing) and the NW pass, the only one we have dove here so far, has some of the best marine life that we have seen in the Pacific although most of the coral in the pass was dead. And lots of sharks of course.

We sailed across to Tetautua and anchored in the very calm sandy waters in front (you are only allowed to anchor in front of the two villages but you may possibly ask permission to anchor somewhere else). They love it when kid boats show up and all the children can interact. Unfortunately they are not so enthusiastic about dogs as they are not allowed on the island anywhere.

There is no pearl farming or pearl diving happening here these days and we have not really done much trading with anybody.

There is a yacht book that sailors have been signing for 40 years that is interesting to read through.

This is my second time across the Pacific but first time to Penrhyn, and I have to say it is our favourite island (and we loved French Polynesia, especially the Marquesas). It is not on the straight line path towards Tonga if you are coming from French Polynesia but it is so well worth the few days north to get here, it really is.

Ian and Ann, Sv Afrikii

3.2.2 YOLO - August 2011

Yolo spent about 2 weeks in Penrhyn. Check in cost \$162 US dollars total covered clearance in and out of the Cook Islands. However, when they stopped at Suwarrow, the ranger insisted on charging them a \$50 USD fee at Suwarrow too. Many more details below.

Location: Penrhyn (Tongareva) is the northern most of the Cook Islands. It is located 740 nm north of Rarotonga. It is located at 09 degrees 01 minutes South and 157 degrees 59 minutes West. If you leave Bora Bora and sail to Penrhyn you will travel 580 nm on a heading of 321 degrees True. In 20 knot winds it took us 3.5 days to reach Penrhyn, a voyage well worth our time.

Penrhyn is the largest atoll to be found in the Cook Islands, with a 77 km long reef rim enclosing a deep lagoon of 233 km². To date it is the largest atoll we have ever visited. According to several locals, one yacht spent five months there exploring this huge atoll, and it is easy to see why. Penrhyn's numerous motus have a combined land area of 10 km². The lagoon, which has many patch reefs, is connected to the open sea by three passes.

Lagoon Passes: Takuua Pass is located on the northeast side of the atoll, Siki Rangi Pass is on the northwest, and Taruia Pass is located on the west side.

Small cargo and petrol ships access the lagoon via the Takuua and Taruia passes. The Siki Rangi Pass was reported as too shallow for ships and yachts to transit.

Most yachts enter the lagoon via the Takuua pass since it is located near the main village of Omoka, which is where you can clear-in to Penrhyn and the Cook Islands. Prior to entering this pass the wind had been blowing at 20+ knots for over a week. We motored through the wide pass at high slack tide, saw no standing waves, and briefly saw 2 knots of ebbing current. We experienced a minimum of 24 feet of water and our passage was easy and straight forward, much easier than most of the passes we experienced in French Polynesia.

About a week later, and under the same weather conditions, we anchored near the Takuua Pass and explored it via dinghy. The water depth was 20 feet or more, it is a very wide pass, and it appeared to offer easy access to the lagoon. It is frequently used by the locals. Note that there is a coral pinnacle which almost reaches the surface of the water in the middle of the pass, at the lagoon end. It is located at 08.56.546 S and 157.55.857 W. The locals have marked the pinnacle with a white pole. There is deep water on ALL sides of the coral pinnacle. This small coral patch was not noted on any of our electronic charts. The locals have also used white poles to mark the large reef on the west side of the pass. We never observed standing waves in Takuua Pass and would use it in all but extremely high winds and seas from the north or east.

Our Raymarine plotter uses C-MAP NT+ chips which were spot-on in terms of passes and motu locations. Inside the lagoon the water is 65 to 210 feet deep, yet it is spotted with over a hundred surface level coral patches. Our navigation software did not identify all of the coral patches, nor correctly identify the depth of several 30 foot shallow areas inside the lagoon near Omoka, which were actually at sea level. We navigated inside the lagoon in good light using eye-ball navigation techniques which made our travel safe and easy. We recommend doing the same when using the passes. Many, not all, of the coral patches and reefs are marked with white poles.

We left Penrhyn via the Taruia Pass with 15 knots of wind from the east, during a flooding time period half way between low and high tide. Despite these conditions we noted a .3 knot outgoing (ebbing) current. We stayed to the south side of the pass in a minimum of 22 feet of water and observed a small section of 1 foot standing waves in the pass.

Clearance: Clearing-In is a snap; the only real challenge is finding a good location near Omoka to drop the anchor. Most of the options are in 55 feet of water full of coral heads, and you are typically on a lee

shore. In calm weather you can tie off to the metal walled cargo wharf near the large oil tanks at 08.58.8 S and 158.03.1 W. This was not an option for us in 20+ knots of wind and waves. We dropped our anchor in 35 feet of water just off a coral patch at 08.59.9 S and 158.02.8 W. Since the water was cloudy we could not determine the make-up of the bottom, yet our fish finder and raising our anchor told us that numerous coral heads covered the bottom.

One local noted that numerous boats have lost anchors, chains, and broken equipment because of wrapping coral heads in Omoka waters. When ashore a local told us where the preferred and safe anchoring location was.

When we cleared-out of Penrhyn we dropped our anchor at 08-58.7 S and 158-03.1 W and played out 175 feet of chain. This large sandy area is just east of the metal walled cargo wharf and directly in front of the small boat basin. We did not observe any coral heads on our fish finder in this area and our anchor came up without any problems.

Omoka has a small inner harbor for small fishing boats just north of the commercial wharf. This provided us with a safe and secure place for leaving our dinghy while anchored just outside of it.

About ten minutes after we dropped the anchor two young men arrived at the boat via their small aluminum fishing boat. One represented the Quarantine Health Inspector who refuses to travel by boat to a yacht and the other was the Agricultural Inspector. The Health Inspector asked us one question, "Is anyone sick on your boat?" He then quickly completed a brief form collected his fee (NZ\$10), and gave us a receipt. The Agricultural Inspector did much the same, with the exception of very briefly looking at our fruits, veggies, and meats. He told us up front that he would not be removing any stores from YOLO. Just prior to leaving he lightly sprayed the interior of YOLO with airline bug spray. We asked the young men if they would take us to shore (round trip) to clear-in with Customs and Immigration, which they gladly did despite the rough conditions.

The Penrhyn atoll Island Secretary acted as the Customs and Immigration Officer. We enjoyed a short scooter ride to his house and then proceeded to his office located near the Post Office, Community Center, and bank. He collected our passports and we quickly completed several simple forms. He requires one day prior notice before we meet him on the day of departure, to collect the clearance fees, and retrieve our passports (his security deposit which is required so that yachties don't skip town). He stated, "Just ask a local anywhere on the atoll to call me the day before you leave, you don't have to see me in person to give me the one day advanced notice.

Clearance Fees:

Health Inspection, paid upon arrival, \$10 NZ

Agricultural Inspection, paid upon arrival, \$10 NZ

Immigration and Customs "Departure Tax" paid upon departure, \$55 NZ per adult (12 years and over)

Harbor Fees, paid upon departure: \$2.00 NZ per day for up to 10 meters in length, \$2.50 NZ 10-13 meters, or \$3.00 NZ for vessels longer than 13 meters.

All of the above amounts are noted in New Zealand dollars, which as of August 2011 totaled about \$162 US dollars. You must pay in cash, the Penrhyn Island Secretary prefers New Zealand dollars, yet he accepted US dollars. The exact exchange rate was not known by anyone, including the bank located across the street, so we discussed the issue and settled on an agreeable rate. The bank uses a one-to-one exchange rate—our loss of about 20% if we had used it.

When we arrived at Omoka, Penrhyn we did not have any New Zealand or Cooks Island currency. So, we paid all fees in U.S. dollars as stated above. The Health Inspection and Agricultural Inspection fees were quoted to us as \$10 NZ. We told the young men that we didn't have New Zealand money and their reply

was, "Then pay us what you feel is fair." The amount paid the Island Secretary for the other fees were non-negotiable.

Several locals told us that money paid to local officials never appears to reach the government offices in Rarotonga; instead it disappears into their pockets. Fact or fiction we will never know.

Unless you spend a lot of time in the Cook Islands and Penrhyn in particular, it is hard for most cruisers to justify their unpublished and high fees. Their monetary greed could be the primary reason that most cruisers sailing the South Pacific avoid the Cook Islands, or they complete a brief stop at the national park in Suwarrow, Cook Islands which charges \$50 USD for a "landing fee" for one yacht, two people, for a period of around two weeks.

Note: James, the Park Ranger on Suwarrow, claims, "The Suwarrow National Park is a separate and independent nation and not part of the immigration, customs, health, and agricultural laws of the Cook Islands." I.e., he ignored all of the clearance paperwork created by the Penrhyn officials, and being a great bureaucrat created his own paperwork and charged his fee. I asked him to stamp our passports to note our clearance into the "Suwarrow nation." In a circling conversation he explained that Suwarrow isn't a port-of-entry and there is no "official" immigration stamp or process, "however we will stamp your passport with a custom stamp the rangers have created for an additional \$2 US per passport."

If you have additional questions concerning clearance procedures or related fees contact the Penrhyn Island Secretary, Andrew Vaeau at his home phone of 42 021 or office 42 100 or 42 116, or his son's home at 42 163. You can also send him an E-mail at phoenix@penrhyn.net.ck or penadmin@oyster.net.ck.

Language: Everyone speaks one of the many dialects of of Cook Islands Maori and English. All students are taught in English in their schools.

Currency, Goods, and Services: If you didn't bring it to Penrhyn, it is highly unlikely that you will find it here. There are only two villages, Omoka on the west side of the atoll and Te Tautua which is 7.5 miles to the east on a heading of 80 degrees True. Omoka has less than 200 residents and Te Tautua has about 50. When we visited Penrhyn in early August 2011 over half of the population was visiting the capital in Rarotonga for Constitution Day and participation in the related festivals and sporting events. Once a year the government will cover all travel expenses for all outer island residents traveling to and from Rarotonga ("Raro") via a large ship, free! The return voyage and all their newly purchased belongings are also transported free of charge. Needless to say, most outer island residents take advantage of this opportunity, especially since the cost of shipping goods to Penrhyn often exceeds the price of the goods. FYI, a round trip airline ticket to Penrhyn from Rarotonga is over \$3,800 NZ and the five day trip by boat (one way) is about \$750 NZ. Many of the young people who travel to the "big city" of Rarotonga fail to make the return trip to Penrhyn.

Omoka has one very small store, which literally had nothing on it's shelves when we visited. Te Tautua has no stores. Numerous locals indicated that they had no food, fuel, etc. and were waiting for one of the cargo ships to arrive. Once every three to four months a ship arrives from Hawaii to the delight of everyone. This ship carries relatively inexpensive American goods which must be pre-ordered and paid for before it leaves Hawaii. There is also a petrol ship which delivers fuel to the power generator station in Omoka every few months. A small ship (less than 65 feet long) also travels from Rarotonga to Penrhyn every three or four months, "at best." It was apparent that everyone was living-off-of-the-land and sea, and bartering for goods during our visit.

Where to Anchor:

Omoka: Drop your anchor in the large sandy patch at 08.58.7 S and 158.03.1 W.

Te Tautua Village: We spent several days anchored near the village of Te Tautua. This small community will wrap you in their arms and make it very hard to leave. The Saitu Masters (of Palmerston fame), Henry Tapaitau, Ben Williams, and Boss Solo families will share just about anything they have with you and wish to trade for items they need or want. You will also quickly become friends with Mama P, John, Tamu, Peter, Rosaline, Angeline, Matasa, Tatahi, Veronica, and Lennuah. The young men are more than happy to take you fishing, coconut crab hunting, lobstering, etc. We dropped our anchor in pure white sand in 16 feet of water at 08.57.5 S and 157.55.7 W. This anchor provided flat calm waters in 20 knot winds from the east, which was blocked by the motu. There are only a few coral heads near the village and they are easy to see. Before the anchor was set, we observed six sharks taking up residency under YOLO.

During our very short dinghy trip to shore we observed dozens of more sharks. The beach area used by all the aluminum boats is the best place to leave your dinghy. Don't be shocked, this small shallow water beach area between two seawalls will have dozens of sharks in it while the children swim or fish are being cleaned. We observed black tip, white tip, sand, and nurse sharks. As one local teen stated, "they're our pets," and he literally reached out and stroked one of the six footers! We were also told that black, hammerhead, and tiger sharks swim in the very deep center sections of the lagoon. Needless to say we aren't extremely bright cruisers...we too touched and swam with the sharks hoping that they didn't like "the other white meat."

Takuua Pass: We anchored in mostly sand, a few coral heads, near Takuua Pass in the northeastern corner of the atoll at 08.56.812 S and 157.55.824. We dropped the anchor in 16 feet of water. It was flat and calm during our stay in 20 knot winds from the east, most of it blocked by the windward motu.

Just South of Te Tautua: We also anchored just south of the village. The anchor dropped 8 feet into pure sand, with a few coral heads in the neighborhood. Our GPS location was 08.58.591 S and 157.55.342 W. We never felt the 20 knot breeze coming in from the east because of the protection of the small motu in front of us. This anchorage gives you quick access to the two small reef passes which offer great snorkeling.

Cook Islands Christian Church

We were lucky enough to attend the "White Sunday" service of the Cook Islands Christian Church at Te Tautua. This service is held the first Sunday of every month at 1000. The church is located in the center of the village and is over 150 years old. Just about everyone in the village attends. The services are conducted in Maori and English, and visitors are always welcomed. Some of the customs we observed and learned were:

There are a total of five services each week. You will hear the call to service (ringing bell) Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday at 0600, and Sunday at 1000 and 1500. Sunday School sessions are also held on Sunday. The primary service is held on Sunday at 1000.

The White Sunday service requires men to dress in a white shirt with a collar and white slacks. Women wear a white blouse, skirt, or dress. Women are also required to wear a hat, preferably white or near white. Socks are optional and shoes can be any color. Good news, if you don't have the appropriate apparel, just mention it to one of the locals and before you can pet a shark you will be outfitted in all white, while making friends and exchanging fashion statements. Mama P. loaned Karen a couple of items and she never looked better!

Monetary donations are only collected at the 1000 Sunday service. You can make your donation to the church treasurer who sits in the small booth to the left of the front door/gate of the church or place your money in the cup just inside the front door. Most of the members give their donations to the treasurer, who records their name and the amount of the donation in his accounting ledger. And, the

treasurer is the first one who speaks during the service. He announces the name and donation amount of each contribution. Talk about peer pressure...let the service begin! Any and all donations are welcomed, all currencies are accepted.

"Get to the church on time," not! Make sure you get to the church a half an hour early. If you are the first to arrive you can walk around the church, go upstairs, and view the beautiful interior which is done up in dark woods. Leave your camera on the boat, no pictures are allowed inside the church. And, when the first member of the church arrives you must be seated. All must be seated before the last bell; last bell is for the minister.

When you walk in the church the children are seated in the front on the right side. Behind them are the beautiful ladies with their wonderful hats. The men sit in the back of the church behind the women. Guests can sit anywhere on the right side of the church.

Sunday is devoted to religion, meals, and rest. Tradition states that everyone must abstain from work (at home and business), swimming, fishing, traveling, etc. on Sunday. It would be considered offensive if a yachtie raised his anchor and moved his boat, went fishing/snorkeling, or was observed making repairs to his vessel on Sunday. If you plan on doing these type of activities on Sunday, your vessel should be anchored a long distance away from the two Penrhyn villages on Saturday.

Casual dress is acceptable for non-White Sunday services. Men wear any type and color of slacks with a collared shirt (an Izod is acceptable). Women wear colored dresses, skirts, and blouses.

The deacons are easy to spot, they are the men in white jackets and white ties.

The church bell announces to everyone that it is time for church services. Attendees can enter the church prior to the ringing of the bell, or while the bell is ringing. When the minister enters the church the bell falls silent and nobody should enter the church after the minister.

At the 1000 Sunday service communion is offered to those that want to participate. Communion follows the regular service. If you see the children and one or two adults leave the church, you know it is time for communion to begin. If you want to side-step communion, this would be a good time to exit the church.

You can't go wrong attending a church service. You get to see the beautiful interior of the church, listen to the fantastic voices in song, pick-up an inspirational word or two, and enhance local friendships. And these folks can sing! The a capella harmonies were a treat to listen to, even if we didn't understand a word of them.

Fishing: We were told that you can eat any fish caught in the lagoon. We certainly tasted a wide variety of them with no side affects. Sharks are everywhere and it would be very challenging to spearfish in the lagoon. I went fishing with locals several times. We anchored in the flooding pass, after dark, with a moon above. These are the "ideal" conditions which will guarantee you a basket full of fish. The locals use cane poles, short lines, and small hooks. The first few fish are caught on homemade lures (shells and feathers). Then they cut up a fish and used a small hook with fish bait to bring in the rest of the catch. We were catching 20+ fish per hour.

Snorkeling: We drift snorkeled Takuua Pass three times. We took our dinghy to the ocean side of the pass, jumped overboard, held on, and drifted into the lagoon. What an experience, one you will certainly remember! The thousands of fish came in every size, shape, and color. We spotted a few black tip, white, and gray sharks. Sea turtles and huge Manta Rays the size of queen size bed sheets also floated through the clear waters.

We also drift snorkeled the two passes at the south end of Te Tautua. These passes do not give you direct access to the ocean, yet they do drain a very large section of the outer reef. We found the variety of fish, turtles, sharks, and starfish well worth our visit.

Banking, Communications, Electricity, and Water

Omoka has a bank which is briefly open on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. There is no ATM at Penrhyn. The currency of choice is New Zealand dollars. The Cook Island currency was discontinued many years ago, yet the Cook Island coins are still in circulation.

U.S. dollars are accepted by just about everyone, but you'll have to agree on the exchange rate to be used; by default it will be expected to be 1:1.

Both communities have Internet and phone service. Internet service at Te Tautua was reported as unreliable by locals because, "the support technician doesn't do his job of keeping the system up all the time." The new schools built in 2011 at both communities have a computer room with Internet service.

Electricity is 240 volts, 50 Hz and the power stations operate from 0700 to 1400 and 1800 to 2300 seven days per week.

Water is in short supply and it might be possible to get some fresh water from the local community center or church upon request.

Believe It Or Not

Some of the information published about Penrhyn in cruising guides and tour books is inaccurate in our opinion.

Takuua and Taruia passes are not challenging to navigate, unless passage was attempted during extreme weather conditions.

The lagoon does have numerous coral patches, yet in good light they are easy to identify and many are marked with poles. There are no longer pearl farms in the lagoon. We were told that the oysters got a disease several years ago and the February 2010 typhoon eliminated all the farms.

Anchoring near Omoka is not dangerous if you drop your anchor in the large sandy spot noted above and pay attention to the local weather conditions.

The locals are extremely friendly and giving, and they do not promote religious agendas.

Meats, fruits, and vegetables were not removed from YOLO by governmental officials.

Great news! Penrhyn has outlawed dogs...no barking, no watching where you step, and peace and quiet for all, TG.

Everyone spends one day a month cleaning up the motu from one end to the other and making sure no open water containers exist. "This proactive step has greatly reduced the pesky insects that plagued the islanders in the past," said one local.

3.2.3 *Nine of Cups - September 2009*

Arrival/Check-in/Check-out: We entered the lagoon through the stake-marked Taruia Pass. Entering in good light is essential as there are several reefs and bommies to watch for.

Entrance waypoint: 08°57.61'S, 158°013.12'W.

Penrhyn (village of Omoka) is an official point of entry for the Cook Islands. Hail Immigration/Customs on Channel 16 for notification of arrival and departure.

Anchor just off Omoka village: 08°58.74'S, 157°55.84'W in about 50'.

We were visited en masse by Immigration (\$55/pp), Customs, Agriculture (\$10) and Health (\$20). Sometimes they have their own aluminum skiff; other times they ask for a lift from shore. All fees were payable only in NZ dollars, and it was a hassle finding someone who would exchange USD for NZ currency (the bank does not). Additionally, a daily harbor/anchorage fee was charged depending on the length of your boat. For us it was \$3/day. Fees needed to be paid prior to departure. Note that no animals, trash or food may be brought ashore.

Only Omoka and TeTautua are authorized anchorages. Permission should be requested to visit any other areas of the lagoon. Unless you are going to another POE in the Cooks, clearance papers will be issued at Omoka for your next port of call with permission to stop at other Cook Islands noted (e.g., Manihiki, Suvarrow, Palmerston).

Services:

There are very few services available at Penrhyn.

Bank: Bank of the Cook Islands in Penrhyn and Manihiki, but no currency exchange. We exchanged US dollars for NZ dollars at a local shop, and the rates were not favorable. Get NZ currency before leaving French Polynesia.

Internet/Call center: There is island Internet, and international calling is available; check with a resident for availability.

Post office: Colorful stamps are available for sale at the Telecom office. Each Cook Island has its own stamps.

Fuel (gas/diesel): Available on an "as needed" basis only, but in very limited quantities; requires jerry jugging and depends on when the last supply ship arrived.

Provisions: Some fruit, coconuts, pumpkins, lobsters and fish are available from locals; ask around. There are two small stores (very, very small) in Omoka: Flora's (in town) and Mrs. Latham's (near the airport), which may or may not have stock depending on when the last supply ship arrived.

Airport: There is a long runway on Omoka, but no scheduled flights.

Medical: There is a Nurse Practitioner and a pharmacist at the clinic at Omoka.

What to see and do

There are two villages at Penrhyn: Omoka and TeTautua (across the lagoon). Visit both as they are distinctly different.

Though reef-studded, the lagoon is easily negotiated in good overhead sunlight. Anchorage off TeTautua can be had close to shore in 25'. We anchored a bit off at 08°57.46'S, 157°55.84'W to get good, unobstructed wind for the wind-gen, but could have gone in much closer as the depths decrease very, very gradually.

Go to church at either village. The singing is outstanding. Be aware, however, that there is a strict dress code for church attendance. Men should wear long pants and a nice shirt. Women should wear a dress that covers both shoulders and knees, and a hat is compulsory. In general, activities ashore other than church are discouraged on Sundays, and that includes departures, dinghying around the lagoon or going to the beach.

Trade: once you get the hang of it, it's fun, although you could possibly leave with a waterline significantly higher than when you arrived. Best trade items were fishing gear, Dremel tools and tools in general, bedding/towels, Crocs, sunglasses, perfume and DVDs. They trade pearls (natural and black), polished mother-of-pearl shells, shell jewelry, rito hats and fans (both prized in Rarotonga). They're also quite secretive about what was traded and the details of the trades.

Walk the reefs and beaches. The best beach we found was on the southeast side of TeTautua: lots of shells, starfish, black-tipped sharks.

Snorkel at the passes in clear, warm water.

In Omoka be sure to sign Aloha's "Visiting Yacht" book, given to her father in 1987 by John Neal. Considering the book is 20 years old and still not full, it gives you an idea of how few cruisers visit Penryhn. We were the 13th yacht to sign in for the year.

3.3 Suwarrow

3.3.1 Begonia – August 2017

Time zone - UTC-10 (same as Society Islands)

We found the coordinates given in Soggy Paws were good, and entrance straightforward (even in a drizzle).

Many boaters find their chain caught on coral on departure - so buoy your chain, or allow for the extra time required to depart (ideally with a snorkeler in the water).

Officialdom

Rangers for 2017 were Harry (his 6th year) and Katu (his first). Harry is very knowledgeable and a great fisherman. Katu is a fantastic artist and specializes in wood carvings, and was also a Hakka choreographer. Both are exceptionally helpful and welcoming.

The Rangers will come out to your boat to do paperwork, and spray the boat for insects (you may want to have fenders to hand, and cover any food and kitchen tools etc. before they arrive).

Official documentation and Noon site indicate that ANY ONE intending to stop at Suwarrow must complete a form CICS Form 27 (which can be downloaded from www.MFEM.gov.ck This can be emailed off. I sent one but didn't get a reply in time, I arrived at Suwarrow anyway without issue. Most cruisers have never heard of this form but arrived and were welcomed without issue.

We were also told that SCUBA permits can be requested via a form online.

We were able to officially clear in and out of Cook islands from Suwarrow (And left with a zarpe for the next port)

They permit a 2 week max stay - cost \$50US (2 adults aboard) or \$70NZ. Passport stamps can be requested but are not automatically made. There may be a fee for this.

Activities

Go swim with the Mantas. We were told to be at the Mantas for 7am in order to see them, but (liking our sleep so much) - we tried later and regularly found them at 11, noon, and even in the afternoon. Manta rays in about 4-6m of water arrive most days - there is a buoy installed to tie your dinghy to at about S 13 deg 15.267', W 163 deg 6.654' This buoy is tied to a shallow patch separate from a nearby longer reef. If you swim off to the longer reef (you can see the shallow water), then there are likely to be plenty of mantas - we regularly saw them in 2s and 3s and even 6 at a time.

Snorkeling generally - Reefs themselves are not that great, with lots of dead coral and silt covered coral - but there is still plenty of places to snorkel and explore the crevasses and enjoy the fish (you'll want to be in the water to cool off anyway)

Walk around the island (Anchorage island), easiest at low tide - and you will probably spend ages enjoying the rock pools and life (including plenty of Reticulated Moray eels darting about, and the usual reef sharks, etc), and enjoy the birds too. You can walk around the island at high tide too - but may need

to duck under a few trees, and wade through a few shallows, either way take shoes with good soles as the surface can be very sharp and uneven.

At low tide, you can walk the reef between Anchorage island and Whale Island (but be sure to get back before the tide gets too high again). In the shallows is much easier on the feet than the jagged exposed reef - but either way take shoes with good soles as the surface can be very sharp and uneven.

There is a book swap ashore (Take a book, leave a book)

At night, go and find the ancient looking coconut crabs out walking around the Ranger station (for enjoying, not eating).

Explore the commemorative and memorial plaques, whale bones, and the Tom Neale statue - all found ashore near the ranger station.

Hang out in the fishing-net-hammocks on shore and enjoy the peace, or the sunset or sundowners (you get the idea).

Kids go ashore to meet up - and are most likely to find the rangers have something fun for them to learn.

Gather and husk some coconuts for your supplies (spikes for easy husking can be found ashore at the camp)

Walk through the short path across the island and fish from the ocean side of the island (it is allowed on this side of the island, just not in the lagoon)

Regular pot lucks ashore organized amongst the cruisers, Rangers invited to share, and are great company (but don't keep them up too late since they have to work!). They will readily join in and start up the Grill to cook any meats and fish on.

Look out for the birds--Red tailed tropic bird, Noddies, Frigate birds, shearwaters, boobies (nesting on Anchorage island), etc.

In 2007 the rangers were building an outdoor gym. Worth a look even if you don't want to work your muscles.

Activities are much more restrictive since 2014 rule changes (designed to protect the wildlife)

- No setting foot on any motu or island except Anchorage Island (without special permission)
- No Scuba diving (without prior approval - a fellow cruiser had applied for a permit on line but I'm not sure of the details)
- No spear fishing
- No fishing in the lagoon (you can fish from shore on the outside of
- Note also you should have a holding tank sufficient for your stay and throw no scraps overboard (as they attract the reef sharks, which then attract the bigger sharks)

Consider bringing provisions for the rangers. When we arrived they didn't seem to want anything, but they did say they liked Documentaries and music (especially Eric Clapton for Harry).

Laundry: Obviously there is no laundromat ashore, but the rangers have a non-potable water catchment system that you can ask to take from for laundry water (assuming they have sufficient to spare).

Reading ahead of time or for while you are there?

- "The Island of Desire" by Robert Dean Frisbie

- “An Island to oneself” by Tom Neale - - I was able to download from here AnIslandToOneself-TomNeale.rar (but treat any external web site with appropriate diligence) - <http://am4-r1f9-stor06.uploaded.net/dl/9c6f6ad3-26aa-4ed9-8350-b8e110e8dcbc>
- Kenneth R. Vogel’s article, Tom Neale: A Remembrance, published in 1987 by Islands Magazine

3.3.2 Duplicat – August 2017 – Update

Harry and Kato are the rangers this year (2017) and continue the great tradition of hospitality towards cruisers. They contribute bbq-ed fish to the regular potlucks as well as entertaining us with stories, hakas, and lessons on coconut husking and their way of life.

The manta rays came 1 day in 4 whilst we were there, but had been more regular for cruisers earlier in the season. It was still stunning to see them.

The only slight downside is that scuba diving is no longer permitted (if it ever was officially), which is a bit of a shame.

3.3.3 Emily Grace – July 2010 - Suvarrow Overview

Navigation Tips:

1. Straightforward entrance- Not a problem in heavy E'ly swells. A NZ Navy Frigate and a cruise ship have both visited here in the past.
2. CM93 and Navionics and Charlie’s charts are accurate
3. Leave South Reef on Port for 30 foot minimum depth and narrower pass
4. Leave South Reef on Starboard for 50 foot minimum depth and wider pass
5. Give the south point of Anchorage Island a wide berth

Anchorage tips:

- 1.No swell in anchorage, though it can get choppy in strong southeasterlies.
- 2.Depths are 38-60 feet
- 3.Need to anchor west of buoys in the anchorage area, which is on the NW side of Anchorage Is.
- 4.Reef and bommies are easy to see. Water clarity is good
- 5.Furthest North has less wind waves in prevailing SE winds
- 6.Leave white buoy off jetty (Tom's Pier) to starboard on approach; kick up outboard leg

Suvarrow General Info and activities:

James is the current resident Cook Island ranger and his assistant is Appii (rhymes with Happy). They could not be nicer.

Almost every day they offer to take cruisers to other motus to gather coconut crabs, snorkel, SCUBA dive and spear fish. The days catch is then normally shared by all in the anchorage in a pot luck dinner ashore. Without cruisers' gasoline, these trips would not happen. There is no SCUBA air compressor on the island.

The park fee is \$50 US for a 2-week period and crew of two. Additional crew is extra and children under 12 are free. There is no confiscation of food products here.

Suggestions on what to bring the Rangers:

1. Gasoline for their aluminum skiff and generator (and outboard oil would be helpful, too)
2. A full LPG tank if you have a decanting hose and can spare the LPG (*note in 2011 they had brought adequate propane, so were OK*)
3. Fresh veggies and/or fruit is especially welcome...and of course Potatoes for Crab Cakes would be a smart move!
4. Beer and wine to share, perhaps if boats are about to hit American Samoa with its low prices while still carrying some Ecuador or Panama beer & wine

3.3.4 Second Wind - 2010 - Suwarrow Entry Waypoints

From s/v Dharma letter in 8/2010 SSCA Bulletin: I contacted fellow SSCA members Marjorie Menzi and Bill Heumann, *Second Wind*, to get some information about my upcoming trip to Suwarrow as *Second Wind* was currently there. They also gave me permission to share this in the *SSCA Bulletin*. It will be invaluable for anyone wanting to stop at "Tom Neale's Island."

Here is what they had to say: "First I think it is important that someone be at the entrance waypoint at noon on a sunny day. One might be less cautious with someone on the bow. The entry waypoint according to Charlie's Charts is 13°14'S and 163°06'W.

Proceed:

390 yds to 13°14.788'S 163°06.006'W
 345 yds to 13°14.940'S 163°05.970'W
 .332 nm to 13°15.268'S 163°05.918'W
 178 yds to 13°15.345'S 163°05.873'W
 282 yds to 13°15.481'S 163°05.842'W
 351 yds to 13°15.546'S 163°06.006'W
 .510 nm to 13°15.239'S 163°06.425'W
 .249 nm to 13°15.036'S 163°06.575'W

Please be cautious with these waypoints as I don't know how accurate my GPS is. We did not find the pass difficult. However, it can be unnerving as it is not obvious. The reefs are actually obvious when you get close to them. There is a current, but we did not find it to be more than about 2 knots on August 4. The caretakers, John and Veronica, and the other cruisers here are really friendly. If you are uncomfortable about the pass, I would not hesitate to call them on VHF Channel 16 and ask for assistance. The caretakers like flour and sugar. We plan on giving them some sugar and a frozen chicken."

3.3.5 Java / Tomboy – July 2011

There was a verbal query on the HF net about what currency was accepted for Suwarrow clearance, and the answer from Java was: \$50 U.S., \$50NZ, or \$50Oz, but this was not actually correct, but they do accept US, NZ, or Oz dollars, at whatever the prevailing exchange rate is.

Here is a list of items needed by James (2nd season) & John (1st season) who arrived in Mid May and stay into November on the island without outside support. They arrived with basic stores & live off the land mostly.

As of now (mid-July), they have already gone thru 15 kilos of their 30 Kilos of white flour already.. They make wonderful coconut cakes/pancakes for all the yachties, fix breadfruit & fry fish for our potluck gatherings too--using up their supplies fast.

John has started a garden with lettuce and Bok Choy growing.

They are in need of:

- Fishing hooks & hand line--bait hooks and not for trolling--hand line caught fish is a staple of their diet + breadfruit from a local tree.
- Stainless steel type cooking pot scrubbers (Goldilocks type)- they provide plates/cups/silverware for our potlucks given at their open air "home" high up on cement foundation.
- Loose tobacco called Bison is available in the Chin Lee Market in Bora Bora + cig rolling paper there also.
- Provisions: White flour, ground pepper, rice, Canned fruit/veges, Canned meats- chicken, beef, tuna: Cheese, Eggs, Potatoes. Any type of fresh fruit/veges too.

Thanks to prior cruisers, their propane tank has a functioning regulator for their cook stove. James has been a restaurant cook for years.. good food! Use a gas powered generator nightly for a freezer & refrig.

There is a book exchange library with books of many languages.

They have a fresh water area to allow us to do laundry. Sometimes drinking water is available to boats that need it, but this is limited by the rain supply.

Check In

James is relaxed about entry formalities--he understands that everyone arriving at Suvarrow has been on passage for a number of days. It is best to call 'Suvarrow Ranger Station' on VHF 16 when you arrive, and let them know you are there. When you are rested and ready, take your dinghy and paperwork ashore to the rock jetty, and walk the path up to the 'Suvarrow Yacht Club'. James is normally nearby.

James has the paperwork to fill out, and the fee of \$50 US covers your clearance in and out, and a 2 week stay for 2 people. There is an additional per person charge for more than two crew (but children are free). If you want a (unofficial) Suvarrow stamp in your passport, it's an extra \$2 per passport.

Check Out & Paperwork for Beyond Suvarrow

James Mataa, the older & senior park ranger, does all the paperwork. He issued us a copy of our

1- Cook Islands Customs General Declaration (one we filled out on arrival) and 2 new papers:

2-Cook Islands Customs Certif of Clearance

3-Cook Islands Public Health Dept-Certif of Pratique.

These papers verify the official check in, and would be used if you visit other Cook islands.

James also keeps a daily log for island events, and has a book with all entry info for each boat. If you are interested he will allow you to look thru all of this. The other Ranger is John Trego. They are both very pleasant, helpful, interesting men with different backgrounds and proudly serve their country to preserve this natural isolated atoll.

3.3.6 Soggy Paws - Aug 2011 - Snorkeling & Diving in Suvarrow

This is a compilation of inputs from several boats at Suvarrow at the same time we were (Dream Away, Far Star, Eden, Sete Mares).

Manta Reef: The buoy that the Rangers placed in 2011 is located at 13-15.21S / 163-06.73W. This is a long shallower area running East and West. The Manta Rays seem to come by in the mornings for a 'cleaning'. We saw them 2 days in a row around 9:15, and DID NOT see them in the afternoons. They

are in the shallower area (15-20') on top of the reef, not out in the deep water. Because of the water clarity in normal conditions, this is easily snorkelable. But diving with tanks would give you more time to sit on the bottom and watch the mantas.

East of Whale Island: It's only a short dinghy NW to the reef on the edge of the shallows east of whale island. 13-14.7S / 163-06.8W Most of the good stuff is in fairly shallow water, so this is a good snorkel spot close to the anchorage.

Perfect Reef: Shallow reef in Suvarrow great snorkeling 3 miles south of Anchorage. There is a mooring ball there, you can attach to the mooring ball with dinghy or drop your dinghy anchor in the sand nearby. 13-18.49S 163-07.78W

It's recommended to take 2 dinghies (for safety), and you need fairly light winds.

The best area for snorkeling, once inside Perfect Reef, is the NE end of the enclosed reef area.

NE of Entrance Island: Entrance Island is not at the entrance, but is a small motu used to line up on the Suvarrow pass. Location of the reef, which is a little ways from Entrance Island is 13-17.42S / 163-04.69W. It is about 2 ½ miles SE from the anchorage. This has the healthiest group of coral we have seen in a long time. Large plate coral formations in 20-50' all the way around this patch reef, with caves, tunnels, canyons, etc. Makes a good snorkel or even better dive.

Seven Islands Area: Seven Islands is at the east end of the atoll, approx 4 miles from the anchorage. 13-17.06S / 163-03.17W - Long NE-SW reef, off the beach. Depths from 3' to 40' Good for both snorkeling and diving. Another smaller reef that looked good (but we didn't stop at) in this area was at 13-16.39S / 163-03.28W. There is also a wreck high and dry on the reef at 13-15.7S / 163-03.64W - we didn't take the time to try to work our way out to the wreck, it's in very shallow water.

Bushwood Islands Reef: 13-13.9S / 163-08.5W. Several miles West of the anchorage. Big reef, tall bommies, 15 feet to the bottom.

3.3.7 Iron Bark (2007)

On 21 August, we headed off towards Suvarov in the Cook Islands, an island as different from those in the Society group as can be imagined.

Trevor had warned me that the anchorage is as bad (coral-wise) as any in the Tuamotus and just before we left Bora Bora, we'd heard of yachts having a dreadful time there, breaking anchor chain, losing anchors, steaming round all night, unable to re-anchor among the coral heads. But Suvarov to me, has near-mythic status, not in the least from a book called *An Island to Oneself*. This book tells the tale of a man who became so fascinated with Suvarov that he went there to live on his own for many years. What he doesn't mention in the book, is that during the years that he lived on Rarotonga, he married a wife and had children. But he left all that behind him for the sake of Suvarov. He went back to Raro a couple of times, but each time the lure of the island grew too strong. His final visit was his longest and by this time he had become very skilled at living with all the problems that he encountered. Visiting yachts were on the increase and these brought him news, books and undoubtedly some food and the odd bottle of rum, but he seems to have been entirely contented on his own. He finally left the island only months before he died and is buried there. The Cook Islanders view him with both reverence and aversion: reverence for his ability to live in 'the old ways', aversion because he abandoned his family. He was also a friend of the mystical French sailor, Bernard Moitessier, who also loved Suvarov.

Arrival: Early in the afternoon, we sailed in through the pass and after having motored round for about 20 minutes, finally found a spot to anchor among the 18 other yachts there. Later, we shifted berth, laid one anchor from the bow in about 6 ft of water, and then motored astern for several boat lengths,

dropping a stern anchor in about 60 ft. We pulled both cables tight, so that they couldn't get caught on coral and stayed comfortably moored in one spot.

Clearing in was wonderfully casual. John and Veronica were going out fishing: 'so come over later and we'll sort it out. Or tomorrow, if you'd rather.' Suvarov is a National Park; there's a charge of US \$50, which is used to pay John as Park Warden. He spends 6 months a year on Suvarov with his wife and 4 delightful sons. They'd prefer to stay there all year, so that they could make a garden and have hens, which would immensely improve their quality of life, but the Cook Is Government has not yet agreed.

When we were there, they were more than grateful for anything the yachts could spare. The Government had not planned their supplies too well: they'd run out of cooking gas, flour, sugar and were very short of petrol. Any other little luxuries such as sweets for the children, interesting tinned food or the odd bottle of rum for John were more than welcome. We hoped that they'd get home more easily this year than the previous one, when the relief ship that was supposed to pick them up, found itself short of fuel and simply cancelled the voyage. They'd had to hitch a ride to Penrhyn I on a visiting yacht! John and Veronica could not have been more welcoming and we were upset to hear that some members of our cruising community had disobeyed the rules, or refused to pay the Park charge. John has no way to enforce the regulations and hates having to be unpleasant to his visitors.

We stayed for five wonderful days in Suvarov. If the yachts could provide the petrol, John liked nothing better than to take us for fishing trips, or to one of the nearby islands where we could see frigate birds and terns nesting. He loved his atoll and its birds and refused to harm either them or their eggs. He was very proud at the increase in numbers of (lesser) frigate birds, commenting sadly to me that he believes his predecessors used to eat the eggs. He's working very hard to eradicate rats on the islands (in Tom Neale's time, there were no rats, cockroaches, mosquitoes or flies!) and one side benefit is that the number of coconut crabs has increased enormously. He warns all visitors that there is rat poison down and that the crabs may very well feed on the dead rats: this effectively discourages visitors from taking the crabs. He showed us some of these beasts and his older son, Jonathon, put one on a palm tree for us: it scrambled up with no difficulty. When we went ashore, John would shin up a palm tree, throwing down nuts to Veronica, who deftly lopped the top off with her machete. Any fish caught on the outing would be shared between all the party, John's face alight with the pleasure of sharing good things.

They are a lovely couple: superb both as caretakers and ambassadors for the Cook Is. We were sorry to say goodbye.

3.3.8 Tackless II - 2005

When cruisers die and go to heaven, Suvarrow will be one of the destinations available to them. The pass is a tad dicey, the anchorage (**13*14.9S; 163*06.5W**) is full of coral "bommies", and the only protection is a small area behind Anchorage Island, but it is hundreds of miles from anywhere else, the reefs are unspoiled, the fish free of ciguatera, the breeze (usually) steady over Anchorage Island, and the only sign of man is the camp of the official caretakers.

An atoll eleven miles across, Suvarrow is one of fifteen small islands belonging to the Cook Islands.

The day after our arrival, John and Veronica, the new caretakers of Suvarrow invited all the boats in the anchorage ashore to a "light lunch" of fresh-caught tuna, poisson cru, breadfruit, and coconut pancakes, the first of several group feasts.

How can I capture the natural warmth with which John and Vero welcomed us to this mid-ocean Eden?

Imagine being a lone couple, plopped for six months on an island hundreds of miles from family and friends, essentially camping out and, <C:\Users\sherr\cgi-bin\blowup.pl> not unlike charter captains, finding themselves reaching out over and over to constantly changing visitors of varied nationalities, not

to mention different languages! Plus, they had to be aware that they were replacing a well-loved figure – Papa Joane – who retired this year.

Papa Joane, who it turns out is Vero's uncle (for a nice bit of continuity), came up with them at the beginning of the season to show them the ropes...what birds nest on which island and which critters lurk on which reefs.

The rest of the required skills – from fishing, to catching coconut crabs, to weaving anything and everything from palm fronds – seem to be things every Cook Island child grows up knowing how to do.

During the ten days we stayed at Suwarrow, we saw John and Vero wear many hats: park warden; tour guide; custom and immigration official; teacher, and musician, but the one that fit most comfortably was that of host.

In one stop we forged the kind of bonds we'd been looking for since the Marquesas. <C:\Users\sherr\cgi-bin\blowup.pl>

It's amazing how you can fill your time in a place like Suwarrow, even considering that, thanks to a spate of high winds, our adventures were confined to the reefs near the anchorage. Even though waves were breaking under the dinghy, we dove a half dozen times in clear warm water on lovely reefs full of fish and many varieties of shellfish. We trolled for dinner from the dinghy, and Don even got to break his spear-gun out of mothballs for a few forays, although the patrolling sharks and rolling seas made for a more adventurous exercise than he and his hovering tender really wanted... We went back to trolling! <C:\Users\sherr\cgi-bin\blowup.pl> Ashore, we walked beaches and coconut groves, consumed coconuts at every stage of the nut, and learned from Vero how to make her yummy coconut pancakes, made from the coconuts that have begun to sprout.

One afternoon that spoke to my soul was spent sitting on a fallen palm trunk in the dappled shade of the coconut grove with Marie Christine, a French lady doctor, singlehandedly. We learned from Vero to make palm-frond roof tiles for the beach palapa that John and several cruisers were restoring, which, of course, had to be christened with a big potluck when it was done. And finally, when the wind eased just a bit, John and Vero carried us in their skiff to Gull Island to see nesting frigates, and, particularly special to me, an up-close view of a nesting tropic bird.

We might easily have stayed half the season in Suwarrow, but another group of this season's Puddlejumpers arrived, with more not far behind them, and the anchorage was growing crowded. It seems more and more cruisers are making Suwarrow the Cook Island of choice. Plus a weather window of steady, if strong, easterlies was forecast, which seemed ideal for carrying us on our next leg to American Samoa.

3.4 Aitutake

3.4.1 Notes from Web Search 2018

Money: A hotel website for Aitutake said this: There are two ATM's on Aitutaki but we still recommend bringing some cash. Many places outside of the larger resorts do not take credit cards and if something goes wrong with the ATM's, or your card, you want to be prepared. Aitutaki is very safe and theft is not a serious concern. The banks will, however, cash traveler's cheques and give cash advances on Visa, MasterCard, and Amex.

A Trip Advisor Forum for Aitutake said this: There are 2 ATMs on Aitutaki and 3 banks ANZ and BSP are international banks and the BCI (Bank of the Cook Islands) is a local bank. All will exchange foreign currency. Unless using a card issued by the banks, the ATMs charge a fixed transaction fee.

Visa and Master Card are both widely accepted on Aitutaki. The major shops accept credit cards but usually have a minimum amount required. The only places to eat that don't accept credit cards would be some of the smaller takeaways. Almost all of the lagoon cruise operators also accept credit cards but not all so it's a good idea to check first. There are two ATMs on Aitutaki where you can get cash using your credit card. Both charge usage fees per transaction unless your card is issued by that bank. The two banks are ANZ and Westpac.

Cell Phones: Aitutaki, like the rest of the Cooks, uses Blue Sky Telecom service, and they have contracts with most major carriers around the world, so it is reported that you can use "roaming" with Vodafone, AT&T, etc. However, check the roaming cost with your carrier. You can buy a local sim card in Aitutake, at the Telecom office, if you bring your own unlocked cell phone.

From Noonsite – Marine Services

Marine Supplies - Items can be shipped from Rarotonga via the daily flights.

Fuel - Several fuel stations with gasoline & diesel.

Water - Available at the Port Authority cistern. Ask first (drinking water and regular water available).

LPG (gas) - Bottles available at station in town but refills are made only in Rarotonga.

General Services - Bill Tschan, a Swiss expat, is the cruiser's friend on the island. He took over Father Don's Gold Book and is a great source of information & help. He has lived for 35 years in the Cooks so he knows many people. Please contact him to fill in the cruiser's logbook and check his book exchange. He also started a very beautiful and extensive botanical garden and is always on the look-out for new varieties! You can find him at his small store ABC, just North of town or contact him by email

tschan@aitutaki.net.ck

<http://www.noonsite.com/Countries/CookIslands/Aitutaki?rc=MarineServices>

3.4.2 Jadean - August 2017 (from Noonsite)

The Good - Meeting the amazing Nolan family. Renting their scooters for island tours and hiring their boat Wahoo. They became friends in a few days rather than just business. Enjoying the dining and entertainment at the Thursday Island night.

The Bad - Absolute max draft 1.7 at high tide, be prepared to bump. Charts 1.5 at LW is wishful thinking. Place for approx 5 yachts med-mooring style, side onto prevailing wind in harbour. Can be done, but involves lots of messing about. Place for max 3 other small boats in channel in front of harbour. The lagoon suffered a bleaching event early in 2017. Lagoon corals are mostly dead.

The Ugly - One official is enforcing no access to the lagoon unless with a licensed operator. This includes no dinghy, SUPs, kitesurfers, divers, or fishing--basically nothing allowed by yourself. Water taxi rides to the kite spot are NZ \$35 per head / day, and there is no group or multiple rate from the kite operators. We found this extortion, especially when one is paying \$250 for a kitesurf lesson or renting gear already.

We originally chose to pick one Cook island and spend a month there, only to find the restrictive nature of Aitutaki and the prohibitive costs for a family wanting to kite, dive and paddle for a month. Unless you have very deep pockets or are not interested in the lagoon, after you land tour, you will be confined to your boat in a muddy harbour.

This is on top of already expensive official fees that are well documented on Noonsite. There are no printed rules, no notice boards or web site information to warn upfront, and is just enforced by a chap yelling and intimidating yachties and their families from the wharf - which is a bit late.

We took this unfairness up with the Mayor in person, Tourism office and customers office, and nobody would confirm, deny or provide rules, but rather took the lazy way out of the discussion by saying that it is Local Council rules from their forefathers. We waited a few days while the Mayor considered our request for leniency or could provide written rules. This was however not granted and we were advised "you don't want to break the Law".

It remains a mystery to us and other cruisers how come the mystery rules only started getting enforced mid August 2017, since they were made by council forefathers. Ourselves along with 4 other buddy boats left on the next weather window cutting the time short in Aitutak by 3 weeks and moving onto countries that are interested in Tourism.

Such a disappointing end to something that we thought would be a highlight of the Pacific. Hopefully Aitutak can put their heads together some time soon, but suspect this could take a long time.

[Noonsite Link](#)

3.4.3 Directions for the Pass - Noonsite August 2013

Detailed directions for entering the anchorage at Aitutaki in the southern Cook Islands and a warning to not rely on electronic navigation.

If arriving from the south you will need to be slightly north of the pass before you see it clearly as the pass runs in a south westerly direction. Under no circumstances rely on electronic charts, they are well out as a badly damaged steel boat here can confirm.

The pass is narrow but do-able especially if you have someone on the pulpit with polarized sunglasses. At the time I arrived the pass had been deepened slightly to help ferry boats from a small cruise liner. A boat drawing 6 feet failed to get in on the top of High Water Springs and had to be towed off. A draught of 1.7 metres at high water is the absolute maximum.

Do NOT rely on your electronic charts for the times of high and low water

When you identify the pass you will see a long (not quite straight) line of white stakes. All the stakes are white. Leave them all to port EXCEPT the last two which, amazingly you leave to starboard - if you leave them to port you will be well aground. This brings you to the inner anchorage where you will anchor fore and aft with fenders on each side. It is like sardines but has good shelter.

If the inner anchorage is full there is another anchorage a couple of hundred yards towards the reef which will hold at least three boats. Before you reach the starboard hand stakes there is a clear but narrow channel to starboard where you can again anchor fore and aft. You will need to anchor well as the wind comes from every direction so pick a spot where you will be clear of reefs, sandbanks and bombies. You will definitely need somebody high in the bow to get in here.

Conventional wisdom says do not attempt to anchor outside the reef - it is a graveyard for anchors

Good luck-- it is a lovely island and worth the trouble. [Noonsite Link](#)

3.4.4 Update on Aitutake Costs - August 2017 (Noonsite)

Once anchored, the captain should come ashore to clear in.

The Customs & Immigration officer may come out to the boat or you may check with him at his office, in the post office building. There is departure tax per person to pay (on departure) and a daily anchoring fee. See latest fees reported in comments at bottom of page.

The health officer will contact you too for pratique (his office is on the other side of the island) for which there is a fee. He will come on board and spray the boat for insects, and collect the fee at the same time.

Note that if you arrive at the weekend, the health fees are much higher.

Docking - The end of the channel has 2 sides: left passage leading into the small harbour and the right passage leading to the small anchorage off Arutanga village.

There are now 2 small pontoons attached to shore close to the church where a few local boats are moored.

Anchorage - Due to a strong tidal current different from the prevailing winds, it is recommended to anchor fore and aft in the anchorage, as the deep area is small (or tie the stern to a coconut tree).

Boats too large or with deeper draft (more than 1.5m) should anchor outside the reef to the south of the channel (there is a shallower area also on the North side, but a real trap for anchors!), however poor holding and bommies have been reported here.

Harbour: Docking stern-to with a bow anchor in the harbour may be done with permission of the port captain, on condition the yacht is moved if required. There is space for approx. 5 yachts med-mooring style, side onto the prevailing wind. Can be done, but involves lots of messing about.

There are plans to deepen the channel leading to the harbour to carry 20 ft all the way, and the harbour to be enlarged.

Lagoon Access: Access to the lagoon is now restricted and you can only enter with a licensed operator. This means taking a water taxi to the best kite spots, using a dive operator to dive and no entrance permitted by dinghy, SUP, canoe etc. Costs \$35/day per person.

Kiteboarders, PLEASE BE AWARE: Due to the health officer, you are no longer allowed to use your dinghy once anchored inside Aitutaki to venture into the lagoon. The kiteboarding location is not accessible via land. Any cruiser wanting to kiteboard Aitutaki MUST hire the local tour operator at \$35 per person per day to taxi them to the kite island. This came into effect August 25, 2017. We had planned to spend an entire month here. We left in under one week due to this new law.

Side note: If you do decide to kite this 1st class location, talk to WAHOO charters to get a group daily rate to taxi you to the kite beach. Great fellow with better service and better prices than the local kite companies.

Tides in the Pass: We tried to get into Aitutaki in June 2017 at the very top of a spring tide. We draw 1.7m and ran aground (on sand) about half way down the channel, before the shallow part marked on the chart! I dinghied in later and was told by locals that even a 1.6m draft would have been pushing it.

Fees as of 2017 (NZD)

\$57 for customs.

\$65 per person for departure fee.

\$25 for health inspector.

\$20 for bio inspector.

Total: \$232 for 2 persons plus an anchorage fee of \$5/day.

The mooring fee in the anchorage next to the harbor is now 5 NZD/day

We arrived on Saturday. The health officer came on board Monday morning, and left after 20 minutes. He sprayed for bugs and collected the weekday fee (25NZD) [40NZD on weekends]

The customs and immigration clearing in took about 30 minutes. Very friendly people. No fees to be paid until departure.

Wifi is fast in the harbour, but you have to buy the access pass in the post office or stores. Buying online does not work (certificate error). I paid for the monthly special: 2 GB for 30NZD valid 15 days

3.4.5 Sanuk – June 2017

We arrived after 4 days of sailing on Saturday morning around 8AM but had to “heave to” twice during our trip so we would not arrive in the dark at the pass. We were not sure if we should enter right away since we knew it was low tide and the water was leaving the lagoon at a rapid pace. The Captain did not want to wait another couple hours so I went up front ready to drop the anchor in case it was needed and we pushed Sanuk (a catmaran) against the current of 5kts into the lagoon. Our depth meter said “0”, a good thing Stefan did not mention this while going in or I would have flipped!

We are now anchored in the little harbour of Arutanga in a depth of 2M and tied to 2 palm trees. We have been here a week and no other yacht has arrived here. This is definitely not an easy pass to navigate through.

Things to do:

- We hiked to the highest point on the island, 124M, Maunga Pu, to enjoy the beautiful view on the lagoon.
- There are about 15 motus in the lagoon. Kite surfing is very popular on the island.
- We visited the Aitutaki Marine research centre, they protect the colourful clams from the lagoon. They are eaten by humans, some fish and turtles.
- Enjoying a very good evening dinner at Cafe Tipuna with our feet in the sand. We got there by bicycle after being lost for 15min in the complete dark. No streetlights or moon...
- While the weather was not so great we enjoyed walking and bicycling around the island. We even had to wear a sweater during the evenings. Yesterday we took out Fiipper to tour the lagoon but the wind and cold water (only 22 degrees) made us turn around. Tomorrow we have booked a lagoon cruise with a barbecue on “One Foot Island”. It looks like it will be a sunny day.

We have checked out today (Friday) since there are no custom officials working during the WE. We paid 220NZD (about 140USD) departure tax and anchorage fee of 5NZD per day included.

<https://svsanuk.com/2017/06/24/aitutaki-the-cook-islands/>

3.4.6 Migration - 2009

We covered the 550 miles from Bora Bora to Aitutaki in the Cook Islands in 3½ days; dodging squalls but mostly enjoying some fine sailing. The Cook Islands are a self-governing democracy in free association with New Zealand. Quite a definition, don't you agree? The fifteen islands are spread over nearly two million square kilometers of ocean but have less than 260 square kilometers of land. Cook Islanders speak Cook Island Maori but also English — and that was the biggest change for us. No more French. I was watching and listening to some workmen on the quay one day when it suddenly dawned on me that I could speak to them without formulating the entire sentence in my head and trying to translate it into French. I was understanding everything they said. I could make jokes. I had my entire vocabulary to use!

It was a letdown.

We liked Aitutaki but it didn't seem as exotic as French Polynesia. Which was the exact opposite reaction of our friends from France who loved that they were suddenly in a country that spoke a foreign language!

Getting through the reef in Aitutaki is a bit of a challenge. Only boats that draw less than six feet can make it. Once inside, Migration was tied to palm trees with an anchor laid out astern.

Aitutaki is on its way to becoming an atoll. It still has an island within the coral ring but it's quite low and small compared to the reef-ringed peaks of the islands like Tahiti.

The snorkeling was excellent among the lagoon's giant clams and famous blue starfish. In an attempt to maintain the health of the lagoon, there are underwater clam and coral farms. We biked and hiked and had a good time.

A week after arriving we threaded our way out the pass and continued our journey westward.

3.4.7 *Ishka - July 2009*

We arrived into Aitutaki yesterday morn, a little later than we wanted as the tide was dropping, making the precarious Arutunga pass even more difficult to navigate. This had to have been one of the most heart stopping moments on *Ishka* yet as Ian steered her down the incredibly narrow channel [its no more than 40 feet wide in some parts, *Ishka* is 25 ft wide!!], while Ida stood on the bow directing the best route through the coral. The depth gauge read 3.5 ft at one stage...and we draw 4!

But finally as our hearts began to slow down again and our sweaty palms dried out, we anchored in the lagoon beside *WhiteHawk* at the end of the pass, only having 'kissed' the coral once on the port keel, but no cause for worry..... we hope.

The people greeted us with big smiles and doing the check in procedure was the most laid back yet as we sat on a stump underneath a tree at the pier, filling out only 1 form and finding out how the All Blacks were doing in the test. Wasn't a good weekend for the Kiwis!! After the formalities, we wandered up to the supermarket and bought vegimite for Ian and NZ sauv blanc for Ida, happy days to have these little treats again.

This is such a fantastic island, and hopefully we'll get to visit it again, as the friendliness of the locals and the laid back feel throughout make you feel privileged to be here. We hired a scooter for a couple of days, and the deal is once you pick the vehicle up at the hire shop you have to drive, as part of the test, to the police station to get your \$2.50 Aitutaki license. So with legal transport we spent Thursday and Friday driving around the island, going to the local teams final rugby match, watching hundreds of goats graze everywhere there was grass and wooing hip thrusting fire dancers at the nearby resort.

Saturday was a very wet day but it didn't deter us from taking the dinghy to one of the other islands to watch Paul kite surf. Standing under palms for shelter from the downpours for what seemed like ages as goose bumps appeared, when the sun appeared Lynn and Paul got the Kite surf set up and to give us an idea of the forces involved with this sport they let us fly their little trainer kite over the sand as Paul surfed his stuff on the water. Ian was a natural but when Ida took hold of the strings, the local kids ran far enough away from that part of the beach to not get attacked by the low flying, out of control tangled mess!

Lynn and Ida were keen to go to the church as the singing is meant to be something else, and it was although the service did go on a bit too long, and after 1.75 hours, they decided that's enough religion to keep them going for a few months. Some other yachts decided to leave Sunday afternoon but not without the grief of the reef in the pass. Ian and Paul having missed praying for their sins at church that morning were good Samaritans for a couple of hours helping get 2 of the yachts off the coral just in time before the tide turned. We are now a little worried for how we'll fair when we leave on Tuesday.

3.4.8 *Mr John VI - Late August 2008*

Thursday afternoon of the 28th when we finally got going on a track to Aitutaki and this time the sailing was nice and smooth. It was only one hundred and forty miles due north from Rarotonga but we had to make sure of getting inside the harbour before the wind started to pick up and we had only a very short

window to get there. Aitutaki also has a very narrow entrance channel with strong currents so we had to time our approach to coincide with a favourable tide. In this event it meant spending two nights at sea for this short voyage and we had to slow right down in the later part of the trip; arriving off the island in the very early hours of Saturday morning where we hove-to awaiting daylight. It was quite comfortable close in the lee of the island but we noted that the wind had already risen above twenty knots and it was quite squally with some heavy rain showers; indeed, we were lucky that at the time we picked to make our entry, one hour before high water, the rain cleared and there was just enough visibility to spot the channel avoiding the coral only a few yards on either side.

Once in the basin we were assisted and guided by Dave off "O'vive", who was already moored there with his fifty foot 'St. Francis' catamaran; that has to be about as big a boat as is possible to get in here! By noon we were all moored and secured; a good thing too as the wind was steadily increasing and the rain moved in again, reducing visibility and obscuring the view. The forecast was calling for twenty five knots by midnight and thirty five knots by the end of the following day; we were really glad to have our bow lines tied off to Palm trees and half a mile of reef between us and the Pacific! Over the next few days it blew hard, rained hard and the seas built up enough that "damaging swell" warnings were being broadcast from radio New Zealand for all the southern Cook Islands.

Paula and I took to doing long walks over the island, mostly in the rain, or so it seemed; we climbed to Lookout Hill and between the advancing rain showers and squalls, observed the troubled seas beyond the lagoon. There were lots of big waves out there and the surf was crashing on the windward reef enough that one could hear it right across the other side of the island; the lagoon was all stirred up and if it had ever been the 'tranquil blue' promised in the guide books, it sure wasn't now! In this weather, there was little to do on Aitutaki and the tourists must have been dying of boredom; at the best of times three to four days would be enough to do and see everything here so a solid week or more of gales and rain was not a pleasing prospect. We continued to explore the island, chat with the islanders where we could and occupy ourselves with boat jobs; we also discovered that the 'Heineken Store' did great value for money ice cream at one dollar a cone and they had a nice place to sit when returning from a long walk, we had to limit our visits to this store!

At the 'Gas Station' in town, the diesel pump had a sign "out of order" and the petrol pump had a sign "out of petrol". There was no fuel to be had anywhere on the island without good connections, the locals had what that they'd hoarded and some of the gas stations had a little 'put by' to service the tourists when they rented vehicles or scooters; the supply boat was expected soon but no one seemed to think that there would be any fuel on board.

One feature on the island that took our interest was the amount of graves they have, there seemed to be an unusually high number of these and they practically lined the roadside in many areas. Where they were not lining the roadside, they were in the front gardens of the houses; it seems normal here to have a nice little house with a nice little lawn out front and then have a centre piece of one or more graves, usually well tended and decorated with flowers.

Sunday morning, we went to church; from somewhere we dug out our best attire and scrubbed up well, knowing that the locals always attend in their special Sunday outfits; we didn't want to be seen as a bunch of rag-tag yachties! The attraction of Sunday Church Service in Aitutaki was to hear the beautiful singing of the island congregation and try to get closer to this warm and generous community. After the service the 'Mama's' of the church provide refreshments in the village hall so one can mingle with the locals and other tourists who have also come to participate in the experience. It was really quite

enjoyable and a very different experience to what we had previously experienced.

After twelve days we were starting to see a little improvement, the wind backed down to twenty knots but the sea remained rough, the local forecast was still saying twenty to twenty-five with gusts to thirty and “very rough” seas but there was an overall impression of improvement. Like many others, our patience was being tested but deep down inside we knew that it was better to remain in a safe port than to sail out into dubious conditions. A couple of days later a weather window appeared and we soon made preparations to sail. We departed Aitutaki without incident at about 0830 on Sunday 14th September for Beveridge Reef

3.5 Palmerston

3.5.1 Migration – August 2024

Check-In: Up until two years ago, one could check into the Cook Islands at Palmerston, but that is no longer the case. Palmerston currently has all the officials necessary to check boats into the country except a health official. Until a health officer is instituted, boats must check into an official port of entry (Rarotonga or Aitutaki, for example) to be permitted to go ashore.

If you are not checked into the country, you may not go ashore at Palmerston, nor can anyone visit your boat.

Mooring: There used to be 9 moorings, but during the pandemic when no boats visited for 2 years, the moorings were not maintained & all were lost in storm seas.

They have new moorings that have not yet been installed. For now, the only option is anchoring on the coral shelf outside the atoll as the pass is for small boats only. Locals are happy to assist you in finding a good spot outside the reef. Call on "PALMERSTON ISLAND" VHF 16. It is worthwhile having them help you as the reef is full of ravines that could make anchor retrieval difficult. FLOAT YOUR RODE: The coral is beautiful.

Local Info: There are currently 28 residents - mostly older folks - living on the island. Nine are school age children & five are teens. They make their living catching & freezing fish to be shipped to Rarotonga. There is no longer copra being harvested.

Besides the 10 or so cruising boats that visit each year, the only other visitation is by a 100-passenger cruise ship that comes once or twice annually (in April &/or Oct.), & a supply ship which comes on a very irregular schedule - sometimes two weeks, sometimes 4 months.

If you stop at Rarotonga or Aitutaki, please ask the locals there what is needed at Palmerston. Your assistance in ferrying goods will be much appreciated.

Snorkeling and Diving: Snorkeling and diving on the outer reef is exceptional. The wall is magnificent and the visibility when we were there was at least 50 meters. If you are there in the winter you will most likely see whales.

3.5.2 Sanuk – 2017

We checked the weather while in Aitutaki, and the wind was good so it was time to leave for Palmerston. Bill’s wife (whom we met in the visitor centre) asked if we could take “something” for her family to Palmerston which we gladly accepted. This “something” turned out to be 16 cartons with bananas and papayas and 4 more bags with watermelons, a suitcase, and a bag of candy ... a good thing we have a catamaran and lots of hull space!

Two days and 236NM later we arrived at lunch time in Palmerston and took one of the moorings guided by Bob Marsters.

The history of Palmerston is unique. In 1862 William Marsters from Lancashire settled here with his 3 wives and 26 children. He divided the island and motus into sections for each of the 3 families with strict rules of intermarriage. Today 58 people are living on the island all connected somehow to William Marsters, except for some people employed by the Cooks Government (nurse and teachers).

The island has no airport and the supply ship only comes when it is profitable to come by, so once every 2-3 months. Since 2015 they have 24hr electricity supplied by a solar power station sponsored by the Cooks government. Before that they only had a generator who supplied 6hrs electricity in the morning and 6hrs in the evening. There is internet and one TV channel since 2014, so life is changing.

The welcome was incredible. We were invited into Bill's house for lunch and after saying a blessing we had rice, fish, lamb, corn and tarrot root. For dessert there was ice cream. Not only the first day but every day we were invited for lunch prepared by Bill because his wife was in Aitutaki with one of their daughters, Caroline. The other children, Juliana (16), Ngariki (14) and the youngest son (10) ate after returning from school around 2-3PM. Ngariki gave us a tour of the island, showed us the school (15 children between 6-18 years old), the infirmary with an enthusiastic nurse from Fiji, the wreck from the Riri and the old cemetery. There are no paved roads on Palmerston but the sand roads are raked clean on a daily basis. No cars but at Bill's house they had 2 motorcycles and we did see one quad...times are changing.

There are no stores on Palmerston and thus everything has to be ordered from Rarotonga to come with the supply ship. Every house has several huge freezers to make sure they have enough food till the next ship arrives. Most of the families live from fishing. They sell their fish (mostly parrotfish) to hotels and cooperatives in Rarotonga for about 15NZD a kilo. But they remarked that there is less and less fish to be caught...is this temporary or a trend? They are aware of the climate change and see more and more coral bleaching because of the warm water.

The population of Palmerston is aging. A family with 9 children had just left the island a couple weeks before. Although Palmerston is for some a paradise I can fully understand that for others (especially youngsters) this is too limited and they move to NZ, Australia or Rarotonga in search of a "better" life. A lot of them do come back for visits or to grow old.

We are so happy we met with the teachers Josh (US) and Melissa (South Africa). Their contract ends in December in Palmerston. I hope they stay in contact and let us know where their next assignment will be.

The unconditional generosity and "do good" attitude of the Marsters (In Flemish we say "doe wel en zie niet om") is so remarkable that this short stop of 4 days will be fondly remembered.

<https://svsanuk.com/2017/07/26/the-generous-people-of-palmerston/>

3.5.3 Spunky – 2017

We stopped here in June 2017. Definitely worth a visit

Seems they have now enough starch food. Alcohol is however appreciated.

3.5.4 Wonderland - 2010

www.palmerstonisland.net

7-9 Moorings, inspected by cruisers

Use 2 independent lines to tie to mooring, with some length

3-4 balls in a string, tie to the end

Anchorage a bit rolly

3 families

Except on Sundays, someone will meet you, and you get 'adopted' by one of the families on the island.

They will take you on a tour of the island

Ciguatera only on grouper

Local time is Papeete time

No bugs, no flies

If you arrive after 4pm on Sat or on Sunday, can't go ashore until Customs/Immig officials come out.

Call Palmerston Island on VHF 16

\$20 pp Immig, \$5 pp for 'local fee', will accept USD, NZ, Euros

You can't take things banned ashore (veggies,etc) - Fairly lax on their customs enforcement

Trade goods: The islanders need things like

- Food staples
- Mooring parts
- Gasoline, outboard oil
- School supplies, super glue
- Fishing goodies (hooks, line, swivels)

Cargo boat comes every 3 months normally, but 7 months now since last one

Navigation

- CMAP seems accurate
- Navionics is off by 1/2 mile
- Go around the reef to the n side. Reef sticks out to the west.

3.5.5 Don Quixote - Riri Mooring Incident - August 2011

A sailboat, Riri, broke loose from its mooring at Palmerston in rough weather in August 2011. Here is Don Quixote's brief confirmation that the problem was not with the mooring itself, which had recently been inspected, but with the attachment method that Riri used, which cut through the mooring loop.

Riri was attached by a single line through the mooring loop. In this case, it was the mooring line that gave, but really, the point is the same since the damage is caused by the mooring technique and could have happened either with Riri's motion or from a prior cruiser using the same method. The lesson here for all cruisers is one of how to connect to a mooring environment.

The lesson being--NEVER NEVER attach to a mooring by putting your line from one bow cleat, through the mooring loop, and back to the cleat on the other side. Because of the tendency for boats to 'sail' at anchor, the back and forth motion will eventually (in only a day or so, in any winds) saw through either your mooring line or the mooring ball loop. It is best to use 2 lines, each of which go back to the same cleat, or a prepared mooring bridle. Chafe protection where line-meets-line (ie where your line goes thru the mooring loop is HIGHLY recommended).

Soggy Paws uses one hefty dockline which has a large very hefty stainless attachment point served in a loop at the middle. Each end of the line then comes back to the port and starboard cleats on the bow.

This arrangement minimizes chafe at the mooring line, and provides a strong bridle. Most catamarans will have a bridle--so if you're unclear on how to make up a mooring bridle, visit a catamaran and ask to see theirs.

Regardless of the technique, your attachment to the mooring should be checked every day for chafe.

It is also a good practice to have a completely separate second backup line, tied with a rolling hitch somewhere below the mooring ball/loop, and the other end secured onboard. This can be left loose, but provides a failsafe if any of the mooring-ball associated line/connections fail..

3.5.6 Don Quixote - August 2011

If there is a middle of *ing nowhere, this is it. We have finally gone far enough to find it. Google "Cook Islands Palmerston". Prepare to browse their web site as well as numerous glowing reports from visiting cruisers while you learn about one of the more unique sociological experiments conducted in the last two centuries. Give yourself time to process it.

There is a high sitting its big fat ass just south of us reinforcing the trades and dishing out 25 to 30 on the hook and a good 5 to 15 more than that out on the blue. Boats underway are reporting 5 meter seas from two quarters. Watching the waves break on the edge of the reef, I can believe it. So we are pinned here like bugs waiting for the weather to moderate. Don Quixote has two attachment points to the reef, three to those lines, and we're maintaining a round the clock watch on all the boats.

We've already had two boats break off moorings and anchors. In fact, just this morning, my husband and daughter larked off in the dinghy with Graham of Catachaos to chase down a wayward Discovery who -- after yanking out an anchor AND a mooring line -- was hell bent west, next stop Tonga.

Even so, we are all more fortunate than the lost Riri. The winds are blowing from the southeast attempting with every blast to scrape us off this rock and send us winging at high speed towards Australia with nary a pause. Riri fared less well last week when a blast broke her mooring and drove her south and east straight on to the reef. (see note on this incident below)

I sit here gazing at the carcass of what was a beautiful, well founded cruising boat with the dread feeling that there but for the grace of all the gods sit we. We all -- every cruiser out here -- have made a mistake that could have resulted in the loss of our lives or the boats we sail on so blithely. Luck only takes you so far. Talking with Riri's captain has been a sobering experience; Helping him get his salvage off the island to somewhere he can put his life back together again is both the right thing to do and a wave at the Fates asking for positive karma points paying forward to our next eventual mistake. Make it small, make it recoverable, thank you Fates for not taking Frank and Gail as well as Riri.

As for Palmerston itself, I am taking the day off, today, staying aboard Don Quixote while the family visits ashore. My political economy/public policy-trained brain is absolutely awlirl after three days here, and I desperately need some time to myself. Imagine taking 60 members of your closest family (first imagine having 60 members of your closest family whose relationship to you is not only known but all within first cousin range), put them all in the same office environment, make them work for 2 different governments in 20 administrative capacities, make them all quite Christian, then stick them on an island roughly the size of a city block, drop the island 350 miles from even the next largest stop which is about the size and population of Cicily, Alaska (Northern Exposure). Make a short temper breed true. Run supplies in and out every 3 or 4 months, taking islanders on and off in broad looping multiple year runs to get health care, provisions, and spouses. Then just to make it lively, parade roughly 50 boats with yachties from every country in the world -- renowned for their independence and eclecticism -- past these people every year. Make it a cultural imperative that the islanders offer every possible courtesy

and hospitality to these foreigners in exchange for trade goods and services. Then let the whole thing simmer for about 150 years. This is officially the world's largest tempest in the world's smallest teapot.

For now we are quite safe, my husband, an eye doctor, is busy ashore, and the girls are having an amazingly good time. As a barter for our time on the mooring, DrC is treating the islanders' health care issues in the small clinic.

The kids study in the mornings, play all afternoon, spend the night with their new best friends on the island.

Meanwhile, I try to stay out of trouble. However, I'm sure you can imagine how successful it is to mix Toast in with a strong patriarchal society where we're supposed to relay everything through the men before so much as walking down to the beach. The only reason I'm not in the village center fomenting a feminist revolution is that I'm down to my last two bras and can't afford to burn them.

So probably, it's safer for everybody if I just take anchor watch till we depart. It's okay. The dolphins and I are on a first name basis now, and they promised me that they'd explain to the whales in here yesterday why the mooring lines are not to be used for back scratching. Not sure we can trust the grouper, though. There are two under the boat who have been taunting me since we arrived, "Nyah na, we've got ciguetera. Just eat me. I dare you."

3.5.7 Sara Jean II – July 2011

This island is about 523 nm west of Mopelia and en route to Niue. We had planned to stop here however conditions did not permit it unfortunately. When we arrived about 4 days after leaving Mopelia, the winds had shifted to the NW and then the North. The anchorage at Palmerston is on the west side of the atoll and there are mooring balls there, however they are very close to the reef. "Merkava" with whom we were buddy boating had arrived a couple of hours ahead of us and tied up to a mooring but they also decided not to stay because of the NW winds.

The customs people apparently came out to the boat right away but did not proceed with any formalities as "Merkava" said they were leaving. As Charlie's Charts warns, if you have steady Easterly tradewinds at Palmerston, the location of the moorings may be fine. However when the wind dies the current alone may push a vessel onto the reef and as it was in our case, a northwest wind would very likely push us dangerously close to the reef. So with these conditions we did not stay and sailed on to Niue. We had communicated by email with Joseph Marsters, one of the islanders, before our arrival to see if there were any goods we could bring to them on the island. We also spoke to him on the VHF as we were sailing by. He was very friendly. Joseph Marsters' email address is telecom@palmerston.net.ck I found this address on the Noonsite website. Palmerston has a unique history with all the islanders descendants of a William Marsters from England who arrived on the island in 1826 with 3 wives from Penrhyn Island. I'm sure our visit would have been interesting and pleasant. Next time!

3.5.8 Wonderland – August 2010:

<http://www.palmerstonisland.net>

7-9 Moorings, inspected by cruisers

Use 2 independent lines to tie to mooring, with some length

3-4 balls in a string, tie to the end

Anchorage a bit rolly

3 families there

Except on Sundays, someone will meet you, and you get 'adopted' by one of the families on the island.

They will take you on a tour of the island

Ciguatera only on grouper

Local time is Papeete time

No bugs, no flies

Arrive after 4pm on Sat or on Sunday, can't go ashore until Customs/Immig officials come out.

Call Palmerston Island on VHF 16

\$20 pp Immig, \$5 pp for 'local fee', will accept USD, NZ, Euros

can't take things banned ashore (veggies,etc)- Fairly lax on their customs enforcement

- Need things like staples

- Mooring parts

- Gasoline, outboard oil

- School supplies, super glue

- Fishing goodies

Cargo boat every 3 months normally, but 7 months now since last one

Navigation

- CMAP seems accurate

- Navionics is off by 1/2 mile

- Go around the reef to the n side. Reef sticks out to the west.

3.5.9 *White Princes April 2011*

Do not put your dinghy in the water here. On approach call Palmerston Radio on channel 16 and you will be met at the anchorage and directed to a mooring or an anchor position (they usually race each other out for the privilege of being your hosts). Your hosts will ferry you to the island in their boat as often as you wish. There is an island council fee of 5 NZD per person for the visit.

There are 8 moorings, they are private and normally cost 10 NZD per day but this is negotiable and in any case they will insist on feeding you lunch daily. At peak periods there may be no moorings available, or you may be requested to move off them and anchor. This island is worth visiting, particularly if you are set up for independent diving as the reef is excellent and it is possibly the only remaining place where you will get a traditional Polynesian style welcome. Gifts of fishing hooks and lures are much appreciated.

3.6 *Raratonga*

3.6.1 *Nutmeg – July 2023*

Arrival and docking: We gave advance notice to the authorities with our paperwork and they sent a response with approval. We arrived at 530 a.m. so stayed offshore until we reached someone on Ch 16 from Port Authority at 730. He advised us to come alongside a side dock with fenders on starboard. He helped us tie up and we waited for the officials. Over a space of 2 hours we waited for Immigration, Biosecurity, Health and Customs to come by. All were very friendly.

Note: we heard of another boat who came in during the night and tied up on their own. When Ports Authority arrived they made them go out until they were called in. So stay offshore until you reach someone to come in during day light hours.

Re: Biosecurity: He only cared about fruit & vegetables and meats. All of our meats were purchased in French Polynesia and that seemed fine. He did not look closely at everything. Most were frozen but there were some salami and prosciutto in packages and he said that was fine. Did not care about eggs, dairy or nuts. I had forgotten to throw out a couple potatoes and onions and he had me bag them up so he could take.

After all clearance was done, we moved over to Med tie with one anchor out. Once you are secure with stern lines, they brought a large ladder to go down the wall behind us. We then lowered our dinghy and tied between the wall and the boat. Hop in the dinghy, then pull over to the ladder and get out. It was certainly a challenge when a storm came through and there is a surge. When we were here there was one coastal freighter alongside the dock, and one monohull med tied. When there are cargo ships in there is limited space on the wall.

Everyone was very friendly at the Ports Authority office giving us lots of advice. For a deposit they give you a key for the bathrooms & showers.

Avarua: The town of Avarua is all along the waterfront road. There are lots of cafés and tourist shops, ATM's, a bakery, a pharmacy, a liquor store with large variety of beers, etc. Across the road is a "Home Depot" style hardware store, and just a 5-minute walk is a large grocery store that has everything.

There is a ring road all around the island that has lots of hotels, villas, lodges and small restaurants. Interior is residential and agricultural. We heard there are a few hikes. Overall, the island is a bit touristy but is fun for a few days.

Transportation: There are lots of rental car places but they were all booked when we were here. It was a busy tourist week. Taxis did not seem to be around. The bus goes around the island, every half hour during the week and during the day and then every hour until 11 pm (I think). There is a schedule that is somewhat adhered to. For our purposes, we found the bus worked fine.

Laundry: There is a very clean laundry mat across the road from the wharf. It is self-serve or they will do it for you.

Fuel: The Port Authority ladies helped arrange for a diesel truck to deliver from Toa Fuel. We had to go out to their office near the airport to prepay. They arrived at the time they said they would. It was duty free price and no delivery fee.

Propane: There is no propane on island, only butane.

Day Market: There is a market set up just next to the wharf area. Some stalls are open during the week but the big one is on Saturday, starting at 6 am. Fruit, vegetables, baked goods, crafts, clothing. It was very busy the Saturday we were there.

Night Market called Muri Night Market, located on the east side near the lagoon. On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights starting at 5 pm. It is a variety of food truck type set ups that is medium priced. No liquor is sold so take yours. It's a fun, people watching evening

3.6.2 Mahina Tiare III (via Noonsite) - July 2011 – Avatiu Harbor Dredging Update

Rarotonga's Avatiu Harbour's redevelopment, dredging and realignment has started. It would probably be easier for those doing the construction in this quite small harbour if cruising yachts instead chose to stop at Penryhn, Aitutaki, Palmerston or Niue until construction is complete, hopefully sometime later this year.

This notice is being broadcast daily on INMARSAT-C now:

EGC: 9639 2011/05/02 08:58:57 SAFETY***

STRATOS CSAT IU HARBOUR

ALL INBOUND VESSELS ARE REQUIRED TO CALL HARBOUR CONTROL ON VHF CH 16 PRIOR TO ENTERING THE PORT TO REQUEST CLEARANCE TO PROCEED

ALL VESSELS ARE PROHIBITED FROM ENTERING OR LEAVING AVATIU HARBOUR DURING THE HOURS OF DARKNESS, FROM SUNSET TO SUNRISE

Our thanks to John Neal of SV Mahina Tiare III for this information.

3.6.3 Tips for Mooring in Aviatu Harbor – Mahina Tiare III - September 2010

Copied from Noonsite.com

Harbour Layout

A \$30 million harbour realignment and dredging project has been approved and funded. Dredging is scheduled to start in late 2010. Once construction starts, available mooring space for yachts will be greatly reduced.

Although the long concrete wharf that makes up the eastern side of the harbor may look inviting to tie to, it is generally reserved for international and inter-island freighters. Sailboats are not allowed to tie up to the north (entrance) end of this wharf as their masts obstruct aircraft taking off from the nearby airport.

During cyclone season, end of November to end of March, cruisers are not permitted to use the harbour.

Yacht Mooring in Raro

Mooring in Avatiu Harbour is not easy as it's a med moor; bow anchor set and yachts held in place with stern lines running to shore.

The complicating factors are:

1. Not much space; there is only 500' for sea wall with the eastern end is generally kept free for local fishing vessel access.
2. Cruising yachts may be poorly moored, generally with two bow anchors, frequently not set.
3. Poor holding ground; some sand, some light mud with occasional lumps of broken coral.
4. Wind on or just forward of the beam during normal ESE trades.
5. Continual swell and wave refraction as the harbour is open to the ocean.
6. You need a dinghy to access the shore as due to the continual surge it is not possible to step ashore from your boat even using a passarelle.

How to go about Mooring in the Harbour

1. As you approach Rarotonga, try to contact Rarotonga Harbourmaster on Ch. 16. Rarotonga Radio monitors this frequency at all times, and can possibly relay a message.
2. Hoist yellow quarantine flag.
3. It is far safer to wait until daylight to enter Avatiu Harbour than trying to enter in the dark.
4. Have main anchor ready to deploy.

5. Entering the harbor through the reef following the two triangular range markers. Keep the green buoy to starboard.
6. Once in the harbour there is enough space to turn into the wind to drop sails.
7. Assemble two stern lines of at least 150' and 100' on deck.
8. Rig fenders to port (downwind in prevailing easterlies) side.
9. Drop anchor at least three boat lengths out from where you want to end up, taking caution not to cross other boats anchors or rodes. Avoid anchoring over the top of existing anchors as prudent sailors will have set two anchors.
10. If no one approaches in a dinghy from another yacht to help run your stern lines ashore launch your dinghy and run a line ashore.
11. This is the tricky part for boats with only a couple aboard - ease the main anchor chain out as you winch in the stern line. If possible it is best done with the main engine off to lessen the chance of tangling the stern line or another boat's anchor line in your prop.
12. Set second anchor, generally more to the east, from dinghy.
13. Snorkel to check anchors. The maximum depth in the harbour is 15' though the visibility is poor.
14. Bear in mind that as the harbor faces north you need to monitor the weather patterns. It is not advisable to leave your boat unattended in northerlies brought about by a frontal passage. If the harbour is crowded, you may be safer and more comfortable putting to sea.
15. Ships and fishing vessels may also require that you provide turning room in the harbour so check with the harbour master if you are planning on leaving your vessel unattended for any length of time.
16. Be vigilant at all times of your lines and anchor settings.
17. Be prepared to help other yachties by running and securing stern lines ashore upon their arrival.
18. The harbourmaster, whose office is in the two-storied blue building adjacent to the harbour, handles customs and immigration and generally the health and quarantine inspectors will call by if you have the quarantine flag hoisted.

Options If You Need to Vacate the Harbour

1. It is possible to anchor in the lee of the island as the wind back around to the north during a frontal passage, but all of the anchorages are deep, fairly close to shore and frequently on coral and the wind may shift around in an anti-clockwise direction fairly quickly, depending on the speed of movement of the frontal passage.
2. Off Arorangi Primary School (visible from seaward). On the far western edge of the island is an anchorage that has a dinghy pass through the coral. The approximate position of this anchorage is 21.13 S, 159.50 W. Published plans are to build a landing here for cruise ship tenders to land their guests during northerly conditions when it is too rough for cruise ships to anchor off Avatiu Harbour. Whether or not this happens is debatable, but this is one possible alternative for yachts in strong northerly conditions.

John Neal

John has moored here about 15 times over the past 34 years.

3.6.4 Adios III (via Noonsite) – 2011

Copied from noonsite.com

I just wanted to caution readers that a lot of these cruising reports are VERY subjective. Take them all with the view that your mileage may vary....

We just spent a week at Rarotonga and had a great time.

Super friendly people, great market on Saturday (early 6 am) and no problems in the harbour. They have started driving piles though - so it is a little noisy.

Not much cheaper than Papeete, but good provisioning. (But we loved French Polynesia too, though we do all speak French.)

Did a PADI dive course with Dive Rarotonga - super professional and great sites including their own wreck.

Check in was easy, \$20NZ for health inspection.

Check out \$55 per person +\$50 customs.

Stopped at Beveridge reef, and had THE BEST snorkelling ever. Visibility was unlimited, almost unbelievable and great fish and octopus on the south reef. Snorkelling on the East side was very dull, so it depends on where you go.

Used the very accurate waypoints from the Dangerous Middle guide [here](#)

3.6.5 Beaujolais – August 2010:

The net is a double edged sword sometimes. Chinese whispers often distort and rearrange the truth. Many of the cruisers we have met, after having heard horror stories about the customs regulations here, decided to skip the Cook Islands all together, which is a shame.....and their loss.

So here is our account of our actual experience.

May I start by saying we arrived on a Sunday and as John, the harbour master doesn't work on Sundays (he leaves in 6 weeks for a new post, so that could change, though I doubt it as they are quite strict about the Sabbath) we would be clearing on Monday. Ordinarily that would have been the case, but it was a national holiday, so we cleared in on Tuesday, but there is no problem going ashore before clearing in. Just remember to fly the Q flag.

A note: John's hours can be variable, but the office opens at 8am and is manned by 'the girls' who will let you know when he is available, if he isn't there. Office hours are Monday to Friday 08.00 – 16.00hrs, no clearance will be given outside these hours (taken from their documentation)

There are showers and toilets on the quayside, you pay \$10 (NZ not US) for the key and leave a \$20 deposit (from the Port's office, which is the nice blue and white building). There are also potable water taps along the quay.

Anchoring is an option and mooring in the harbour is stern-to and you will need your dinghy down to ferry yourselves to the quayside ladders.

Clearing in is simple, as usual take your ships papers, crew list, clearance from the last port and passports. The costs are as follows (in NZ\$): (day of arrival and day of departure each count as a day)

Monohull : NZ\$ 2.20 per meter per day

Multi-hull: NZ\$ 3.00 per meter per day

Motor Yacht: NZ\$ 2.50 per meter per day or NZ\$ 0.60 per Gross Tonne per day (whichever is greater)

There is a departure tax of NZ\$ 55.00 per person (NZ\$ 15.00 for children under 12)

All payment is cash only.

Agriculture and Public health will come along at sometime and hail you for a lift in your dinghy to come aboard.

Once again this is straight forward, they will ask if you have fresh meat and any fruit and vegetables. I, having heard the rumours about fresh meat being confiscated, had cooked it all and frozen it, but when I said we had no fresh meat, they didn't check. So we asked what happens if we had had fresh meat and this is the official reply:

" We allow meat from USA, Fiji, NZ, Australia and Canada. We will confiscate any meat from the UK (due to foot and mouth ...!). If you have come from French Polynesia, no problem as all their meat is from NZ anyway.

As for fruit and vegetables, I had a little and he merely said to keep them secured in a bin below decks.

Charlie then asked me to cover any food or utensils while he sprayed the boat. The spray is only the same as they use in aircraft. He then asked us to close up the saloon and aft cabin for 3 mins and that was that. It cost NZ\$ 20 and we were reminded to take down the Q flag.

Provisions and food: Just a 2 minute walk from the wharf (turn left as you leave) is the Cultural Market. Everyday you will find a few stalls selling fresh fruit and veg, also if you go to Mama's Hut, you can get a slap up breakfast for \$15, consisting of bacon, 2 eggs, hash browns, sausages, tomatoes, steak and toast, it is awesome. Marie (pronounced Maree) and Veena , who run the place (which belonged to Maie's late mother) are exceptionally friendly and I am hoping will become a cruising station for the SSCA as they are so helpful and friendly.

The full market is on a Saturday from about 6.30 am until noon. It's very big and there are lots of food stalls, craft stalls and fruit and veg.

Just at the entrance to the wharf, on the left hand side, there is Scotts Cool Room which is a frozen food store. As you walk into town, turn right into the road just before Raviz Indian restaurant (Which by the way is wonderful!!) and about 200 mts on the left hand side (just before Vonnies Warehouse) you will see Prime Foods. They have an excellent selection of frozen foods especially meats, I think they have the best prices on frozen (and fresh) meats. Alternatively, if you turn right from the wharf and about half a mile on the left you will see a supermarket, that has a pretty good selection.

A 10 minute walk past the market brings you into the centre of town. There are three ATM's, Westpac, ANZ and CBI.

Car/bike hire: If you want to hire a car or motorbike you will need a Cook island driving licence. You have to take your driving licence down to the police station (go early as the q's build up), fill out a form, pay your \$20 and have your photo taken and bob's your uncle, you will then be the proud owner of a driving licence. However, if you wish to have a licence for a vehicle you do not hold a licence for (eg a motorbike) you will have to sit a theory exam and a short practical (there and then at the Police Station) and pay extra.

Most cars start around \$40 a day. Convertibles are about \$50 a day and bikes around \$20.

Fuel: there are plenty of gas stations around, indeed for those of you needing to fuel up, there is one over the road from the Wharf. However, it is expensive at \$2.16 a litre for diesel and about the same for petrol. If you need a lot of fuel, or can get together with other boats, you can arrange a tanker to come down to the wharf and fuel direct AND you can then get it at duty free prices, saving about 70c a litre.

Eating: lots of options, turn right from the wharf and 20 mts on the right is a fish and chip shop. Fish and chips will set you back \$8. Or there is a little cafe right on the wharf itself that is open all week. Raviz ,

the Indian, serves excellent Indian fare and is a 10 minute walk (turn left out of the wharf and it is on the Right hand side of the road).

Internet: You can buy internet cards from the telecoms shop in town. Walk past the Police station, turn right after the petrol station and walk past the shops, just at the bend, on the left hand side of the road is the telecoms shop. You buy cards based on the amount of downloads you require.

There are wifi hotspots all around town and also at the wharf, so you can get wifi from your boat. Or you can walk through town, over the roundabout and just opposite the cinema there are 2 concrete benches where you can piggy back off someone's unsecured network.

Crew Changing: Rarotonga is a great place for crew changes as it is the cheapest destination within the Pacific for either US or NZ or Aus (except of course New Caledonia or Vanuatu from Oz). If you have crew flying in with a one way flight ticket, you can ensure they have no problems at their point of departure (some airlines will not board you with a one way ticket if you are not a resident of your destination country) you can pop along to the Immigration office (which is on the Right hand side, just before the big roundabout) with a copy of their passport and flight details, the immigration will then contact the airline and give permission. This also means they don't need to post a bond, it certainly makes their travel less stressful.

The airport is about 10 mins drive from the wharf (turn left out of the wharf) and the flights are often delayed (our crew turned up an hour and a half late) so it may well be worth hiring a car for the day for \$40 rather than paying for a taxi or 2??

Hardware supplies: There is a DIY builders store right opposite the wharf or Vonnies warehouse has a small section. Otherwise, if you drive towards the airport (and past it) there are several different stores along that road. If you need air-conditioning or refrigeration the you need Anderson's just before the airport.

If you need something engineered, pop along to Mama's hut in the market and ask Maria to contact Keith for you, he can make anything!

3.6.6 White Princess – April 2011

Here is an update on the Southern Cook Islands, especially Rarotonga. We recommend that ALL Cruisers Boycott the Southern Cooks, which is a little tough on the folks at Palmerston, until the fees are lowered.

Avatiu Harbour, Rarotonga

The Facilities here have not improved any in the last six years, but the fees have quadrupled. The access ladder is now so damaged that it is dangerous to use. As always shelter in this little harbour is limited.

Fees (NZD) Fumigation \$20, Departure tax \$55 per person, Harbour dues \$2.2 /m/day, Bathroom facilities \$30 for key (not refundable) .

Facilities: Water - good quality. Butane \$4.45/kg (\$2/lb), Diesel \$1.67/l

Groceries: These are even more expensive than in Bora Bora, There is also a local fresh fruit & Veg. market, but this is also expensive. Eggs are \$4.50 per doz. and are usually chilled. In spite of Rarotonga's so called agricultural economy, most foodstuffs on sale are imported from New Zealand. The Bond liquor Store no longer does duty free, and the cost of wine and imported beer is high. There is a new microbrewery, Cooks Larger, which will fill your own containers for \$5/l.

Future Developments: There are development plans for Avatiu Harbour, and when these are completed the fees will be increased for commercial vessels and yachts in order to pay for them. The date of these improvements is uncertain, and will consist of straightening the east quay, and dredging

the basin to 10m. Apart from the increase in the fees, this is likely to spoil the holding in the basin - yachts usually med moor due to the ever present surge. The harbour master did not comment on any improvements to the south quay which visiting yachts use.

Conclusion: Unless you have an imperative reason to visit, Rarotonga should be avoided as the costs of even a short visit are high. There are no specific attractions on Rarotonga, and officials on the other islands will happily relieve you of the departure tax should you visit. There is no navigable lagoon, or free anchoring as in French Polynesia.

Other Islands: There are now mooring fees at Palmerston and Aitutaki and Suwarrow charges a park fee.

3.6.7 Phoenix – August 2007

We visited Rarotonga from August 2nd through August 9, 2007. Our original plan had included Aitutaki, but the pass into the lagoon is too shallow for our nine foot draft, and we weren't really interested in anchoring off the atoll. A cruising document that we had read recommended Rarotonga as a superb stop, and we finalized plans to stop there.

The Harbor: The most recent update to Jimmy Cornell's World Cruising Guide has good information, but we thought it would be good to augment that. The Avatiu Harbor was expanded, and now all of the small fishing and power boats are in the new section to the west of the original harbor. The entrance to the harbor is marked by a small green-lighted buoy on the right when entering and range or leading marks at the back of the harbor. The lights for the range are bright blue vertical bars, and the day shapes are orange triangles with the front mark pointing up and the back mark pointing down.

The quay on the left is for large ships – container ships, cruise ships and large fishing boats. If no ships are scheduled to use that quay, yachts are permitted to side-tie there, but will be asked to move if space becomes a problem. The quay along the back is more frequently used for yachts. Yachts med-moor bow-out to allow more room and to minimize the affects of the swell that sometimes rolls in through the entrance. This part of the quay is about 100 meters long and can handle at least 12 yachts and the derelict freighter. There is more room for "overflow" to the west of the quay with stern lines going to the shore rather than the quay. The weather was largely settled while we were there, but there is usually some swell that makes its way into the harbor, particularly with strong northerly winds. We left about seven meters between our stern and the quay. There were half a dozen ladders we could use to get up the quay wall from our dinghies.

From offshore to the quay, we saw depths of about 10 meters in the reef and harbor entrance and at least five meters along the quay. In spite of best intentions, anchors regularly get fouled and there is a big piece of chain lying on the bottom 30-40 meters off the quay toward the east end. The Harbormaster has it on his list for removal, but there was no indication of when that might occur.

Checking-in/-out: John, the Harbormaster, is very quick about processing the check-in paperwork, about 10-15 minutes. The check-in form doubles as the check-out form. If you're coming from French Polynesia, he wants to see both the sortie and departure forms, in addition to the passports and yacht documentation. His assistants in the office handle the receipts, restroom/shower keys and check-out. Check-out involves getting the key deposit back (restroom/shower), putting a departure stamp in your passport if you want it, paying the departure tax (\$30NZ/person) and harbor fees (\$2NZ/meter/day). For vessel length, they don't round up or down, they just multiply the length by the rate. All very simple. The Health Inspector also comes aboard for his inspection and charges \$20NZ. It takes about five minutes.

Facilities: The shower and head are in the Harbormaster building and are \$30NZ with a \$20NZ refund when you return the keys. They aren't fancy, but everything works and they try to keep it relatively

clean. Hot water is provided by a solar collector, so don't expect a warm shower first thing in the morning. There are water spigots on the quay, but no electricity as far as I could tell.

Fuel can be delivered, but it tends to be expensive (\$1.50NZ/liter) and there is no duty-free price. We pooled our requirements and had 15 yachts participate, so the company sent a truck down to the quay. You could use jerrycans, but the closest gas station is about a half of a mile away.

Propane: The driveway immediately to the east of the fence for the port facility leads to an LPG depot where you can get tanks filled with butane. If you had propane in the tank before, make sure you don't have any pressure in the tank as it will make the filling process smoother. They have fittings to fill US tanks. It will cost at least \$15NZ to fill a tank.

Wifi: There is a WiFi hotspot at the harbor. We had pretty good service from it, but the ladies in the Harbormaster's Office didn't seem to think it worked very well. WiFi is supplied by Cook Islands Telecommunications (CIT) and is available on a prepaid card that costs between \$15 and \$50NZ. It is bandwidth- and time-limited; the smaller cards are valid for a week and allow 50 MB of data transfers; the bigger cards are good for a month and 800 MB. There are four options.

Cell Phones: CIT also provides GSM mobile phone service, but it is an older system and needs some type of manual configuration on the phone. I never got ours to work, so we used Skype instead – it was much more affordable.

Laundry: A laundry service is right across the street and charges \$10NZ per load.

Provisioning: We were led to believe that provisioning was significantly less in Rarotonga than in French Polynesia. This was largely untrue, but there are two main supermarkets in Avatiu, and they seemed to have a much better selection than in most of the places in French Polynesia with the possible exception of the Carrefour in Papeete. The CITC supermarket is about a quarter of a mile west of the harbor and is more of a warehouse-type store where you can get some items in bulk. They do have fresh fruit and vegetables, but check the prices. The other main store is the Foodland about a half mile to the east of the harbor. They were the only store to carry powdered skim milk. They also have a pretty good variety. On Saturday mornings, go to the market just to the east of the harbor. The fruit and vegetables are fresh from the garden; generally prices and quality are better than the stores. Don't expect to find luxury items like chocolate chips or corn syrup in any of the stores. There is a limited selection of dried fruit.

Ice Cream: After the general paucity of ice cream in French Polynesia, the crew expected to make up for it in Rarotonga. The ice cream factory sells hard ice cream for \$2.50NZ for a single and \$3NZ for a double, but they close at 1500. The Fish 'N' Chips on the west end of the harbor sells it for \$2.50NZ per scoop and the Raro Fried Chicken (across the street from the harbor) sells it for \$1.00NZ per scoop, and they're open 24 hours! There are other places, too, but we didn't have time to check them all out.

Dining: Restaurant prices are generally more reasonable in Rarotonga than they were in French Polynesia. We ate out a few times during our stay. Most of the guidebooks do a pretty good job of covering the restaurants.

Arrival Timing: The best time to be in Rarotonga is the week just before August 4th, which is their Constitution Day. The week is filled with many unique activities that include people from all of the other islands in the Cooks. This year, the dance competition started on July 30th and ran through August 3rd. Tickets are hard to get, but we were able to get them for the August 3rd show. It was stunning. Each island does a dance in every category, and the organizers include dances of each type every night. All of the costumes are hand made, usually of indigenous materials. The drum competition was on Saturday and the groups were superb. Tickets are not required for the drum competition. The inter-island market was on Friday morning and featured crafts from each of the outlying islands. Prices are usually better than at other times. If for no other reason, come to Rarotonga to enjoy the dance and drum

competitions. There are dance shows on the island every night (at different venues), but they generally don't compare to the competitions.

Other Activities: We did two other activities; the cross-island hike and a bike ride out to Muri Lagoon and beach. The cross-island hike starts at the intersection across from the Harbormasters Office. It takes about five hours to go all the way across the island, but the views from the top are well worth it. It is a strenuous hike on the way up. Take the side trail up to the Needle for the best views. On the way down, look for the big tree on the left with the small arrow pointing to the left and follow that trail down. The waterfall that the guidebooks describe is only really visible during the rainy season, and then you can't get to it because the trail crosses the stream several times above the falls. There are some small falls, but they are difficult to access. We caught a bus back to the harbor.

Muri Lagoon is on the east side of the island about 10 km from Avatiu. We rented bicycles to ride out, have a brief swim and ride back. There are a number of bike rental agencies, but not all are open all the time. We used an agency out by the airport and paid \$10NZ per bicycle. Other companies are similar, although they may have bigger bicycles to fit taller people.

Overall, Rarotonga was a really great place to visit. The camaraderie with the other cruisers and the sights were great. It is definitely worth visiting.

3.7 Beveridge Reef

3.7.1 Sanuk – July 2017

Between Palmerston and Niue is Beveridge Reef: about a circle of 2 nautical miles (3.6 km) diameter, within 7 meters deep coral with a broad sandbank of 2 to 3 meters depth and then the reef with its breaking waves ... From the high seas you only see the splashing white foam of breaking waves that pop up from nowhere, except for the west side a 200 meter strip where the waves do not break: the pass.

Our GPS indicated that we would arrive at the south of the reef by 5:00 pm, and the sun was going down at 18:20. Our Navionics maps only indicated the reef as a shallow spot without detail, the same for OpenCPN (we did not have a satellite photo of the reef), but we did have an accurate report with drawing and GPS coordinates from a certain Mr John VI.

Because of a wide arch we came to the pass at about sunset, and although there was a three-quarter moon, visibility was poor. In retrospect we should have turned around and continued to Niue - and afterwards we also made a new rule: no navigation on new terrain in the vicinity of land after sunset - and we only entered unknown reef on gps. Ilse made me promise that if something went wrong I would not say: I'm sorry, I could not help it.

There was little current, 15 knots of wind with a small swell, but it remained difficult to see. With three knots over the bottom, we followed the course of Mr John. Once inside (somewhere in the middle of the atoll) we threw the anchor as soon as possible and waited for the next day's sun.

The next day was still cloudy, yet the water was so incredibly clear that we could shift to the sandbank on the edge of the reef. We passed many coral columns and although they looked extremely high in the clear water they all remained 2 to 3 meters below the surface. Sanuk has 1m20 draft.

On our lonely parking space in the ocean we had a ray of sunshine during our two days on the spot so that we could take spectacular pictures of this very special place. With our dinghy, we motored to the reef about 300 meters away, and we saw lots of fish and beautiful coral. Despite the bad weather it was one of the best snorkeling experiences.

But it is still a double affair: back and forth between Sanuk and the reef in the dinghy, it is risky, if the engine should quit, because then the wind will blow you away, and with rowing you will not get back to

the boat. And there is no other boat in the area, only sea. That is why Ilse was relieved when we sailed back through the pass, on our way to our next destination at 150 nautical miles: Niue, one of the smallest parts of the world.

3.7.2 *Starry Horizons – August 2016*

The charts are completely off for Beveridge Reef, but with sunny conditions it's easy to navigate visually. Come around to the west side of the atoll, and you will find the pass on the 20° S line. Set yourself up to come in headed due east. Our first depth reading came in at:

20°00 S 167° 46.763 W

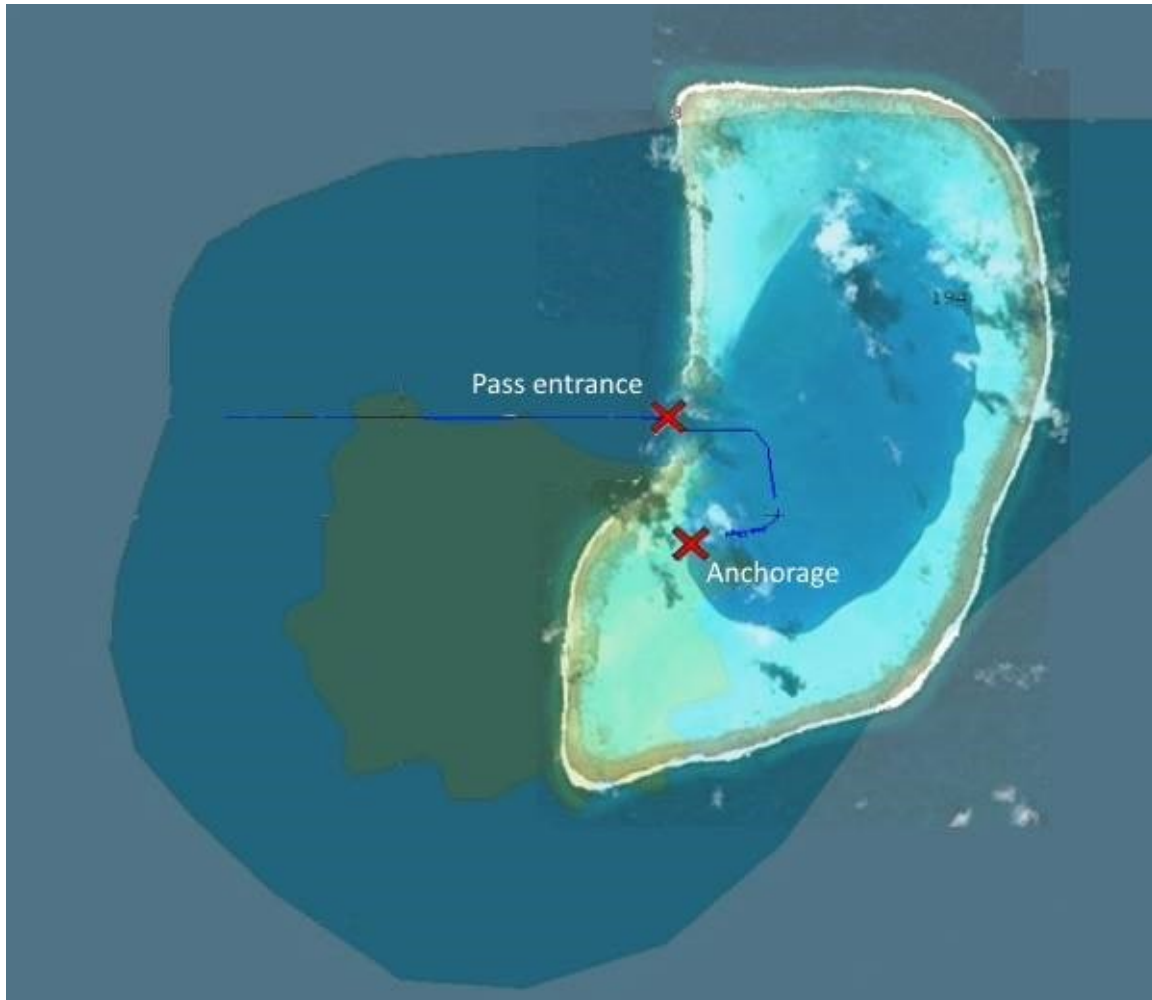
We had approx. 4 knots of current coming against us on our way in. Once we read a depth of about 30 feet and felt comfortable navigating visually we turned towards starboard (south) and came to anchor at:

20°00.725 S 167° 46.604 W

Friends of ours on Prince Diamond were anchored on the north side of the reef at:

19°58.61 S 167° 45.21 W

It was approximately 20 feet deep where we were. I snorkeled to check our anchor and the visibility was easily 200 feet. The coral heads around us were low to the ground, coming no more than a few feet off the bottom. On this snorkel, I was approached by a gray reef shark, who came rather close. That night, two reef sharks swam in our underwater lights.



This is not a calm anchorage, as there is no land to protect it from winds and seas.

There is a rock that breaks the surface to the southwest. We went in our snorkel gear to explore but quickly backtracked when we got stung by a Portuguese man-o-war (or blue bottle). The 2 minutes of swimming was nice though, large fish and the rocks (if they were rocks) were very oddly shaped.

We frequently spotted whales just outside the pass. A neighboring boat went out to snorkel with them.

We did receive a call from a Niue patrol boat (not on AIS) requesting identifying information for the vessel and crew. They asked if we had done any fishing inside the reef today. We had not.

Departing was easy with visual navigation and following our track back out.

3.7.3 Eagle's Wings – July 2015

Anchored at 22 00.86s 167 45.10w

We hove to off the reef in the wee hours of the morning local time and then tried fishing along the edge of the reef for a few hours. There is no land here, all you can see is the breaking surf.

We saw lots of flying fish but no bites on our lines. We maneuvered through the pass about 11:30 am local time and finally dropped anchor at 12:30 pm local time. Great visibility going through pass.

Two other boats ("Hotlips" and "Apropos") came in over the course of the next two days. They were very early boats sailing west from Panama or the West Coast. They only stayed a day or two, as they were keen to move on to Tonga and Fiji.

We, on the other hand, ended up staying more than a month -- having the reef to ourselves for 3 1/2 weeks. The weather was spectacular for most of our stay. We had some gorgeous sunrises and sunsets.

We came to Beveridge to dive -- and we did -- but the water was a bit brisk (70 - 72 degrees F). We had to layer up as much as we could to keep warm. One complete dive outfit: Fourth Element farmer john, Fourth Element long sleeve top, 3 mm full wetsuit, 3 mm long sleeve shorty wetsuit, 2 mm hood, socks, boots, and gloves.

We did lots of snorkeling and diving -- but only inside the reef. Diving outside was just too scary, since there was no good place to anchor the dinghy in the breaking surf and strong currents. We needed another couple to take turns acting as a surface team. But even inside the reef, we saw over 30 species that were new to us. And, since we're far away from any nutrients, the water was stunningly clear -- you could see almost as far underwater as on top.

These low atolls are famously dangerous, because you can't see them until it's too late. Beveridge has traces of at least four shipwrecks (that we found).

Everyone got safely off a New Zealand fishing boat when it went up on the reef over ten years ago.

But the old wooden sailing ship whose anchor we found here was probably a different story. The only thing left besides the anchor is the ship's iron windlass. There's no dry land in Beveridge. And no EPIRBs, radios or sat phones in those days. And the nearest islanders were cannibals...

It isn't easy to find lobsters at Beveridge. But if you know where to look, and are willing to stick your neck out, you can get dinner. Ken volunteered for the hard job of getting pummeled by the waves and came up with a couple for dinner one day.

We only took a few, and none of the big ones. Beth made delicious lobster risotto and lobster bisque, which she served with homemade focaccia bread.

After five weeks in Beveridge -- including a 25 day stretch of complete solitude, it was time to buy some vegetables. And chocolate. (Actually, chocolate IS a vegetable.)

3.7.4 Migrations - September 2009

Beveridge Reef is a completely submerged atoll. Nothing above the surface of the water except the remains of a wrecked fishing boat.

Beveridge Reef has an easily-navigated pass so we anchored inside. At high tide the reef provides very little protection and the the swell rolling over the coral creates a lot of chop. Others have stopped here in better conditions, but we had three pretty bouncy and uncomfortable nights. The snorkeling was a bit disappointing though the water is exceptionally beautiful.

On the morning of 29 September, as we were leaving Beveridge Reef, a boat arriving called on the VHF to say that he had just received a text message on his satellite phone; there had been a large earthquake in the Pacific and a tsunami had hit Samoa.

We wouldn't know the extent of the devastation for a few days, but we did know that many friends and cruisers were in the area. We were worried about them.

We later learned that we were only 400 miles from the earthquake and the tsunami had actually passed by Beveridge Reef that morning while we were still at anchor. We felt nothing -- the shape of the reef didn't allow a huge wave to build. We were very lucky; since Beveridge is completely isolated, it would have been a terrible place to be wrecked. Many boats we know were not so lucky -- several were lost or

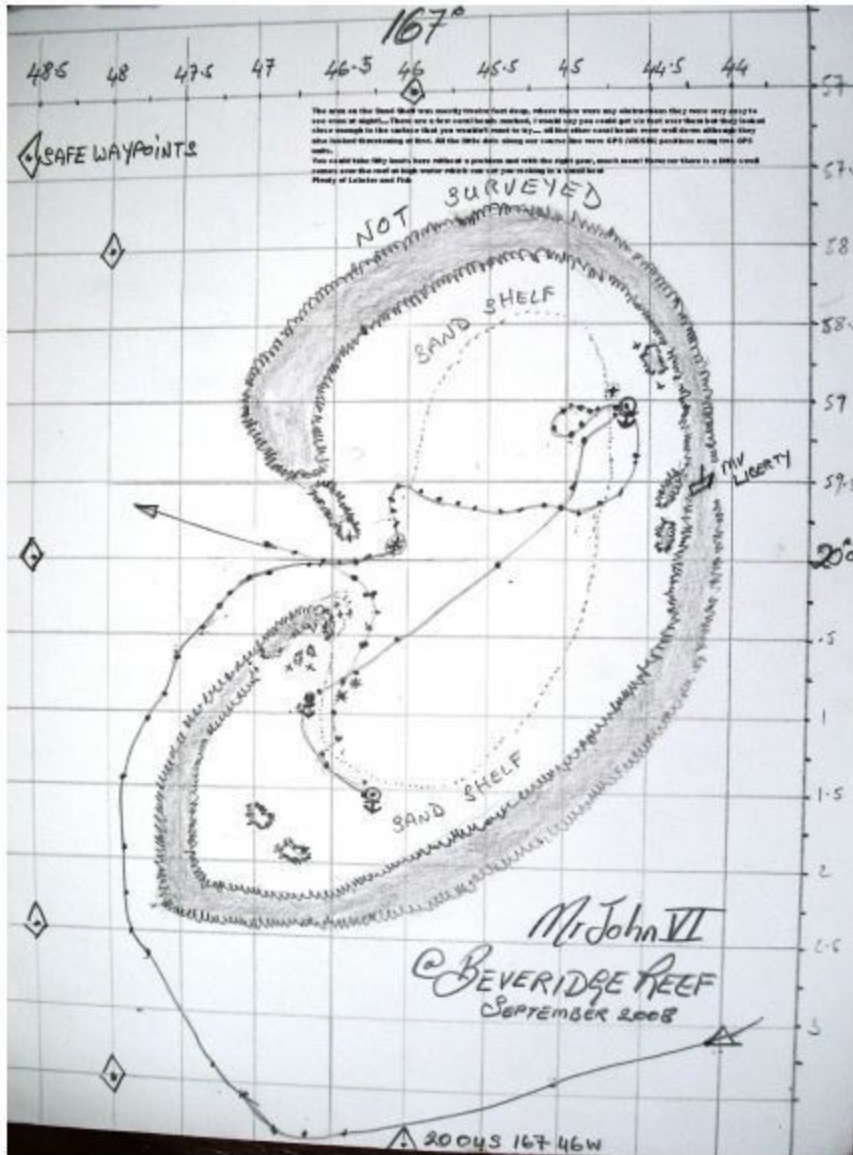
damaged in Pago Pago (American Samoa) and a cruiser we'd recently met was swept off the dock and drowned.

So many factors at play: our schedule, the shape of the reef, the speed of the wave. You never know what is around the next island. It does no good to worry. One would have to be crazy to not feel grateful... and lucky

3.7.5 *Mr John VI - September 2008*

On the 18th of September we arrived at Beveridge Reef, an 'almost' atoll about one hundred and forty miles east-southeast of Niue (20 00.0S 167 45W). This is a very interesting and very different place, right out in the middle of nowhere; all alone and isolated is a horseshoe of reef with a turquoise-blue interior lagoon surrounded by a wide plateau of white sand over which lies about ten feet of clear shimmering water. At high tide the reef is completely covered and there is nothing to be seen except the breaking waves on the outer reef and one small, lonely fishing boat, well stuck in the coral's unyielding grasp.

BEVERIDGE REEF



The dots along the tracks taken are positions from 2 GPS units set on WGS 84

We anchored with six feet under the keel, in the north east section and were soon afterwards invited over to "Cop Out" who were also sharing this bit of paradise having arrived a few hours after us; they were doing a 'Pot Luck' dinner where we all brought a dish or two which would complement the huge Mahi Mahi they had caught the previous day and cut up into forty something nice big steaks! Joining us were the crews of two other British yachts 'Tuppenny' and 'Nomad', whom we had last seen in Rarotonga and had left there at the same time that we had left Aitutaki; it was a nice evening and it was interesting to exchange stories about what we'd been doing and what conditions we'd experienced during the last period of inclement weather. They had both been stuck in Rarotonga and had bounced around it that harbour for the duration of the heavy weather, breaking mooring lines and being generally uncomfortable.

The next day we went snorkelling on the inside of the reef and discovered some of the wonders of Beverage; I have often seen wall to wall fish but never before had I seen so many big fish congregated in and around any one reef, they were everywhere. We were in the water most of the day and also paid a visit to the wrecked fishing boat from which I managed to recover a good length of heavy duty fishing line. Unfortunately, that night the weather started to come apart and around the high tide, we bounced about as the swell managed to power over the reef, setting up an uncomfortable chop catching us broadside as we lay to the northerly wind. The expectation was that the wind would continue to back around, so the next morning, in a break between showers, we heaved up and went to anchor a little way south of the pass, on the western side of the lagoon. 'Cop Out' and 'Tuppenny' joined us a little later in the hope that we would all be able to check out the local 'Dive Spot' marked in our guide; this was not to be however, as the weather did not co-operate; it shifted to the south sooner than expected and heavy rain moved in, so by late afternoon I was convinced that this was going to be an uncomfortable place to remain the night. Apart from the wind, there was quite a lot of current in this location causing us to cavort around our anchor rode, so before the light went completely we shifted once more to the southeast end of the lagoon; following along the edge of the white sand we were able to see any dangers clearly (there were none) and we found a much more comfortable anchorage in our new location. Here we had no current spinning us around and lay comfortably to the wind which quickly moved into the southeast and increased to twenty knots or so.

The following morning it was overcast, grey and blowing fresh; the forecast didn't give any hope for improvement, in fact it appeared that things were going to go downhill in the next twenty-four hours. Whilst I was far from keen on going sailing in these conditions we decided it would be the smartest thing to 'cut and run'; it was only one hundred and forty miles to Niue and if we were to be weather bound in strong south-easterly winds for a couple of days it was a far better place to be. We could do little in Beverage in these conditions but in Niue we could at least walk ashore. By 0930hrs we were underway, 'Cop Out' was headed in the same direction but 'Tuppenny' and 'Nomad' headed for Vava'u in Tonga, another two days beyond Niue; we had squally and overcast conditions the whole way and made the passage with just a double reefed mainsail, it wasn't fun! The wind did go down a little for a while overnight but came right back again in the morning as we slipped easily into the lee of Niue; we very gratefully picked up a mooring at 0900hrs having averaged six knots for the passage.

4 Niue

Niue is self-governing island in free association with New Zealand. Niue is fully responsible for internal affairs; New Zealand retains responsibility for external affairs and defense; however, these responsibilities confer no rights of control and are only exercised at the request of the Government of Niue. The currency is the NZ dollar.

Economic Overview: (CIA World Factbook 2006): The economy suffers from the typical Pacific island problems of geographic isolation, few resources, and a small population.

Government expenditures regularly exceed revenues, and the shortfall is made up by critically needed grants from New Zealand that are used to pay wages to public employees. Niue has cut government expenditures by reducing the public service by almost half. The agricultural sector consists mainly of subsistence gardening, although some cash crops are grown for export. Industry consists primarily of small factories to process passion fruit, lime oil, honey, and coconut cream. The sale of postage stamps to foreign collectors is an important source of revenue.

The island in recent years has suffered a serious loss of population because of emigration to New Zealand.

Efforts to increase GDP include the promotion of tourism and a financial services industry, although the International Banking Repeal Act of 2002 resulted in the termination of all offshore banking licenses. Economic aid from New Zealand in 2002 was about US\$2 million. Niue suffered a devastating typhoon, Hattie, in January 2004, which decimated nascent economic programs. While in the process of rebuilding, Niue has been dependent on foreign aid.

Niue uses the New Zealand Dollar as its currency. As of June 2012, there are NO ATM's on the island, and only one bank. Bring your own NZ dollars if possible. Few establishments can take credit cards, and then only Visa (not MC or others).

Niue Yacht Club: <http://niueyachtclub.com>

4.1.1 Begonia – September 2017

Officialdom

NZ\$15 trash fee payable on clearing in.

NZ\$80 per person payable on clearing out (since July 2017)

Extras Payable at visitor information center

Mooring fee - NZ\$20/day (note as of Sep 2017 NYC web site still said \$15/day but this is not correct)

Shower keys: NZ\$20 deposit (NZ\$5 returned) . The shower block is up the ramp from the wharf to the left, there are two doors - each with a shower/toilet and each with a medium deep sink which can be used for clothes washing. (you may need to take your own plug)

Many places accept credit cards but charge between 3%-6% (some cruisers saw 10%) on top of charge as a fee - so it may be better value to pay cash, depending on your own home bank fees. NZ Debit cards have no charges, but other debit cards will be charged as credit cards.

Potable Water

A water tap is available at the foot of the dinghy hoist machinery. Note it is very low to the ground so a hose will aid in filling your water jugs that probably won't fit under the tap.

Wifi

Kaniu wifi have several wifi spots and SOMETIMES we could get it at our boat in the South mooring field. Cost was NZ\$25 for 5GB for 2 weeks (or NZ\$50 for unlimited data for a month)

Free wifi 1 hour a day available at the FREE KANIU wifi hotspot - next to the telecom office in the area of shops by Gills (Indian restaurant)

Telecom wifi - at the telecom office (and other hotels and restaurants around the island) you can purchase 1 hour internet keys (NZ\$5) or 24 hour keys (NZ\$15) - sometimes this signal was available at the moorings but very rarely.

Yacht club has unlimited free wifi (get code from visitor center) - but we found it unreliable and the room was often full of mosquitoes so we didn't persevere.

How to Spell Niue? I kept getting the i and the u swapped. Kyle came up with a great way to remember how... Think of the phrase "Niue is Nice" - take the word Nice, and rotate the c to a u.. You Nice turns into Niue!!!

How to say Niue? say New-way

Car Rental: Currently the Tourist office can manage that for you (and you can pick up and drop off there too) - they have \$40/day cars that go first, then \$50/day cars. If you plan to be in Niue awhile, we recommend timing your car rental with a mid day low tide

Hiking: If you plan on hiking any of the sea trails DO take good shoes - for many of them flip flops just won't cut it. Trails going through caves can have some very smooth/slippery patches, and most others have stretches of very rough/spiky coral

Whales: Note good practice if you find yourself around any whales (Niue is very strict and very protective of their whales). See the full set of rules on NYC web site.

Swimming with whales is NOT allowed except with an approved guide

Spearfishing is NOT allowed except with an approved guide

4.1.2 Spunky – June 2017

Time: It's one hour earlier than Cooks Islands.

Customs was also willing to check us in at Queensday.

Getting **cash** was not difficult at all as we could get cash from our (European) debit card in the bank at a 2 dollar fee. Just like a personal ATM (cash officer). At most places on the island you can pay you with your bank card anyway (eftpos).

The **market** starts at 4 AM, and is over at 6AM (so we missed it ;-)) Do not expect veggies, but hot tea, coffee, cakes, porridge and souvenirs.

We suggest to rent bicycles (e.g. at the Mini golf) and cycle the west site of the island, the road is flat and ok, watch out however for the potholes. A nice stop for refreshments, that is not on the map yet, is Hio cafe, near Hio Beach.

If you missed the vanilla in Taha'a, you can pick up some beans here in Niue. They also have plantations.

Departure tax will be increased from 34 to 80 NZ\$ per person (starting in July 2017)

John invites yachties for his Friday night hamburgers, in the back corner of the market hall, he makes delicious hamburgers with Popo (papaya) chutney, every Friday night (12 NZ\$) and he can tell a lot about the island.

4.1.3 Starry Horizons – August 2016

We arrived in Niue on August 16th, at approx. 11 am local time. We had no trouble hailing Niue Radio to arrange our clearance but were unable to connect with Niue Yacht Club to confirm a mooring. We just picked up a mooring available and tried again later. They had no problem with the mooring we picked. We were the 12th boat in the mooring field, and almost none of the boats had dinghies on...everyone was ashore...like a ghost town!

Clearing in – We happened to arrive on one of the two days a week when the plane comes in, so customs was out at the airport. Through Niue Radio we coordinated meeting customs at the dock at 3 pm. We tied the dinghy up to the wharf and did not use the crane to lift up. The customs crew met us with a van and three officials. We cleared in by filling out paperwork in the back of the van. We had already filled out everything that was on the Niue Yacht Club website, so it went quickly. No charges, no boarding. The officials gave us a ride to the Yacht Club.

IMPORTANT: When clearing into Tonga, they asked for our clearance paperwork from Niue. When we cleared into Niue we did not receive ANY documents. The Tongan official showed us what he was looking for – an orange half page document titled “Certificate of Practique”, which was stamped and

signed. The Tongan official allowed us in anyway but said Fiji isn't so lenient. Our friends told us they had gotten that paper from the Niue Yacht Club.

Moorings – The moorings are \$20NZ a night. I snorkeled ours and understood why they really want yachts to use moorings – the entire seabed is coral. The moorings are taken out at the end of the season and ours was in good condition.

Wharf – Sir Robert's Wharf can be intimidating, as there is a crane to lift your dinghy up to tender storage. Since the wharf is unprotected, it is recommended to lift your dinghy up and leave it in the designated parking spots. However, a few times when we were ashore for a short time and the swell was low, we left the dinghy tied up and out of the way of the crane. Many times locals helped us use the crane.

Information Center – The information center, and Niue tourism, have done a fantastic job branding and putting together helpful material for tourists. At the information center you can learn a lot about the island and local wildlife. You can also pick up a map of Niue and a small guide book for free. There is also a chalkboard with events.

Whale Research – We had heard about the Whale Research Project from the Pacific Puddle Jump and offered assistance. We didn't hear much via email from the organizers ahead of time, but it was easy to get a hold of them via the VHF channel 16 in Niue. The time frame for the project varies; in 2016 it was two weeks in August. The Whale Research Project needs volunteer boats to take researchers out and collect information from the whales; photographs, whale song recordings, and DNA samples. In 2016 they had, for the first time, more boat volunteers than needed. We offered assistance as a back up for the duration of our stay and did end up taking one of the educational trips – 7 local high school students onboard!

Internet – Any internet here is pretty slow, but we were still able to manage posting photos and videos. The trick is patience!

Kaniu: The main service for wifi on the boat is Kaniu. Almost every wifi you connect to has a Kaniu login, although the network may be named ccap or Alofi. While there is a portal to pay online for the services, we couldn't get it to work. We went ashore to the office (next to the police station) and paid for wifi. There are two options:

\$25NZ – 5 GB for 15 days

\$50NZ – unlimited data for 30 days

Wifi Café: There is a wifi café on the main road next to Gill's Indian Restaurant.

NYC: Niue Yacht Club has free wifi to those staying on a mooring. There is a sign on the door that yachties can use the porch and outlets even when the office is closed. I was able to load gmail just fine but could not get anything else to load.

Diesel – Brian at Niue Yacht Club helped us arrange diesel. He picked us up at the wharf with our jerry cans (4 x 5 gallons) and took us to the gas station. He made the trip twice for us. It was about \$200NZ for 20 gallons, and they don't accept credit cards. Our debit card got declined for some reason, the gas station let us go on good faith that we would come back with cash.

Cash – Fortunately this has gotten a lot easier since the other cruising reports. On the main road there is a Kiwi Bank, which will take debit or credit and give you cash. They charge a 5% fee.

Car Rental – We rented a car from Niue Rentals for one day, \$60NZ for a small car. We drove completely around the island, stopping to tour about 10 different locations. Despite having all day, we did two of the longer stops (Togo Chasm and Tulava Arches) and thus ran out of time. I would recommend two days for the car, to see all the major activities.

Sightseeing – Blue street signs are prevalent and consistent around the island, marking local business and sights.

Sea Tracks are (usually) footpaths that led from the main road to the sea. At the end of these tracks can be picnic areas, beaches, pools, or other points of interest. The small guidebook available at the Information Center has a list of the most popular sea tracks, and the map includes more. However, neither list is inclusive. Driving around the island you will see that there are probably close to 50 sea tracks. Lots of adventuring to be had. Bring a bathing suit and water appropriate shoes – almost every track has water to either wade or swim in.

Our favorite adventure was the Tulava Arches. It is best at low tide, as you can walk out to the arch and through it. There is a small chasm between the arch and the caves, which at low tide is protected from the swell. It's not big enough to swim in, but is beautiful to view. Tide pools and caves make this place interesting to poke around. Give yourselves at least two hours – it's a long walk out there.

Limu Pools is popular for a swim. The salt water and fresh water met, with the warmer salt water sinking and the colder fresh water creating a top layer. This thermocline is visible in the water, creating a frosted effect.

Anapala Chasm is a freshwater chasm, with 155 steps down to the water. Bring a dive light if you want to swim.

Togo Chasm's highlight is the black pinnacle coral rock formations stretching for miles on either side of the path along the coast. Following the path further, you will find a ladder going down into the chasm with a salt water pool and beach. Climbing over the rocks opposite the ladder will get you into the next chasm, a murky, freshwater pool with vegetation growing in the pool and along the walls of the chasm.

Restaurants – We ate out at two places:

Jenna's – Across from the Niue Yacht Club. Open for dinner Friday and Saturday, and lunch most days of the week, we went for their special Tuesday night buffet. Reservations are required. The food was a good mix of Polynesian cuisine and some more typical fair; papaya stuffed chicken, takihi (layered papaya and taro casserole), lasagna (very good actually), povi matima (salted beef), uga soup, etc. There is also a show – for us it was two young girls (maybe 10 years old) dancing Niuean dances with chanting and drums. Very cute. \$40 NZ per person.

Gill's is an Indian restaurant with a \$5NZ roti lunch special. The roti is small compared to standard in the Caribbean (which is always huge), but I think it's a better portion size and a great deal for \$5NZ.

Groceries – The main grocery store is Swanson, across from Sir Robert Wharf. I was impressed with the selection – many items (or maybe most) come from New Zealand, and there is an excellent selection of frozen meats.

The gas station also has groceries, including four large freezers, again with a good selection of frozen meats. I think the prices are cheaper here, but it's a long walk from the wharf. They also have meat pies in the morning, hot from the oven.

There is a market Tuesday and Friday from 6 am – noon and then Friday night 4 pm to 8 pm. It is a small market next to the information center, with a mix of handcrafts, prepared food, and produce. The produce included tomatoes, cucumbers, some type of leafy green, and fern heads. Prepared food was doughnuts, banana chips, and *Nane Pia*, a warm porridge made with tapioca and coconut milk.

Clearing Out – For clearing out, we went to the Yacht Club, who called the officials. They came to pick us up and take us to the office. There, we handled our paperwork and paid our \$35NZ per person clearance.

4.1.4 Soggy Paws - June 2012

We had reluctantly skipped Niue on our “puddle jump” last year because we stayed so long in Suvarrow that we just ran out of time to do everything. Also, the problem with going to Niue from Suvarrow was the length of the journey. It takes about 5 days, so you burn your weather window enroute, and then you arrive and the next system is on you, bringing bad wx to Niue (sometimes).

But we had a great sail on westerlies in June for the (only) 260 miles from the Ha’apai group of Tonga, and arrived in Niue as planned 48 hours later, with wind SE, but the swell still SSW, unfortunately, and over 3m. Keith, the Commodore of the Niue yacht club, said the dinghy landing/lift area 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”. We ended up using one dinghy between 2 boats, as we were sharing a rental car anyway and coming and going at the same time. It made getting in and out a little easier--with more hands to help unloading stuff and handling the dinghy.

Yolo (below) has done such a good job of documenting Niue, that we’ll just add comments that fill in what they did not say, so be sure to read the Yolo write up below too.

Weather Planning: During the winter months, fronts come through this area every 7-10 days. For most of the fronts/lows, the wind backs from the normal trade wind SE to NE, then NW, W, SW, and S. The open roadstead at Niue is OK with winds from S to E to N, but you won’t really want to be there in westerlies. You will also need to monitor the SWELL portion of the forecast, as sometimes storms down south will send huge swell that will make the dinghy landing impossible, and the anchorage very roly, even if the wind is OK.

Even if you trust your boat to the moorings in westerlies, you will not be able to get off the boat, as the pier area is completely untenable in any significant westerly swell. So, it is best to arrive in Niue just as the wind switches to the south after a westerly (ie a day after a frontal passage). If you DO plan to stay in westerlies, you should make sure you are ready to depart the mooring at a moment’s notice if things get wild. For short frontal passages, it might be best to just heave to on the east side of the island until the wind and swell switches around.

While there, monitor the weather forecasts for the approach of the next front. We used 10 day GRIB files and SPOT forecasts for this and were completely happy with the result--knowing when we’d need to leave Niue to arrive in Tonga before the next front actually hit Tonga. Since it is only a 2 day passage to Tonga, it’s pretty easy to get a good weather forecast for that jump.

To get SWELL in a GRIB file, add ‘HTSGW,WVDIR,’ to the end of a normal GRIB file request. Or use a spot forecast. For Niue, a 10-day spot with swell:

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send spot:19.1S,169.9W|10,3|PRMSL,WIND,WAVES,RAIN
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Internet: The Niue Yacht Club internet is a great free service. However, with all the yachties and backpackers on it in the evening, it was pretty slow. We were getting the ‘alofi’ signal in the harbor, even with just the laptop, and when I put up my external wifi extender (an Alfa with a big antenna), I got 5 bars. So we paid \$25NZ to the computer shop across from the main shopping square/complex (Rocketnet?) for access to the ‘alofi’ signal on board. It was worth it, as I could do my internet early in the morning when few people are using it, and it was much faster than Niue Yacht Club.

However, it turns out that I could also see the ‘ccap’ signal onboard (I think that was the spelling), which I think costs the same \$25 fee. In retrospect, I would sign up for ‘ccap’ instead of ‘alofi’ (if you can

connect to it onboard), as it services the Alofi town area better. When in town, I could NOT connect to 'alofi' using just my laptop wifi, either at the Indian restaurant or at NYC, but I could see and connect to 'ccap'.

Email Issues via Internet: If you use Windows Live Mail or Outlook, or any other POP3/SMTP mail access, OR Sailmail/Winlink via Telnet, Niue will drive you crazy. They seem to have the mail sending (SMTP) ports blocked, and the Telnet ports blocked. Using Outlook, receiving (POP3) worked, but sending (SMTP) did not. In all cases, webmail worked fine, and that was what we ended up using.

More details: This will get technical, so those of you not techies, skip this.

At Niue Yacht Club, none of the **Telnet** ports worked. Winlink wants to use 8772, and Sailmail wants either 50 or 50001. I could get none of these to work at NYC (even though Keith the Commodore was trying to get his techie to fix it).

On the 'alofi' network in the harbor, I could connect with Winlink Telnet but not Sailmail Telnet. And I could send with Outlook via my ISP's alternate SMTP port of 587 vs the standard SMTP port of 25).

Sailmail Station: The Niue Sailmail station is located at the Niue Meteorological weather station on the west side of the airport. It is not run by Niue Yacht Club, as we had assumed it would be. When we visited the weather station we were told that the Sailmail organization shipped a 'station in a box' to them. One guy at the weather station knows how to reboot it, but I doubt much else (we didn't actually get to meet him).

Cell Phones: There are cell phones on the island, and my GSM cell phone registered a strong signal, but neither my Tonga sim nor my ATT sim would allow me to make a call. The Niue communications office is right in the square, and we could have bought a Niue sim card--but we did not bother to ask the price, as we were only staying a week. The Yacht Club was very accommodating in helping us to make calls (but having a working cell would have made it easier to discuss what we wanted to do with the car rental place, dive shop, etc). However, the cell signal seemed to be good only in and around Alofi.

Restaurants: We went to the Washaway Café (only open on Sundays in the SW corner of the island). We had great sandwiches for lunch. We went to the Gill's Indian Restaurant, on the square for dinner twice, and got a 'roti' for lunch once. All their food was excellent. We also ate both lunch and dinner (once each) at the small Jenna's restaurant right across from Backpackers/Niue Yacht Club. The food was good and they have a big buffet one evening a week with live entertainment. And the last night we went to the Falala Fa restaurant, about two blocks south of the NYC. We thought this restaurant had the best food and service. Finally, we had dinner twice at the Crazy Uga just north of the NYC. It had good food and a great view.

Car Rental: Based on Yolo's recommendations, we used Niue Rentals, which were very accommodating. We rented for a week and the cost was \$300NZ for the week. We split with another boat, and each used a Visa credit card (via their Paypal link on the website) to pay for half of the rental. It is a good idea to reserve ahead of your visit, to get the kind of car you want. We didn't get cleared thru Customs until after closing hours (4pm) on Friday on a 3 day weekend, but Ira at Backpackers/Niue Yacht Club called them at home on Friday night and arranged for them to deliver a car to NYC for us, and we didn't even do any payments or paperwork until Tuesday morning!

Cash: Bring NZ dollars if you can. There are still no ATM's as of June 2012. We got a cash advance via Paypal/Visa card via Niue Rentals. It cost us \$35 NZ (for under \$1000), and they use the exchange rate set by Paypal. They gave us a 'Cash' voucher which we then took the bank to get cash.

Later, as we were running short of cash, we took \$300 USD to the bank. The fee was only \$1, but the exchange rate was poor (1.14 NZD to 1 USD vs Paypal's 1.28 to 1). The bank will also do a cash advance via Visa but I think they quoted us a fee of \$50NZ, so we opted for changing USD instead.

Formalities: Though the Niue Yacht Club mooring bulletin ('send niue.moorings' on Saildocs) said that a 24 hour notice of arrival is required at Niue, we were unable to raise Niue Radio on 6215 (several tries) until we were about 12 hours out. There is apparently no email access to send a notice of arrival. But no one seemed to be bothered about it. Also, the VHF repeater access reported on 60 and 61 seemed non-existent. And for boats coming around the northern tip, Niue Radio didn't hear them on Channel 16 until they were quite close to the harbor.

Regardless, as soon as you can raise them, call Niue Radio and tell them you are inbound. When you've actually picked up a mooring, call them again to tell them you have done so, and they will inform you as to Customs arrangements. We happened to arrive on Friday of Queen's Birthday weekend, and did manage to arrange a Customs clearance on Friday afternoon. A few World ARC boats arrived at the same time we did, and that might have helped. The day we left, one boat cleared in on Friday afternoon, and another one on Saturday morning (with a fee).

Usually, clearance in with Customs is done on the pier. For clearing out, we went to Immigration first, and the Immigration people called Customs to arrange a meeting with us for Customs clearance. They met us at the Police Station (next to Immigration) to do our paperwork. We were able to clear out Friday morning for a Sunday departure.

Though the Niue Yacht Club bulletin states that a trash fee was collected, no one ever asked us for it. We paid nothing on arrival, but \$35NZ per passport to Immigration on checkout.

Moorings: In June 2012, Niue Yacht Club had 20 moorings available, all in excellent shape. At that time, they were not keeping track of who was on what mooring (but probably will when things get crowded). For the latest information, get the Niue Moorings Bulletin from Saildocs. (email to request@saildocs.com, with send niue.moorings in the body of the message). Once you have received the bulletin and digested it, Email support@nyc.nu (or the email address given in the moorings bulletin) to let them know you are coming. The standard mooring fee is \$15NZ per day, collected when you leave. The moorings are not all alike, so if you have an unusually large boat size/weight, you should ASK. There is at least one extra large mooring for bigger boats available, I think at a higher fee. Aug-Oct are the 'peak season' months in Niue. Because the harbor is exposed to the west, the mooring field clears out pretty much every time westerlies arrive at Niue.

When attaching to the mooring do not run your line from one side of your boat, through their hard eye and back to the other side of your boat. Your line will be chafed through by the sawing action of your boat's yawing. Instead, it is best to run two attachment lines one from each of your boat.

Showers: Niue Yacht Club maintains 2 locked 'family style' showers at the top of the pier. These are really nice, clean, hot water showers. Arrange with Niue Yacht Club for a key. There's a deposit of \$25 for the key, and then you get \$20 of it back when you turn your key back in. Best \$5 we've ever spent.

Water: There is a water hose on the pier. NYC says all water on the island is potable.

Sightseeing: We rented a car for the week. The Tourist Information building has maps and information about everything happening on the island. The main attraction (besides whales and diving) are "Sea Tracks". These are access roads/hiking paths down to various locations around the island to caves, beaches, and promontories. Ira at NYC/Backpackers told us that "every one is different" and she is correct. Though we enjoyed visiting every one of them over our week, if you only have a day to sightsee, use the 'best sea tracks' list in the tourist bulletin--they were definitely the most dramatic.

We tried to hire a guide for the 'guided only' sea track at Vaikona, and could not--he was busy elsewhere. So we did it on our own. The path is reasonably well marked--watch for little orange/yellow triangles on the trees. But it is over tough terrain, so you definitely need more than flip-flops for this trek. Once at the cave, marked by a small unattached dangerous cave sign at the entrance, you use 2

sets of ropes, total 3 ropes, to go down inside the first cave to the bottom. Then make your way over large boulders to the water at the far end of the bottom of the cave. There is a second cave that you can only access by swimming under the water a short way further on. A guide would be very helpful, if you can find one (ask at the Tourist Bureau). We didn't get into the 2nd cave as we were leery of going the last bit into the bottom of the first cave--worried about getting back out. Take a couple of extra ropes and good shoes if you really want to do this.

Once we came out of the cave, we followed a faint trail further east through the Pandanus forest to the water's edge. Part of the trail was blocked by a fallen Pandanus tree which obscured the trail, but once we worked our way through that tree, the trail was clear to the water. Another dramatic cliff area on the east side of the island...

Most of the Sea Tracks are better at low tide, so check the tide tables (conveniently provided in the tourist brochure, or use WXTide). The western side tracks/caves should be done in the afternoon and the eastern side in the morning (due to sun angle). Matapa Chasm is better as a swimming hole at mid-day, when the sun is overhead. By late afternoon it was shadowed and not as nice. Most of the prominent tracks on the NW corner of the island have bathrooms with showers, but those on the east side do not. Several on the northwest side of the islands lead to large caves including the spectacular Talava Arches area. If you only do one this is the one to do.

We hiked the Vinivini Trail, and had planned to walk and hitchhike back to the car, which we left at the start of the trail on the Alofi-Liku road. Fortunately, we got a ride from another tourist, because it would have been a long walk back. In retrospect, if we did it again, we'd start on road south of Liku, hike in to the corner (where you'll find a huge huge tree), and hike back out. The rest of the trail is NOT 'protected forest', but bush farms, and pretty uninteresting. While nearby, stop at the Sculpture Park--we found that pretty interesting.

Diving: We only had time to dive with Niue Dive--never got a chance to make any dives on our own (too busy hiking sea tracks). We arranged two 2-tank dives with them at a 'cruiser's discount' of \$130NZ per 2-tank dive, using our own equipment and their tanks. It is definitely worth going with them for a couple of dives. They have 2 large RIB boats that take 4 divers each on two tank dives and 6 divers on one tank dives, so they are pretty booked up during 'tourist season'. If you want to dive with them, it would be a good idea to contact them a few days ahead of arrival and try to book something.

niuedive@niue.nu

All the dives we did were very good with 30 meter visibility, big caves and swim throughs but not much live coral due to the cyclone. Their rental equipment and enthusiasm is top notch. www.dive.nu

They prefer to meet you on the dock for the first dive (to do paperwork and especially if you are using their gear). They set all the gear up in the dive boat, before it is lowered into the water. We stopped at their shop south of town before our first dives to do paperwork and ask questions. After that they picked us up at our boat when conditions are good in the harbor.

Their facility is south of town on the SW side of the island, next to the Matavai hotel.

4.1.5 Yolo - September 2011

The following information is provided to help cruisers visiting Niue (NEW-way). This information is based on two U.S.A. citizens on the 42 foot catamaran "YOLO" (You Only Live Once) with no pets.

OVERVIEW: If you sail the South Pacific we strongly suggest you spend a few days at Niue, which is centered between the Cook, Samoa, and Tonga islands. Niue is a small island nation and is very unique in many ways. It is one of the largest uplifted coral islands in the world and offers excellent tunnel, chasm, cave, and arch exploration. The waters are crystal clear and you can watch the fish 30 meters

down. During our stay whale watching was popular, with several large Humpbacks swimming right through the mooring field at dusk. And, large pods of Spinner dolphins frequently visit the west coast. Niueans are very friendly and love to get you involved in conversation and local traditions. Before you know it you will be learning to weave a basket, writing down a new recipe, or balancing a pile of free fruit in your arms.

APPROACH: There are eight Fish Attraction Devices (FADs) in Niue waters. FADs are marked with a large sausage shaped orange buoy. Attached to the buoy are numerous smaller buoys, a large underwater fish cage, and fish platforms. The exact location of the Fads are ever changing since they are anchored to the seabed with extremely long lines. One local fisherman noted that some of the FADs move around a 1.5 mile area because of the wind, waves, and currents. During the day keep your eye out for the FADs. If approaching Niue at night stay greater than 3nm off-shore to avoid the FADs. If you approach the Alofi anchorage at night, steer 90 degrees True and you will avoid the two FADs on the east coast.

ANCHORING: They don't call it "The Rock" for nothing...we would NOT recommend anchoring anywhere near Niue shorelines. While snorkeling at Alofi we observed very few zones with small amounts of sandy bottoms. Most of the ocean beds were scoured rock or broken up coral. Expect the water to be over 20+ meters deep several hundred meters from shore. The Alofi anchorage/mooring field is located at 19 degrees 02 minutes South and 169 degrees 55 minutes West.

Just about every yacht visiting Niue rents a mooring ball from the Niue Yacht Club, which is one-of-a-kind. If you decide to become a permanent member of the yacht club it costs only \$20NZ, which basically covers the cost of making your official membership card. The NYC members who live on the island have no boats, there is no clubhouse since the last cyclone washed it away, there are no docks, and their world wide membership exceeds the number of citizens living on Niue! The volunteers who manage the yacht club (Sue, Keith, Mamata, Jim, Brian and Ira) hang out at Robert's Wharf or the at Niue Backpackers in Alofi. Hail the NYC on VHF Channel 16 for immediate helpful assistance.

The yacht club has about 20 super-strong professionally made moorings at Alofi. Each mooring is attached to one or more 4.5 ton concrete blocks, has a 24mm polyester line with stainless steel thimbles, and a large orange buoy with reflective tape. The moorings were made in 2010 and are inspected at least once per season. The moorings are removed from the water November through early April for cyclone season. Two of the moorings are located just northwest of the wharf and the others are southwest of Robert's Wharf. We, and many other vessels, experience winds in excess of 25 knots from the west while on the NYC moorings. The winds and three meter waves certainly made our boat bounce, yet the moorings held without any problems. FYI, make sure you use two or more bridle lines from your boat to the mooring. During our wild 24 hour ride several anchors on mono-hulls cut through their bridle lines and put their yachts at risk. Moorings rent for \$15NZ per night with your seventh night free. We very seldom stay at a marina or pay for a mooring, yet when visiting Niue renting a mooring is worth every penny.

Give the Niue Yacht Club \$20NZ and you will get a key to the two toilets/large wash basins/hot showers on Robert's Wharf. You will get your money back when you return the key. The yacht club/backpacker office has a large free book exchange, and sells NYC T-shirts, local produce, cold beer, pop, and coffee. Bring your laptop and use their free WI-FI. Most yachties hang out at the office in the later afternoon and solve world problems. For more information on NYC go to www.nyc.nu

There is a large sausage shaped orange mooring buoy northwest of Robert's Wharf. This is owned and rented by the local fisherman's association for \$25NZ per night. This large and super strong mooring is used by large commercial ships, large fishing vessels, and mega yachts.

Every couple of months a large commercial supply ship visits Niue for several days. During it's visit all vessels moored northwest of Robert's Wharf and on the two moorings just southwest of the wharf must

move to the moorings further south of the wharf. Large steel shipping containers are transported from the cargo ship to/from the wharf from 0730 to sunset via an aluminum barge. During this time access to the dinghy dock is restricted. You can only lift your dinghy into or out of the water when the shuttle barge is not using the wharf.

DINGHY DOCK: The large and high concrete wharf (Robert's Wharf) at Alofi is the only place to land a dinghy. During calm seas it is a snap, during strong winds from the west it is scary at best and very dangerous for all parties.

Dinghy docking procedure: All dinghies and local vessels must be hoisted into and out of the water, no exceptions. Approach the wharf on the south side. At the east end near the mainland there is a cutout with a wide set of stairs (which are VERY slippery) going to the top of the wharf. Tie your dinghy to one of the cleats at the base of the steps, tilt your engine out of the water, and attach your dinghy's heavy duty lifting bridle to the large crane hook, get out of the dinghy, untie your dinghy from the cleat, and grab the electric crane control unit which is located at the base of the crane on the top of the wharf. Press the Up button to hoist your dinghy out of the water. Position the large flat aluminum dinghy dolly provided by the Niue Yacht Club under the dinghy and/or swing your dinghy and the crane arm to the point where your dinghy is above the dinghy dolly. Press the Down button to lower your dinghy onto the dinghy dolly. Remove your dinghy lift bridle from the large steel hook. Push or pull the dinghy dolly to an open spot on the wharf and slide your dinghy off the dolly onto the ground. Push the large crane hook off the south side of the wharf and lower it to one meter off the waterline for the next incoming dinghy. If you start and stop the electric crane numerous times within a brief period of time it will overheat and stop working. And, this is really going to piss off numerous cruisers, fishermen, and dive groups.

CLEAR-IN DAY/DATE FOR S/V YOLO: Monday, September 5, 2011

CLEAR-OUT DAY/DATE FOR S/V YOLO: Wednesday, September 14, 2011

REQUEST PERMISSION TO ENTER PORT: Optional, when you approach Niue haul "Niue Radio" on VHF Channel 16. It is very unlikely that you will get a response. If you do, you'll be directed to change to channel 10. We couldn't hear them on that channel, though. It appears that the lady who handles the Niue Radio VHF traffic uses a low power hand-held unit while she travels around the island. Niue Radio may respond during government business hours, and never at night, on Sunday, or during holidays.

Required, when you get to the Alofi anchorage and secure a mooring ball, call Niue Radio on Channel 16 to make clearance arrangements. VHF Channel 10 is Niue Radio's working channel. Good luck.

CLEARANCE AGENT REQUIRED: No

NORMAL GOVERNMENTAL BUSINESS HOURS: With few exceptions government offices are open 0800 to 1600, Monday through Friday, and closed Saturday, Sunday, and holidays. Customs officials will NOT process your clearance paperwork after 10 AM on Fridays. The only plane that visits Niue does so on Friday afternoons, so the Customs officials are at the airport. Then they leave the airport for a long weekend at home. If you arrive on Friday afternoon, Saturday or Sunday, plan on clearing-in Monday morning. If you want to clear-out Friday afternoon, Saturday, or Sunday, make arrangements Friday morning. The Police Station (Immigrations) is closed for lunch from 1200 to 1300.

CLEAR-IN DETAILS: Contact Niue Radio to set up an appointment with the clearance officials. You are responsible for getting to the large concrete wharf in Alofi to meet the officials. Keep in mind that launching a dinghy and hoisting it to the top of the wharf takes extra time, especially if a swell is entering the anchorage or there are strong westerly winds.

Customs (Chamb Pita), Agriculture/Quarantine (Colin Etuata), and Health (Sione Hetutu) representatives will meet you at the wharf and have you fill out the clearance paperwork. Our passports, ship's papers, and exit papers from the last port-of-call were reviewed. Funds were not required to check-in. After

these three government agencies have completed their paperwork they will drive you several blocks to the Police Station where the Chief Of Police acts as the Immigrations Officer. Once cleared-in you are permitted to stay for 30 days or less without any Immigration fee. Our clearance was done in a timely and professional manner.

CLEAR-OUT DETAILS: Walk to the Police Station and meet with the Chief of Police. He will stamp your passports, and place a phone call to the Customs department. Customs will drive and meet you at the wharf, Police Station, or Niue Yacht Club. It is the roll of the dice where you will meet and the Chief of Police will tell you where to wait for Customs. Sometimes Customs completes the exit paperwork at your meeting site, or they may drive you to/from their office near the airport.

DESPACHO, ZARPE, OR EXIT PAPERS FROM PRIOR COUNTRY REQUIRED: Yes

BOAT INSPECTION REQUIRED: Sometimes. If a large swell is entering the Alofi anchorage, there are strong winds from the north, south, or west, or you have a small dinghy it is highly unlikely that the officials from Customs, Agriculture, or Health will visit your vessel. I.e., if the weather is good and they don't have much to do they will spend a few minutes completing arrival paperwork on your yacht.

CURRENCY: You can pay for goods and services with New Zealand dollars only, all other currencies will be rejected. Niue does not have it's own currency. Very few businesses accept VISA or traveler checks. MasterCard is not accepted anywhere on the island. Offering a personal check at the supermarket resulted in a hardy laugh. Cash is king in Niue, with very few exceptions.

You should try to arrive at Niue with a fist full of New Zealand dollars. Once on the island it is almost impossible to get a cash advance on your credit card, debit card, or ATM card. The local (singular) bank will SOMETIMES exchange foreign currencies. When they do, they charge a fee and discount the world exchange rate by about 20%! We observed several yachties stranded on Niue with no New Zealand currency, no way to get it, and no way to pay for goods and services. You must think outside the normal financial box to solve this monetary puzzle. There is no working ATM on the island.

Potential solutions... You might be able to exchange currency with a yachtie who is flush with New Zealand dollars. Sometimes the Niue Yacht Club has been know to give short-term New Zealand dollar loans to cruisers. Stroking the bank personnel and letting their financial world slowly perform a wire transfer sometimes works, given enough time and paying the high related fees.

Our solution... We contacted Niue Rentals (car rentals) and worked out the following deal for securing New Zealand cash. After speaking with Moka the supervisor, we accessed their web site at www.niuerentals.nu and paid \$500NZ for a \$45NZ car rental. A 5% 'tax' was automatically added to the transaction, making the total taken from our account \$525NZ. The payment was immediately made via our on-line PayPal account which created an automatic wire transfer from our checking account in our U.S.A. Bank. Within 10 minutes Niue Rental received the funds in their bank account from PayPal. Several minutes later while in the Niue Rental office we confirmed our car rental for two days later and received \$500NZ in cash from the car rental agency. Niue Rental did not charge us a 'fee' for this service but kept the \$25 'tax'. FYI, PayPal's foreign currency exchange rate profit was another 3%. We found this better than being penniless in Niue, or begging the local banker to make 20%+ profit on their foreign currency exchange.

ATMS: There no working ATM's on Niue. Three ATMs sit in their shipping containers in Niue for activation at a later date, "when a high speed connection is engineered and installed on the island."

EXPENSES (STATED AMOUNTS ARE IN NEW ZEALAND DOLLARS): All of the monetary figures are stated in New Zealand dollars. As of mid-September 2011 the foreign exchange rate for \$1.00 US dollar was \$1.20 New Zealand dollar. The seldom offered exchange rates on Niue were considerably less than this, some as low as \$1 USD for .96NZ.

CLEARING-IN FEES: None, no money is paid up front.

CLEARING OUT FEES: \$34NZ per person must be paid in cash just prior to departure (by airplane or private yacht) to Customs. After you have cleared out with Customs go to the Niue Yacht Club and pay your \$15NZ per night mooring fee. All parties gave us receipts. Don't even think about slipping off your mooring lines in the middle of the night and sailing off without paying the fees noted above. One yachtie did so in the past, Niue put out the word in the South Pacific, the yacht was detained several countries down the line, and the yacht owner was required to pay a \$2,000NZ fine plus his original fees! Justice served...

“ADDITIONAL” CHARGES FOR SATURDAY, SUNDAY, AFTER HOURS, AND HOLIDAY CLEARANCES: Seldom do the officials agree to work outside normal business hours. We were told that if they did there would be “additional charges”; how much we do not know.

CRUISING THE LOCAL WATERS: Don't plan on cruising the local Niue waters. For the most part the shoreline is vertical rock, very few (tiny) beaches exist, and they are protected by rocky coral reefs. The deep waters provide no safe anchoring options.

TOURS: NYC Commodore Keith Vial is a hoot to be with and provides island tours for arriving yachties. Call him at 4633 or on VHF Channel 16 at the Niue Yacht Club to make arrangements. Keith appears to know everything and everyone. His humor is infectious. FYI, Keith is the Niue Station Host for the Seven Seas Cruising Association.

While approaching Niue we were delighted to see two pods of Humpback whales breaching, tail slapping, and fin waving. We also saw the large family of Spinner dolphins off the northwest coast. While traveling in your dinghy near Alofi you will see dozens of sea snakes in the water and maybe some sea turtles. The snakes are harmless to humans, feed on the ocean bottom, and come up for air every once in awhile. We were told by a local that the snakes are very curious creatures and often seek out snorkelers for a closer view.

SECURITY: We felt that security issues were extremely low in Niue, be it day or night. In fact, crime must be outlawed completely on Sunday, since all 13 police officers have the day off! We spoke with one officer and he noted that every once in awhile they write a traffic ticket and their jail hasn't seen a prisoner in years. One of the Niueans referred to the seldom used jail as “the resort...a place to go for an unlocked door, a good bed, and free meals.”

Most homes don't have locks and sport open windows. Car keys are left in their ignitions, dinghies are never locked, and bikes stay put. Our rental car hatch didn't even have a working lock in it! Even expensive tools, computers, and office equipment get left unattended and never wonder off. As one local put it, “With only 1,600 people watching everything all the time, how could a stolen item ever get used or sold?” Ah...the good old days.

LAND TRANSPORTATION: Niue does not have public transportation and you would really have to search for a taxi. We hitch hiked several places with ease. Seldom did more than three cars pass by without someone stopping to give us a lift.

Niue Rentals provides the least expensive car rental on the island. We rented a small four door station wagon for \$45NZ per day (includes insurance and real taxes). You must have a valid drivers license to drive the rental car, and the agency does NOT require a Niue Temporary Driver's License which can be purchased for \$22.50NZ at the Police Station (they make a great souvenir, though!). This car rental deal does not include fuel and our rental car started with only fumes in the tank. We added 10 liters of gasoline to the tank which covered our 110 km of travel. The main coastal road around Niue is mostly paved and is 64 km long. If you start at 0800 and focus on seeing the significant island highlights, you can experience the sites in one long day. Pack a lunch before you start, unless you want to return to

Alofi for a mid-day meal. There is virtually nowhere to purchase food or drink once you leave the west side of the island. Niue Rental is open 0800 to 1600, Monday through Friday. The gas stations are open 0800 to 1900 Monday through Saturday.

While self-touring the island we found the following "Seatracks" the most impressive and easy to access: Anapala, Togo, Tautu, Talava Arches, Matapa Chasm (a great place for a fresh and salt water swim), Limu Pools, Hio, and Palaha. All tourist sites on the island are clearly identified with color coded directional signs. For a detailed list of Niue activities and tourist sites go to www.niueisland.com

Historically, hundred of yachties visited Niue each year. However, the number of visitors have sharply declined in recent years. There has also been a mass exodus of locals from the island, especially after the January 2004 Cyclone Heta brought destructive winds and 30+ meter waves over the rim of the west coast! That is over 100-foot waves! While touring the island you will sadly observe hundreds of recently abandoned homes left by locals seeking a better paradise.

CREW CHANGES: Only one commercial flight lands at Niue each week. The Friday afternoon flight brings in about 170 people from New Zealand, 10% of the passengers are locals. Most flight are full, so purchase your ticket well in advance. A round trip flight to Auckland is about \$850NZ.

PORTABLE WATER: Next to the base of the crane on Robert's Wharf is a fresh water tap. All water on Niue is drinkable spring water.

LAUNDRY: Behind and slightly south of the Swan Sons Supermarket is a home based business that does laundry. The owner charges \$25NZ per load. In each Niue Yacht Club bathroom on Robert's Wharf is a large stainless steel sink for doing hand laundry (hot and cold water available). Hot water is heated by the solar panel on the roof.

INTERNET: Niue has internet service, though it was often slow (after the children get out of school) or down (at night). The Niue Yacht club provided free internet access at their location if you have a wireless computer. RockET Internet charges \$25 for unlimited WI-FI access during your entire Niue stay (24/7). You can access RockETs server at their cafe, nearby, or several yachts with good WI-FI antennas had limited access from their boats on the moorings just south of the wharf. The techs at RockET support the island-wide system and appear to be focused on keeping their business connections up and functional, first and foremost.

FUEL: Fuel is not sold dockside at Niue, instead you must go to one of the two automotive gasoline (petrol) stations. At the top of Robert's Wharf turn right or left on the main road and go about one mile to a gas station. Both stations sell gasoline and diesel. In a pinch, the Niue Yacht Club will provide you with fuel cans and transportation. Ali's hardware store is located across the street from the southern gas station and sells/exchanges propane bottles. We do not know of any Niue source for filling gas containers. During our visit a liter of gasoline was \$2.85NZ, that's over \$10USD per gallon. Duty free fuel does not exist.

TRASH DISPOSAL: While clearing-in one of the officials noted that \$12.50NZ was charged yachts for trash removal. We don't know if all yachts paid the charge, nor do we know who collects the trash removal fee. All yachties drop their bags of trash in the large trash barrows 50 meters up the hill on Robert's Wharf.

ELECTRICITY: 240 volts, 50 Hz. The electrical outlets match those found in the Cook Islands, Tonga, and New Zealand. It's best to bring an adapter with you for US plugs as they may not have any available on the island for sale.

RETAIL BUSINESS HOURS: Most stores are open from 0800 to 1600 Monday through Friday. A few businesses have evening and limited Saturday hours. All businesses are closed on Sunday. Restaurants post their unique hours. Only churches are open on Sunday.

GOODS AND SERVICES: Niue is basically a one village, one street, commercially-challenged nation. With only 1,600 residents, and infrequent visits by supply ships, there isn't enough mass to support many businesses, let alone competition. The tax payers of New Zealand dump huge amounts of money to keep "The Rock" afloat, with over half of the Niuean adults working for the local government. Most Niue merchandise is expensive, surpassing the prices we observed in the Cook Islands and French Polynesia.

Alofi is the epicenter of Niue commerce. Walk up the Robert's Wharf to the top of the hill and you will be at the main road which runs north (left) and south (right). Just about all commercial businesses are within several blocks in both directions. If you turn left you will see the laundry, the primary grocery store (Swan Sons Supermarket) and several blocks further Niue Rentals (the cheapest car rental business). Continue another mile to the north and you will see one of the two Niue gasoline stations.

If you turn right at the top of Robert's Wharf you will observe the public toilets, Customs Bond Store (duty-free liquor), the bank (Bank of the South Pacific), Rocket Internet, the Tourist Information Center (Hayden and his team), the local market/craft center, Police Station (Immigrations), several restaurants, and the Niue Backpackers/Niue Yacht Club facility. Continue another mile south and you will run into the other gasoline station and Ali's Hardware Store. The small plaza that houses the bank has several gift shops, the Telecom office, and several small markets (which sell eggs and bread at reduced prices).

The fresh fruit and vegetable market is open on Tuesday and Friday from 0430 to 0830. Many items are gone by 0800...snooze you lose. The market offers lower prices and greater selection than the local stores. The small groceries often don't carry the fresh produce the locals make available at the market and will tell you to go to the market to get them.

All prices are in New Zealand dollars. A small bottle of Coke was \$3NZ, a loaf of bread was \$4NZ (there are six bakeries on the island), and a can of beer at the Bond Store was \$1.50NZ (at the grocery store it was \$3.50NZ). \$10NZ will buy you a dozen eggs flown in from New Zealand. A bag of salad greens at the yacht club will cost you \$6.50NZ. Gill's will sell you a chicken curry roadie for \$4NZ and the good fish-N-chips meal for two people with four cold beers at Falala Fa Cafe will set you back \$45NZ (hint, get there at 1830 when it opens).

Most things have a 13.3% local tax on them. Almost all merchandise we purchased included the tax in their listed price.

LANGUAGE: Niue is the local language and often spoken at home. English is the official language and is the only language used in all the schools. Everyone we spoke with was fluent in both languages.

LOCAL CRUISER VHF CHANNEL: None. The Niue Yacht Club and most cruisers monitor Channel 16 during daylight hours. If an emergency occurs, hail "Niue Radio" on Channel 16 and cross your fingers for a reply. If Niue Radio doesn't reply, hail the Niue Yacht Club.

DO'S AND DON'TS: No bikinis or speedos in public. Men should wear a shirt in public. Nudity is not tolerated in any public place. Sunday is a day of rest and prayer...no fishing, diving, business activities, or boating.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Stop by the Tourism Office in downtown Alofi. They will load you up with a ton of detailed Niue information. The Niue Yacht Club volunteers also offer local knowledge second to none.

4.1.6 Noonsite Bits - 2009

This actually came from a handout provided to the World ARC group in 2009.

There are no visa requirements for stays of up to 30 days, as long as you have sufficient funds and an onward ticket. A departure tax of NZ\$30 is charged for all travellers, including yachtsmen 12 years and older.

As a deeply Christian country, Sunday is truly a day of rest! Many activities available during the week do not take place on Sundays.

Moorings: Twenty safe moorings for yachts up to 60ft LOA maintained by the Niue Yacht Club. Moorings have pick-up buoy on a line, use own line to mooring and return pick-up buoy. NZ\$10 per night. Anchoring is also possible, but be careful as sharp drop off edge of suitable shelf, which can be difficult. Electric dinghy hoist and dinghy park.

Chandlery: No specific chandlery stores. Try hardware stores listed below.

Customs & Immigration: Immigration is at the police station; there is a customs office. Both situated close to the wharf.

On departure: A NZ \$30 departure tax is payable on departure. Children under 12 exempt.

Electricity: 240 volts, 10 amps, 3 pin plug, same as New Zealand.

Fuel: Fuel, diesel or petrol @ NZ\$2.20 (March 2008) a litre, is available from Central Services. Delivery to the wharf can be arranged for a small additional fee. Yachts must supply their own fuel containers. Bulk refueling is also possible, with the yacht moored along side the wharf for as long as it takes to transfer fuel. Again Central Services can be contacted for this service.

Garbage: Landed ashore on wharf. From 2008 there may be a NZ\$10 charge for removal of garbage from the wharf.

Gas: Propane gas available.

Ice: Central Services, and if re-opened, Niue Fish Processors on the wharf.

Internet: Wi-Fi, available at Yacht Club HQ, free with membership. At present negotiating to establish a wifi node that can be accessed from all moorings. A one off connection fee of NZ\$25 is payable to have unlimited access for the duration of your stay.

Internet Café, NZ\$8 per half hour. Open 0900-1200 & 1300-1500.

Laundry: Commercial Laundry, 200 metres from wharf. NZ\$16 per load wash and dry.

Water: All water on the island is safe to drink Two outlets available on the wharf.

Time Zone UTC-11

International Telephone Code - 00683

Currency & Banking: The local currency is the NZ\$ [March 2009: NZ\$ = €0.40, \$0.53, £0.38]. South Pacific Bank - tellers only, no ATM. Mon-Thu 0900- 1500; Fri 0830-1500.

Language: English is widely spoken

Airports: Hanan International. Airport is 2km southeast of the main town of Alofi . Taxis meet the flights with a fare of around NZ\$8 to most places. Air New Zealand, one flight per week on a Friday.

Bike Rental: Niue is a good place to cycle, with a 68km ring road around the upraised atoll. Mountain bikes for hire for around NZ\$10/day.

Buses: Local people will often stop and offer visitors a ride.

Car Rental: An attractive local Niue Photo Driving Licence is required (NZ\$10).

Alofi Rentals, Tel: 4017, E-mail: alofi rentals@niue.nu

Hea Hea, E-mail: pelenistravel@niue.nu

Niue Rentals, Tel: 4216, Web: www.niuerentals.nu

Taxis: Mitaki Taxis Tel: 4084 Alofi Rentals Tel: 4017

Provisioning: Swansons, the Island's major supermarket is open Mon-Fri 0900-1600 only. Meat, fish and green vegetables available. Double M in the Town Square, imported frozen meats and groceries. Mon-Fri 0830-1700; Sat 1600-1800. One of the few shops open over the weekend.

Local produce Tuesday and Friday at the store.

Smaller shops: Outside these hours some smaller shops are open, but carry less range. These stores are often located in houses within villages – if in doubt just ask around!

Government liquor bond store. Duty free allowance for cruisers on arrival, as well as after Customs clearance.

Hospital / Doctors: New hospital with dental facilities, Xray, ultrasound and lab technicians. Visitors pay a modest fee for doctors visits and medication. Medivac arrangements for serious medical cases to NZ.

Diving: Niue Dive, Tel: 4311, Web: www.dive.nu . Niue's only dive shop. A two dive trip (including top quality equipment) costs NZ\$165. There are many excellent dive highlights. For non-divers you can swim with spinner dolphins or snorkel with humpback whales.

Tourist Office: Niue Tourism Office, Alofi Commercial Centre. Tel: 4224. Web: www.niueisland.com

Yacht Club: Niue Yacht Club. www.niueyachtclub.com HQ at Mamatas Ice Cream Heaven. Meals wines and beers. Register your yacht on arrival; optional 20\$NZ Yacht club membership available. Washroom facilities above wharf; solar heated shower; large tub for clothes washing . Book swap and free Wi-Fi access for members. Club merchandise. A great drop-in centre for a chat, ice cream and advice. Regular club BBQ nights.

Repair Services: Very limited. Minor repairs to diesel engines. Outboard motors serviced. Aluminium welding of spars available. Given sufficient notice specific spares can be flown in from New Zealand, on the weekly flight.

4.1.7 Migration - September 2009

We'd been dreaming of visiting Niue since we first heard about it a few years ago. Friends who continued west last year (while we stayed in French Polynesia) raved about this remote island.

Niue is the world's smallest island nation: only thirteen hundred people (there's that number again) on a raised atoll 14 miles across. Take a big coral reef, thrust it up above the surface 68 meters, and you have Niue.

Niue has no harbors. Protection is offered off the town on the west side of the island — away from the southeast trades.

But if the wind changes, you have to be ready to leave.

A small man-made break in the reef leads to a concrete pier. Once you zoom in, you maneuver under the crane and lift your dinghy onto the pier.

On October 2nd, a few days after we arrived, I celebrated my 50th birthday. In what has become a tradition aboard Migration whenever we have party, we invited everyone in the anchorage — all 11 boats. Of the 34 people on those boats, 32 showed up. A new record! It's great having a trimaran.

Sightseeing Niue

(on their website there are lots of photos that go with the text below)

Staggering a little the next morning, Alene and I joined the five singing crews (thirteen of us!), rented a van, and toured the island. Niue has an amazing landscape: coral thrust up from the sea creates pinnacles, caverns, and caves.

Walk through a rugged and pointy field of coral..... then climb down a ladder into a chasm to find an oasis. Crawl through a cave for an amazing view of wave-driven waterfalls.

A 30-minute hike through jungly forest.....leads to a dangerous cave. It's a long way down but if you make it across.....you find a hidden pool. And if you dive under the end, you discover a complex of partially submerged caves. Remember your waterproof flashlight!

On another day, we rented a car with our friends Ben and Carine of s/v Avel Mad to visit the caves we had missed the first time around. Every cavern is different. Every swimming hole, unique. Amazing. The place is simply amazing.

Diving: EIGHT DIVES IN CAVES WITH SNAKES

There is hardly any standing water on Niue as it all soaks right through the very porous coral that the island is made of. That means there is little silty runoff when it rains. And that means very very clear water. 100-200 foot visibility is the norm. For those of you who aren't divers, 40 foot vis is considered very good in the Channel Islands off the coast California. Seeing 200 feet underwater is extraordinary. Most of the coral around Niue was wiped out by Cyclone Heta in 2004. A few areas were spared but the real reasons to dive Niue are caves and snakes.

You don't need to scuba dive to see sea snakes; they swim right next to the boat while at anchor. But underwater, they're beautiful. They are also very curious and it took a while to get used to them following us.

We dove through a short tunnel and surfaced inside the island. The "Bubble Cave" is awesome. Mist floated on the surface. Our lights illuminated stalactites and stalagmites — some of which had snakes coiled around them (as above).

We did most of our dives with Aussies Ian and Annie who run **Niue Dive**. After they showed us where some of the coolest caves were, we visited them on our own.

Get there early for the Whales: Though the exploring above and below sea level was exceptional, the real reason we came to Niue was to see the whales. Humpback whales come here in the Southern Hemisphere winter to calve. They hang around for months before heading south to the Antarctic. This year, the day they left was two days before we arrived. Though friends who visited in August and September had told us that whales abounded in the anchorage, we had none. We knew we were arriving late in the season... it had been so hard to pull ourselves out of French Polynesia! C'est la vie. We'll have to return next year!

The morning before we left, I found a turtle eating sea grass from the side of Migration's hull.

4.1.8 Ishka - August 2009

There are less than 90 hotel rooms in Niue, so sometimes the number of visiting whales out-number the visiting humans. One of the world's safest destinations Niue is a place where crime is almost unheard of, where anyone can feel totally safe walking around after dark, where personal belongings are respected. The politically stable tight-knit community affords protection to everyone.

'The Rock' is what the locals affectionately call their little island home. A big chunk of limestone it rises out of super deep crystal clear water, and has no outer reefs so coming into pick up the mooring at 5am this morning was a breeze in comparison to our exit from Aitutaki lagoon 4 days ago! There are a dozen or so moorings here, as it's very deep and anchoring is strongly discouraged to preserve this unique ecosystem. There are no beaches and when we came ashore to clear in, a small crane is used to lift the dinghy clear of the water and park it onto the wharf, where Sionni from immigration met us in his van

with his 2 daughters, organized the relevant form filling, then drove us around town to pick up some bread and eggs. A great welcome to Niue and we'll look forward to exploring more in the next few days.

A day or two later...Ian went for a dive with Ann and Ian from Blaze 2 on Sunday and the highlight of it was swimming through lots of caves accompanied by the many black & white, sea snakes, that kept coming closer for a look. Then, while Ida, Paul and Lynn from White Hawk, were up checking out car hire places the next day, they look down onto the moorings far beneath and watch 2 whales playing around Ishka's stern.

Another onlooker shouts "wow, there's someone snorkeling with them" and we realize it's Ian! Ida was feeling peeved she'd missed this experience, but when she got back to Ishka they were still swimming nearby, so the bikini was donned and she got to swim with the 2 male humpbacks also. This has to have been one of the most special swims we've ever had, and with the clarity of the water so superb our photos came out fantastic too.

Tuesday we drove around most of the Island [only about 60 kms], stopping at caves, chasms and clear swimming pools which have a layer of icy, fresh water on top of the warmer salt water which is where all fish culminate. Its amazing seeing and feeling the differences of the 2 layers of water, and watching such inquisitive sea life. In Aitutaki Ida had bought some Noni Juice, hearing it has great health benefits as an anti-oxidant, so when we see that there is a Noni farm we can explore at the bottom of the island we head down that way. Noni fruit grows mainly in the South Pacific Islands, and is fleshy and gel like when ripened resembling a small breadfruit, then the juice is extracted when it's almost ripe. The main active ingredient in Noni is proxeronine, and this is where the benefits for the body come with assisting in cellular repair, but it is an 'acquired taste', so the daily tonic needs a hard stomach and a scentless nose! It does seem to be making us feel better so if any of you see it, give it a try, but not as a mixer!

A custom we've seen since the Cook Islands, but it's particularly predominant here in Niue, is to bury their dearly departed in their front yards, they even build little houses over the tombstones. We thought the subject a little too sensitive to enquire further, however we do feel it would make moving house a tad difficult.

A whole group of the yachties met up at the yacht club yesterday evening for a pot luck as lots of them had caught too many fish en route.

4.1.9 Mr John VI - September 2008

After a night of recovering from our passage from Beveridge Reef, the weather was still overcast and raining and didn't look like clearing for sometime, so we set about enjoying Niue as best we could. The town of Alofi is just up the hill from the dock where we landed in the dinghy, there are a couple of small supermarkets, a little hardware and some mechanical parts available at the Petrol Station. It didn't take long for us to check out all the stores and find out what good deals were available; the first of which was the 'Fish & Chips' at the café in the small shopping precinct, this we tested out for lunch and found them to be the best we'd had all trip and the best value for money of 'anything' since leaving Mexico!

Day two, we went to investigate a hire car having already picked up all the information we could from the Tourist Office on the first day and digested it over breakfast; there was quite a lot to see and it really required transport as the island was over sixty-five kilometres in circumference. The hire car was surprisingly cheap at NZ\$45 / day, there is no insurance on the island, so that is not an issue and the lack of hills helps with the fuel economy; we ended up with a nice little Toyota with only 65K on the clock but a little plagued with small ants.

We moved off in a clockwise tour of the coast, doing the tourist sights that were well marked on our

map and well explained in the accompanying information sheets. Our first call was at the Avaiki Cave and we were immediately impressed, it was well signposted, they had gone to quite a lot of trouble installing steps and handrails; this was the same in all the tourist spots we visited. We moved on from one impressive cave to another and from pools to chasms, the latter being neat little swimming spots cut away into the coast, where the coral had been worn away; there were lots of picnic tables and places to stop along the way.

After a good nights sleep on our quite peaceful mooring (except maybe for the occasional gentle roll which certainly didn't disturb us) we resumed our expedition round the island; unfortunately there were several attractions that would require a few hours of walking to get to, these we had to leave in favour of those that were more immediately accessible; I guess if we'd had the car for longer and more time available, there was much more to see; however we were watching the weather and time was limited so we had to make a few sacrifices. We did however manage to do some 'across country' stuff for which a 4x4 would have been more appropriate; however our little Toyota managed to plough through the undergrowth and take us deep into the heavily wooded Huvalu Forest. I'm sure there was at times little visible of the car as we ploughed through the tall grass and bush! Normally I would not have ventured so deep into such an interior in so small a vehicle, however when we were at the Police Station the constable there said that it was normal for hire cars to go 'off road' and he had found them in all sorts of unexpected locations; we obviously had a reputation to live up to and a reputation to live up to! The hire car went back that afternoon and we concerned ourselves with the weather and other matters requiring time on the internet for the rest of the day. It seemed that a trough was headed our way and could produce fresh westerly winds within the next forty-eight hours; we were concerned that these moorings were fully exposed to the west and that there may be a cause to leave at short notice should our situation become untenable. If we were to hang on till that time we would also be faced with beating towards our next destination at least until the frontal conditions subsided; at which time we would be left with very little wind at all! We decided that we should make haste and leave the next day, we would then at least have one day of favourable winds to carry us towards Tonga before encountering any adverse conditions; thus we got a third restful night on the mooring.

We did our last bit of shopping and 'cleared out' of Niue on the morning of the 26th September. Our visit had been short but we had enjoyed it, I'm sure we would have remained a few days longer had the weather not been a factor but we were still in the SPCZ, still playing 'musical chairs' with the available anchorages, and we had to go.

5 American Samoa

5.1 Pago Pago

5.1.1 Tartaruga – July 2024 – Update on Shipping Stuff In

I want to offer some insight to the shipping section, in particular USPS. We came to American Samoa to get some products shipped in that would be difficult to bring on a return flight from the US. Our experience with shipping via USPS came in two ways, first via Amazon and second directly through the Post Office itself – both Priority Mail of course.

We found that vendors or people who could ship packages Priority Mail via the Post Office itself or vendor (Stamps.com for example) had very good delivery times. On both occasions we took this route we had our packages in about one week.

Amazon is another story. Per Amazon's website they ship Priority Mail exclusively. So we changed our Amazon default address to the "general delivery" and therefore if the website said they could ship it to American Samoa, then we should be good to go – Wrong!. What we have learned is that all packages coming to American Samoa are Priority Mail International. As a result, the contents of the package is very important or perhaps scrutinized more. If during the package scanning, at the USPS facility, they cannot determine what is exactly in the package, then the package is put into ground vs air delivery. Ground means your package is going onto a container ship and not flown on the cargo plane. The challenging part is you cannot see this happen in normal tracking—but the details they can see at the local Post Office can see this. So for us, we have now been waiting on packages in American Samoa for 1.5 months. Containers deliveries are not trackable and the local people say it takes about two months post COVID.

So the Summary is, American Samoa is indeed a good place to have goods shipped in. I recommend ordering directly from a vendor or having packages first sent to a main land US address and then have your friend take it directly to the Post Office and ship it Priority Mail. This way someone can identify what is in the package at the desk, all works well. If you are ordering from Amazon, try to avoid electronics that may or may not have lithium batteries, our order was Victron charge controllers. This seems to trigger the container process. If you are coming here to get packages, get comfortable. The Samoan people are wonderful. You might be here a while.

5.1.2 Mandolyn - July 2023

We arrived at American Samoa from Suwarrow at about 1am after a sail of just under 4 days. Normally we don't enter a harbour at night, but friends who had gone before said it was well lit and, with the near-full moon shining, we felt it was doable.

Entry & Clearance: We radioed port control on VHF 16 at the harbour mouth and were given permission to enter and anchor and were told they would call us in the morning. Navigating in was easy with good visibility from the moon and lights on shore. Sure enough, at 8:30 the next morning, port control called and directed us to the commercial dock. We were met there by officials from the port, customs, immigration, health, and biosecurity (13 people total!). There was plenty of paperwork to fill out, but everyone was cheerful and friendly and we were done within an hour. Our passports were taken to immigration, but we retrieved them later that afternoon. There were no charges for check-in.

Checking out: Checking out required a visit first to the port authority to pay our port fees, followed by a visit to customs for our zarpe, and finally a return visit to the immigration office to have our passports stamped. Total cost was \$152 USD for a 10 day stay (\$52USD for port fees, \$100USD for customs). We checked out on a Friday for a Monday departure.

Marina: There is a very small, somewhat decrepit, marina. Some sailboats tied up to the outside of the main wharf, but we anchored, so don't have any information on that option. Dinghies can be tied up in the marina near the ramp, or in an unused slip (check with locals for which ones are unused).

Fuel: Diesel and gas are available at the fuel dock in the small marina.

Buses: Buses in American Samoa are great fun to ride. Each bus is owned and run by an independent operator, so there're no set schedules or routes, but they know where people want to go and there are lots of them. Look for a sign in the front window giving the destination. They cost \$1-2USD depending on how far you're going. They become much scarcer after about 5pm. No buses on Sundays.

Anchoring: The harbour has a well deserved reputation for poor holding. The bottom is uneven and almost everyone we were there with took several tries to get their anchors set. On one attempt our

anchor came up with several garbage bags wrapped on it. With patience you can get a good set. There are a few mooring buoys, but they're occupied by long-term boats

Laundry: There are plenty of laundromats around, but the closest is at the head of the harbour. It's a large, clean, self-serve facility and charged \$1.75 per wash and \$2 per dry.

Provisioning: This is easy to do in American Samoa. In addition to Cost-U-Less (a Costco analogue), there are numerous well stocked grocery stores. It's also easy to have things shipped here via USPS (we had a small package delivered from Amazon).

Cooking gas: There's an Origin Energy facility that will fill your tanks with butane while you wait.

All in all, we found American Samoa to be a fantastic stop. It was easy to provision and easy to get around, but best of all were the people. They were amazingly friendly, going out of their way to make us feel welcome and to help us if we looked even slightly perplexed.

5.1.3 Quasar - July 2019

We entered Pago Pago bay to shelter from some bad weather on our way from Suvarrow to Tonga, but found it to be a very difficult anchorage.

The mountains concentrate the wind from SE to E, so 25-35 in the ocean turns into 35-45 knot gusts in the bay. On one night we had sustained 50 knots for more than 20 minutes, which kicked up 2m chop.

In July of 2019 there are no moorings available for visiting yachts.

The holding is very poor - we are in a catamaran and we couldn't stay stuck in the 40 knot gusts coming down the harbor. We tied up at the wharf but found the waves to be dangerous, especially at high water.

In a calm spell we were able to tie up using 8 lines to some trees behind the fishing marina/gas dock and spent 5 days there waiting for the weather to calm.

There is a \$152 US charge to clear out. The Harbormaster charges \$52, and customs charges \$100. This charge was applied even though we are a US flagged boat and I am a US citizen. My wife is Canadian and she was charged \$20 at immigration.

Ultimately American Samoa is a pretty expensive cruising destination, despite the cheap groceries.

The pizza at Paradise Pizza was good.

5.1.4 ?? - August 2016

Taken from a letter to the editor of the Apia newspaper. As background, we arrived in Pago Pago American Samoa a month ago knowing that the harbour has a bad reputation for poor holding, dirty water, smelly fumes from tuna cannery and we only planned to spend a few days there while we collected our mail.

Despite the many drawbacks of Pago Pago harbour, the people of American Samoa were a delight to be with. They were helpful, friendly, courteous and we ended up staying for three weeks. During our stay the American Samoan people constantly warned us about visiting Samoa as there had been high crime, a recent brutal rape of an Australian tourist, and theft there. As well seasoned travellers we had heard all these tales about neighbours before and so were not unduly concerned and were looking forward to spending at least a month in Samoa to see the sights of Upolu and Savai'i.

5.1.5 Unknown Boat – August 2013

Sorry, I have lost track of who emailed me this update...

We arrived in Pago Pago August 14th, 2013. We sailed from Bora Bora in great weather conditions in 7 days to Pago Pago.

We counted 18 boats at anchor when we arrived. There were several boats that were here for awhile already (long term). Since we heard about the bad holding in the bay we were trying to find a mooring. We tried several available moorings and were discouraged by one of the long term boats in the harbor. They told us the moorings were no good and we would drag.

Eventually we decided on one mooring and pulled hard on it. We were hanging safe and sound on a good mooring. We found out later that the boat that was discouraging us from using the mooring, tried to keep the mooring available for a friend that was supposed to come in the future. There was no charge for the moorings.

WiFi – McDonald still has free Wifi and a great dinghy dock to use for free. Sometimes MCD looked like the unofficial yacht club of Pago Pago. If you want to speak to a cruiser you can find him here.

We had Wifi on board. For \$ 45/month you can sign up with the Video store at the end of the bay. You will receive a password.

A boat anchored closer to the gas station received a free Wifi signal on board from somewhere in town.

Hospital – Pago Pago is a good place to get a medical check up. The hospital was set up by the US government and has good doctors. You go to the main entrance with your ID and get a hospital card (free). With the card, you are able to make appointments with the doctor. I used the dentist and paid \$ 20/visit.

Conditions in the Harbor: Sometimes the smell from the only fish canning company left in Pago Pago was pretty bad. The water in the bay was dirty and you do not want to fall in the water.

If you want to see where the smell comes from you can ask for a tour of the fish factory. We did – and actually it was very interesting.

The people here in American Samoa are very friendly and helpful. There is always a smile on their face.

Despite the smell and bad holding we enjoyed our stay here. It certainly is worth a visit. The provisioning is great! Wish we had done more of it....

5.1.6 Zephyr - Updates - November 2012

Diesel Engine Oil: For those coming to American Samoa, I found a supplier for oil for diesel engines. This way they won't make the same mistake I did. I bought oil at Napa (2 cases-6 gallons for \$134.00) before I found **Chevron Lubricants**. They sell the Delo 15-40 oil in sturdy 5 gallon buckets for just under \$90.00.

Since the streets here have no names on them, here is how to get there other than just telling one of the bus drivers:

Take a "Tafuna" bus. Go out past the Carl's Jr. restaurant and after the bus makes a left turn, watch for the big blue Napa building. Two blocks past it (don't go past the Pizza Hut) turn in at the Sen. Daniel Inouye Industrial Park. Continue past the "Tool Box" (nice store with lots of things other than what you might find at Ace or True Value). Several hundred yards later, you will see the office on the right.

As a side bar, on the left is a **Car Quest** if you need anything else. I found an electrical clip I needed for one of my alternators there (Car Quest).

Amazing what you can find if you hit the side roads.

No More Free Wifi at McDonald's: As of this morning, the McDonalds near the dock has capped off all the available electrical outlets in the restaurant. They have already discontinued the free wifi they used

to have and have now stopped providing electrical so we can keep our computers charged. It's still a wifi hot spot for BlueSky but you have to pay for the service (@\$50.00 for a month of unlimited usage as long as you can find one of their hot spots). I asked for a list of them and was told they don't have a list. I checked their website and it has a spot for pulling it up but it's blank.

TMO Stores: Found a new complex of 3 stores that should be of interest to cruisers coming to American Samoa. It's called TMO. Now TMO stands for a bunch of American Samoan words too long to put here. "TMO" is just fine and the drivers know where it is. The stores are in a complex comprising three stores but the first, "window installation, parts, and repair" isn't of much interest to cruisers. The second store is a hardware store with lots of **tools as well as brass fittings and stainless steel screws**, etc. They even have Dremels that work on a rechargeable battery and 12 volt clip on fans that will plug into cigarette lighters plugs. Very helpful people that know their store.

The third store is a beverage store with a **good selection of wines and hard liquor at very good prices**. Open from 0800 to 1600, it's a good place to stop.

Take the Tafuna bus and tell the driver where you want to go. If you want to walk, turn right at the road just before the Napa store out near Tafuna. You'll know you're on the right road if you pass the DHL store. Continue out the road about a mile and you'll see a tall memorial on the left with what looks like two caskets on top of the memorial. Turn left there and the stores are ahead of you on the left just past the memorial. Worth the trip especially if you need special screws or brass fittings or booze.

MeWon: Another store to look at is called MeWon. It's out the Leone bus route on the right side of the road. Again, tell the driver where you want to go. They have a smattering of everything, but the most important for us was stacks and stacks of the oil absorber pads. A stack of 100 is just \$37.95. Now they may not be as fluffy as what you can find back in civilization but for that price, I just use two. Go together with another boat and spread them around. We did. They also carry fishing supplies and electrical switches and tons of WD40. It's a hodge podge of boating parts and equipment.

5.1.7 Reflections - Formalities for Foreign Yachts - October 2011

We met quite a few foreign boats that planned on skipping American Samoa because they thought you needed a pre-approved visa to come here like you do in the United States. I spoke directly with both Customs and Immigration. This is not true. American Samoa has their own immigration laws, independent of the United States, and all foreign yachts are welcome here. A 30-day visa is granted for visiting yachts.

Soggy Paws then researched this issue, and found the following on the American Samoa Government website at www.americansamoa.travel/about :

Entry Requirements

All visitors to American Samoa require a valid passport, return ticket or onward ticket and sufficient funds to support your stay. US Citizens and US Nationals do not require a visa and may enter and leave freely. Australian, New Zealand and citizens of the United Kingdom upon entering American Samoa are issued with a 30 day permit under the US Visa Waiver Program. All other international passport holders intending to visit American Samoa for business or holiday are required to apply for an entry visa. For further information contact the Attorney General's Office, phone (1 684) 633-4163, email riamanu.passport@americansamoa.gov

Reflections then emailed the above address in an attempt to clear up the discrepancy between what he was told by officials and the above website. Here is his final response to Soggy Paws on the issue:

"Unfortunately, that email I sent to the officials in Samoa bounced back as undeliverable.

But I did print out that section you found on the web about Visas for American Samoa and took it with me when I checked out of Pago Pago.

I spoke to the head man in charge of Immigration and he told me that the statement on the website does not apply to yachts.

He said yachts are very much welcome from all countries and that no yachts would ever be turned away from entering. He said that is only for people arriving by plane. He explained that they know people on yachts will be leaving Samoa since they live on their boats. He said he would try and get the website updated, but I wouldn't count on that!"

Provisioning: I think provisioning was nearly as good in French Polynesia! I know we sure obtained better veggies in FP. And I sure wish I stocked up on more wine and Tequila in French Polynesia, duty free, where it was cheap!!

Jose Cuervo is \$20+ a bottle here. (Capt Morgan Rum is ~\$18 for a liter) Makes that stuff I bought duty free in Tahiti for \$6 look mighty cheap!

5.1.8 Soggy Paws - September 2011

Some anchoring advice from the group of boats that survived the 30kt blow there in late August.

General anchor spot is near 14-16.4S / 170-41.4W. The holding is terrible here and the bottom is very foul. In the 30kt (for 2 days) southeasterly, almost every boat dragged. However, the bottom seemed 'better toward the front of the pack'. If significant wind is forecast, it is recommended that you dive your anchor (by feel--a buoy on the anchor would help), and stay with your boat.

Cruisers standby on VHF 68 and generally chat on 69. The Port Captain would like you stay OFF 6, 12, and 16 for cruiser chit-chat.

Stainless Welding: s/v Windrider said that there is a Harley motorcycle shop near the airport that can do stainless welding. Take the Tafuna bus, get off at the McDonalds near the airport, and walk up the street to the Harley place.

Refrigeration, Fishing, & Marine Items & Tools - Mee Won: Take the Leone bus, it's just after the road splits, and before Ace Hardware. The Tafuna bus would work too, get off where the road turns toward the airport, and walk a quarter mile up the road towards Leone. On the right, going out. Ph: 699-8625. Navigation lights, safety equipment, VHF radios, refrig compressors, fittings, & gases, etc.

Diving: Pago Pago Divers has a small website at <http://www.pagopagodivers.com/>, but this says:

We are not offering recreational dive charters at this time, but are still available for marine projects.

We are a small operation that takes great pride in maximizing our few dive tourists or temporary worker's local diving experience. We offer both boat and shore dives for any size group. No more than six divers will ever be in one group and generally it is only one to three divers plus the Divemaster.

If you have all your equipment and are just looking for diving advice, or a tank fill, you might check them out.

Car Rental: We checked out Dollar Rental next to Sadies by the Sea, they wanted \$80/day, plus insurance for a Toyota Yaris. But we eventually went with Avis. They rented us a 4WD small SUV for \$135 for a day, including insurance and unlimited mileage, and we negotiated an extra few hours for the next morning to go shopping. So we spent one whole day (2 couples), sightseeing, with stops at Ace, a Grocery store, and another hardware store.

Diesel Fuel - We got 2 boats together to purchase enough diesel fuel at the dock. We went to the Admin office for the fuel dock, and paid in advance, and scheduled a visit to the dock for high tide (this is

important because the dock is so high). We got bumped by a day because a big fishing boat wanted to fuel up, and they take lots more fuel than we do. By the time he was done the tide was down and still going out.

The price of diesel at the dock was \$3.62 per gallon. It's a real nice setup there, with lots of filtering and really clean fuel. The phone number of the dock is 633-5580 (I think this is the dock and not the office). The dock is on VHF 67. It's a good idea to go check out the situation and talk to the guy at the dock before you bring your boat in.

Provisioning: The two main provisioning places are Cost U Less and "K.S. Mart". Cost U Less is a small version of Costco/Sams. Just a little further up the street from Cost U Less is a large well-stocked grocery store called KS Mart. When we went shopping, we first surveyed both stores, and bought a few things. We negotiated with the owner of KS Mart for 3 boats who planned to buy a LOT of stuff, to get a free ride back to the docks in the back of her son's truck..

The next day, we took the bus to Cost U Less, got out there, shopped at Cost U Less, left our stuff staged in carts at Cost U Less under the watchful eye of the door guard, and went up to KS Mart to shop. We each bought at least one full cart full of groceries at KS Mart. We loaded our stuff in the back of the truck, stopped at Cost U Less to get the rest, and got a free ride down to the docks. I think it's also possible to negotiate the ride back with Cost U Less, but we really wanted to go shopping at KS Mart too.

5.1.9 Periclees - August 2011

Anchoring: We would have liked to take a better look at American Samoa but it was not to be. We arrived in the late afternoon, anchored and went to bed. At 2 AM the anchor alarm went off. The wind was gusting to thirty knots in the anchorage. We were dragging down upon another boat so we had to reset out anchor. When I lifted it I found a part of a baby pool lodged in the plow. I attached our danforth anchor in series from our CQR. We set the anchor well and went back to bed at 3 AM. In the morning we found ourselves too close to the boat behind us so lifted our anchor again. We weren't dragging but felt we were too close. This time we dragged up several mooring lines, bed sheets, towels, some kind of metal, and other assorted junk.

We were directed to a suspicious looking mooring ball which we did take but unfortunately there was a two hundred ton rusting ship moored beside it which swung around with the wind making the mooring ball a questionable solution. We had a quick tour of the island and left on the evening tide.

The harbor is so fouled as a result of the tsunami which swept through after the earthquake at 7 am on September 29, 2009. There had been no warning at all and about 50 people died on Am Samoa and about 100 more on Western Samoa and Tonga. They have rebuilt very quickly and we saw very little evidence of the devastation of that time.

The Island: The people are amazingly large being fed on all that American corn food. The rural busses are independently owned and without exception they have a sound system to die for...if you were fourteen. The volume on the busses was deafening. I swear I could see the bolts holding the bus together unscrewing to the beat of the supper woofer. I had a lot of trouble hearing anything after that experience. The shopping was good. There is no Walmart or Costco on the island but there is a Cost U Less with comparable products and prices. We managed to drop two hundred dollars. Apparently a large part of the island is in a national park and we were told there were many hikes and beautiful vistas. But we left on the evening tide.

5.1.10 Active Transport – August 2010 – American Samoa, A Pleasant Surprise

General Comments:

Toward the middle of our passages through the South Pacific islands this year we started having wires break in the standing rigging on our 6 year old Tayana 37. We replaced a couple of lower shrouds but when breaks started showing up in a cap shroud and three days later in the back stay We decided that a change of plans was appropriate.

We had planned to replace the standing rigging in New Zealand, just because of its age, and thought we were being very conservative in doing this. But, when the wires started breaking in rapid succession, we decided to go ahead and replace the rigging before the crossing to New Zealand.

The obvious candidate location for this job was American Samoa which has a bad reputation among the cruising community but has good access to vendors in the US. In our case we felt we did not have much choice so we came here and started ordering the replacement rigging and other boat gear.

We had real reservations about coming here based on the rumors we had heard. Fortunately we have a friend in Fiji (Michael ,the Fiji Cruising station coordinator) who had lived in American Samoa for several years and set us straight on the erroneous impression many cruisers have about American Samoa.

The big surprise, for us, was what a nice place this is. Its bad reputation is not deserved in our experience. We think this reputation goes back to a few years ago when there were three fish canning factories operating in the harbor and dumping waste directly into the water. There is only one Starkist plant operating here now and, aside from occasional brief periods of strange odors, when they vent their pressure canning equipment, the harbor is pleasant and safe.

The Samoan people are very friendly and helpful. Even the high school kids will intervene if they think you are getting on the wrong bus.

The island is very beautiful, especially if you get outside the environment of the industrial port area. There is still a lot of evidence of Tsunami damage, such as concrete slabs where there used to be homes, but the people here seem to be rolling with it and rebuilding their lives.

This is not a tourist destination so the people here are much more welcoming to visitors than we experienced in French Polynesia where we occasionally felt we were more like revenue opportunities than guests. It's different here.

The missionaries were very effective here. There is enough church capacity to seat the entire island population several times over. In some of the smaller villages the church has more square feet of space than all of the homes in the village. Like many places in the south Pacific the churches tend to be the largest and most well maintained buildings.

You can not get anything done on Sunday. The buses don't run, the restaurants are closed, and the streets are empty. The few convenience stores that are open won't sell beer on Sunday.

One disconcerting thing about the culture here is their public littering habits. The Samoans throw trash everywhere. A local explained the mentality to us. If you live for centuries where all of your eating utensils and containers are provided by nature, and therefore biodegradable, there is no problem with you throwing your used banana leaf plate or coconut shell drinking glass on the ground when you are finished with it. The problem starts when modern civilization provides Styrofoam and other durable materials for these purposes. It's obviously a public education issue. The Samoans keep their buses, homes and businesses orderly and clean. It probably won't take long for them to fix the litter problem if they make an effort to sensitize people to the problem.

The local beer is called Vallima. There are two types. One is sold in smaller bottles is not very good, in John's opinion. The other is called "special export" and is sold in larger bottles. It is much better. The only beer available here that is sold in cans is Coor's Light.

Credit Cards: One cruiser's bank told them that American Samoa is one of the hot beds of credit card fraud in the world. Our bank cut off one of our cards twice while we were here when transactions took place in American Samoa and in the States on the same day. In both cases a phone call fixed the problem. The Cost-U-Less store is so used to the problem that they let you use their phone to call your bank. Since then we have tried to use different cards here and with vendors in the states and have not had any more problems.

Cell Phones: Cell phone service is reasonable. Calls to the states are 17 cents a minute. You can get a sim card or cheap phone (\$40) at the Blue Sky office out on the Tafuna or Leone bus lines.

Lava Lava's: An interesting tradition here is that the men wear skirts called lava lavas. You see them everywhere and even the school uniforms are lava lavas in the school colors. You see businessmen in the post office in pin stripe lava lavas with belt loops. For some reason they just have the loops, not the belts.

Something that is good for cheap entertainment is watching male cruisers who decided to give the lava lava a try. Getting in and out you dinghy on a rickety dock is hard enough but watching guys trying to do it in skirts can be pretty funny.

5.1.11 Active Transport – August 2010 – Arrival & Departure

Arrival & Approach: American Samoa is the eastern and smaller part of the island chain that makes up Samoa.

Fishing is a major industry here but not all the fish that pass through American Samoa are processed here. There are usually at least two big "mother ships" in the harbor accepting the catch of many smaller vessels. They take the fish to Asia, where the labor rates are lower, to process and can it.

There are also several unlighted steel "rafts" anchored off shore around the islands that pose a hazard to yachts. We know of one at 14 18.770 S, 170 24.330 W. These rafts are offshore moorings for the mother ships.

There are said to be several other rafts like this scattered around the island. Also, please don't take the coordinates we provided as necessarily true in the future. We don't know anything about how well they are anchored to the bottom. The coordinates given here do not agree with those on our charts for this particular raft. The difference is close to half a mile.

We found our electronic charts to be accurate in this part of the world.

We would suggest transiting the 50 miles around the entrance to Pago Pago harbor in daylight if possible.

Visiting the islands east of Pago Pago harbor is not allowed until you have checked in. You are expected to go directly to Pago Pago and then request permission to visit the other islands. We know of cruisers who ignored this requirement and don't know of any sanctions against them but we always try to play by the rules so we came straight to Pago Pago.

Pago Pago harbor is said to be the safest natural harbor in the South Pacific. It is certainly the best we have seen. It is long and reasonably narrow and surrounded by hills, many of which are around 1000 feet high.

The harbor has a wide safe entrance on the south side of the island. We do not normally advise entering strange harbors at night but this one would be easy. It's well marked and well lighted on shore.

Pago Pago port control does not always answer calls, especially from yachts. The same people work as port control officers and pilots for the larger ships that come in here so the port captain's office is frequently unstaffed. You should call Pago Pago port control on VHF 16 when you are close, but don't be surprised if you don't get a response. On one occasion a yacht was directed to tie up to the dock on the left side of the harbor where the smaller fishing boats tie up, but when the skipper asked if he could just proceed to the anchorage area the port control officer was fine with that idea.

The operative style here seems to be laid back and we get the feeling that if you don't make their jobs more difficult, the folks who work port control, customs, and immigration are willing to work with you.

Anchorage: The anchorage area, that is available for yachts, is in the western end of the harbor. At this point there are three moorings available and the port captain says they are available on a first come first served basis.

Anchoring here is the biggest negative we have found. The holding is bad and the bottom littered with debris from the Tsunami that struck a couple of years ago. Cruisers have pulled up trees and lawn furniture on their anchors. Many of us have had to dive on our anchors to get them free.

We have no idea about the condition of the moorings but we don't get the impression that there is any active maintenance program.

Depths in the anchorage vary from 25 feet to 55 feet. There seems to be a shallow (20') bump in the bottom just west of the dinghy dock area.

Dockage: There is a 100 foot long part of 1 pier near the dinghy dock where you can tie along side. We spent a few days there so we could lower our roller furlers to the ground and work on them during our re-rigging project. Ask the port captain for permission to move to this dock if you wish to. Have plenty of fenders (we borrowed extras) and be prepared to do some fender cleaning when you leave the dock. The dock itself has lots of tires on it but they are not at the right height for yachts at many stages of the tide.

One nice thing about tying up to this dock for a couple of days is that it is really easy to load provisions as the Cost-U-Less delivery truck can drive right up next to your boat.

Dinghy Dock: The harbor has a serviceable dinghy dock but it has also suffered Tsunami damage and all the fingers are not that stable. We feel like we are participating in a lumberjack log rolling contest when walking on the dinghy dock. But the dinghy dock is protected from the chop and provides easy access to the local stores and the bus system.

The gate to the dinghy dock gets locked at night. The time they do this seems to vary. If you are going out to dinner you would be well advised to find some other way to get ashore and back to your boat. Some of the cruisers here tie their dinks to trees along the southern side of the anchorage area, rather than use the dinghy dock.

Checking In/Checking Out:

You need to visit a total of 5 offices to complete formalities here. They don't seem to care what order you do it in. The harbor master's office is frequently not staffed (if the harbor master is out piloting a ship in) so you may have to go back to his office several times before you catch hi'm in. Its a three story trek up the stairs each time you find out he is not there.

From the dinghy dock you turn left and walk about ½ mile past the post office, central bus station to the ship dock yard.

The entrance is on the left and marked by a guard house with flags over it. You will be required to provide your passport for identification before you will be allowed to enter the dock yard and proceed

to the harbor masters office. The harbor master is located on the water side of the big building on the left. His office is on the third story and accessed via stairs on the outside of the building.

You also need to visit Customs, public health and the harbor office that will handle your payments when you leave. They are all located on the street side of the same building. Three of them on on the ground floor and will point you to the other office including one on the third floor.

You must also go to immigration which is in a different office building. When you leave the port area turn left and walk another ¼ mile until you see the Bank of Hawaii building on the right side of the road. Beyond the Bank of Hawaii building, and set back farther from the road, is an office building where immigration is located. Don't wait in line. You can go into an office on the left of the entrance to the immigration office and check in immediately. Its quick and painless.

Fees are not collected until you leave and, from what we have heard you will pay about \$150, most of which goes to customs.

Checking out was easier because you don't have to go to the harbor masters office on the third floor of the building.

First go to the Second floor on the front of the building (facing street). Stairs are on the outside of the building. Go to the office on the left and the end of the hall and pay your port fees. We paid 67 dollars. I'm not sure how they arrived at that amount. There were three separate charges each described by a code number.

After you pay this you go to the customs office on the ground floor. Go to the door at the end of the hall and show them the yellow form from the first office. They will write the amount of your customs fees on that form and you take it to the first door on the left when entering the ground floor of the building. That is where you pay the fee. They give you a receipt that you take back to the first customs office (end of hall) and they will prepare your port clearance document when they see that you have paid.

Then we went to immigration. See description of how to get there given above. Immigration wanted a crew list. They stamp your passports and don't charge you anything.

If you want to leave on a weekend you can check out on Friday. We checked out on Monday for an early morning departure on Tuesday.

5.1.12 Active Transport – August 2010 - Available Services in Pago Pago

American Samoa offers some boat support facilities like a boat yard capable of hauling the big tuna fishing boats, supplies of the sort needed by the fishing industry (chain, rope, etc) but does not have much in the way of supplies for pleasure boats.

One of the reasons is that American Samoa has a US zip code and excellent postal service so it is very inexpensive to have things shipped in by priority or express mail and you don't pay duty on any of it. It would be hard for a local boating store to compete with this. We will provide more information on shipping below.

There are diesel mechanics to be found, machine shops and welders. We found some men on one of the Asian fishing boats who helped us with some parts of the rig that needed repair.

There are also shipping agencies that will ship things from the US on boats. We did not need these services but other cruisers were having things like anchor chain and even an engine shipped in at very reasonable prices.

Wifi: There is good wifi coverage in the anchorage area. We have had no problems connecting to the system with our Alfa antennas. The company is called Blue Sky. It is the same company that provides

cell phone service on the island. Prices are reasonable and we only experienced one service interruption during the month and a half we have been here.

You can purchase cell phone service by paying with a credit card on line or by purchasing a card at a local shop. The interesting thing about the cards is that you get a lot of service for the money. If you buy a one week card you get 168 hours of connect time regardless of how long it takes you to use it up. There is also Blue Sky wifi coverage at McDonald's. Nobody seems to hassle cruisers who spend hours in their on their computers.

The wifi is almost always good enough for Skype.

Diesel Fuel: You can take on fuel here but it's a major hassle. They have a beautiful new fuel dock but it's designed for tankers and big boats, not yachts. You have to use the dock at high tide as the deck of most yachts would easily slip under the concrete dock at low tide and you would find yourself riding on your rigging. The men who run the fuel dock are familiar with the problem and will work with you to set up a time that works.

To pay for your fuel you need to go to the "marketing" office for the fuel company. You should plan to do this a day or two in advance of when you want to fuel up.

The marketing office is located upstairs in an old wooden green building over a music store. The building is behind the last gas station as you are on your way out of town (Tafuna or Lenone buses work). The gas station is before the bus gets to the tank farm. You will see the tank farm well before you get to the gas station.

You need to guess at how much fuel you will need and pay for that. They will give you a refund for any fuel you do not take.

The people in the marketing office will help you set up an appointment with the men at the fuel dock. You must call harbor control on 16 and ask for permission to move your boat to the fuel dock. Do this right before you are ready to proceed to the fuel dock.

Don't wait until the last minute to arrange for fueling. Several cruisers waited until the day before they wanted to leave to try and make arrangements and met with frustrations ranging from a lack of available appointments to inappropriate tide levels during working hours. We went to the office to arrange for fuel a couple of weeks before we planned to leave and had to wait until the tanker that was unloading fuel finished before we could get an appointment. Nobody seemed to know exactly when the tanker would leave.

The paperwork for the fueling process is more than we went through when we bought the boat. There are several long forms to complete at the fuel dock. Most of them involve safety issues that would be appropriate for large ships taking on large amounts of fuel.

The fuel dock operation is very professionally run and not a drop of fuel hit the ground or the water during our refueling. While we were at the dock an inspector from the coast guard came to inspect the fueling facility. That appeared to be a common occurrence.

They haul out a huge fuel hose and put it on the dock next to your boat. Just as I was about to tell the guy that we did not have an 8 inch fuel fill opening he came back with a 10 foot hose with a normal sized nozzle on it and connected that hose to the giant hose. On a per gallon basis Yachts have to seem like a lot of trouble to the folks who run the fuel dock.

The fuel dock does not have water available for yachts. They don't have any hoses small enough and seem to do their best to get you out of there as soon as you are fueled. They are probably worried about your boat getting damaged since their dock is inappropriate for use by yachts.

You can also jerry jug fuel from a gas station right next to the dinghy dock.

Water: One thing that is not readily available here is fresh water. There are spigots at the dinghy dock but no water supply to the concrete pier where you can tie up. Most people buy 5 gallon jerry jugs (\$5 each at Cost-U-Less). We did this for a while but then moved our anchorage spot up the harbor closer to the dinghy dock. We had observed the water was cleaner up there and started running our watermaker with no problem. The western end of the bay has several creeks emptying into it so the water at that end is not washed as effectively by the tides and is pretty foul most of the time.

Rental Cars: Rental cars are available from several outfits. We ended up sharing a car with some friends and rented from the hotel office at Sadie's by the Sea hotel. The going price seems to be about \$50 per day. Renting at noon gives you the following morning for a provisioning run.

They don't always have cars available so you need to make arrangements in advance.

You can see most of the sights in a day, including the national park.

Laundry: After several months in French Polynesia we were really pleased to find a very nice, and reasonably priced, laundromat not too far from the harbor. The laundromat is located about ¼ of a mile from the dinghy dock (turn right at the road) and can be reached by any bus running along the road and headed west. You can walk to the laundromat, too. There are good sidewalks all the way but stay on the bay side of the road as there is one house along the way where the owner has a large pack of nasty dogs that are very aggressive toward people on the sidewalk. The laundromat is on the left and next to a little grocery store. operated by the same people who own the laundromat. You can get change for the machines in the grocery store as well as detergent and other laundry supplies. The Laundromat is open 24/7 and is very well maintained. Its clean and has lots of machines. Some of the washers have hot water and some don't so be sure to check if you need hot water. The hot water machines are more expensive. There are plenty of driers too.

If you are a little more adventuresome you can put someone ashore, with the laundry, at the bottom of the bay and from there it is a short walk to the laundromat. Landing is tricky because the sidewalks near the water have been severely damaged by the Tsunami.

Banks: There are two banks here. The best one we found is ANZ which has high limits on how much cash you can pull out in each transaction. The limit at ANZ is \$800.

Bank of Hawaii has a \$200 limit so you would have to pay 4 ATM fees to get \$800.

We used BOH the day we checked in because it was next to the customs office but learned, by dumb luck, to avoid them for future withdrawals.

There is a ANZ office set back from the main road across from the central bus terminal (walk left from the dinghy dock). There is also a ANZ terminal next to Carl's Jr and a terminal in Cost-U-Less.

Medical: The only source of medical care we have found is at the LBJ Tropical Medical Center. Take either the Tafuna or Leone bus and tell the driver you need to go to the medical center. He will divert a couple of blocks and drop you off at the entrance. We had dental cleanings done and although the office management was very disorganized the quality of care seemed to be fine.

Before you can receive any medical care you need to get a hospital card. Apply in the main lobby and have your passport with you. It's free if you are a US citizen. We don't know if it is available for non US citizens.

There is only one pharmacy on the island and it's located at the medical center.

The Bus System:

The bus system here is very handy.

All of the buses are built locally. They start with a flat bed truck and then build a wooden bus body on it. The construction details are so similar between buses that there is probably one outfit building them all. The decoration inside the buses is another matter. They all have their own personality. Some are spartan and others have video screens to keep you amused during your bus trip. All have powerful audio systems and some cruisers have complained about the noise level. When we hear someone complain about the volume of the music on American Samoa buses we know they did not stop in El Salvador.

The buses are privately owned and licensed by the government. They are all different colors and the interior décor varies a lot.

If you are lucky enough to get on one of the buses with a video system you will usually be entertained by videos of amateur Samoan drag queen shows loaded with all sorts of sexual innuendo. All the Samoan passengers, from preschoolers to grandmothers, seem to find these videos hysterically funny. We did, too.

Like most places, the bus route is named for its terminal destination. The ones important to cruisers are the Tafuna bus and the Leone bus. Both wind around the harbor entrance to the west and head out to the west side of the island.

The **Tafuna bus** will take you to **Cost-U-Less** which is a Costco type warehouse store.

The **Leone bus** covers a lot of the same route but then branches off to go past **ACE Hardware** which is the best hardware store we have found in the south Pacific (including a pretty good one in Tahiti)

Before the Tafuna and Leone bus lines diverge they both pass True Value Hardware which is pretty good, too but a little more home improvement oriented than ACE. Across the street from the True Value is a shopping center with the local **cell phone company** office and the best Carl's Jr hamburger restaurant that either of us has ever been to. More about that under restaurants.

If you are only in American Samoa for a few days make sure you take one of these buses out to the west end of the island so you can see the island from the coast road. It is as beautiful as a lot of what we saw in French Polynesia.

Buses are a minimum of \$1 a ride and for the longer stretches. Out past the point where the routes separate, costs \$1.50.

The other bus route of importance to cruisers is the **Aua bus** (not to be confused with the Aoa bus). This one will take you to the plant where you can get your American-valved **propane** tanks filled. They don't have a problem with you transporting propane tanks on the bus. The gas plant destroyed the valves on all the tanks of one of the other boats in the anchorage. We had no problem when they filled ours. I'd be tempted to take our tanks out there one at a time.

One more thing about the buses. After a couple of trips to the same place you will start to get used to the route. Don't panic if the driver turns off the usual route to and heads up a side road. You did not get on the wrong bus. He is probably just delivering a regular rider to his or her job or home. He will return to the route shortly. Many times there will be no conversation between the driver and passenger regarding this diversion. If the person is a regular the driver knows where to take him or her.

The Postal Service:

The most important service here is the post office. You can have priority mail, parcel post, and express mail packages shipped to you here c/o general delivery: Here is how to have your mail addressed:

<your name>
<boat name, optional>
General Delivery

Main Post Office
1 Lumanai Bldg
Pago Pago, AS 96799

When you go to pick up your mail make sure you have a picture ID with you. We also took our boat papers the first few times in case customs ever wanted proof that we were a yacht in transit. They never asked for the papers but just took our word for it. An unfamiliar face is probably a yachtie at the downtown post office.

When you go to pick up packages it's a good idea to check on the USPS web site first. They usually post an "attempted delivery" notice for the general delivery packages so you know your package has been scanned here. If you take a printout of the notice it makes it easier for the clerk to find it and they know it's there so will keep looking if its not easy to find. If you don't have a printer take the delivery confirmation number with you and print your name, and boat name, for them. It is easier for them than remembering your name off your ID while they are searching for your package.

The vast majority of the post office employees here are very professional and helpful. They are used to dealing with yachties and are sensitive to the situation many of us find ourselves in while waiting for mission critical gear.

Here is how mail works.

There is one postal service plane per week that flies from Honolulu to American Samoa. It arrives on Friday and the mail that comes in on it is available for pickup on Saturday AM (9:00 AM to 1:00PM Saturday hours). I once overheard a clerk tell someone that some of the mail is available late Friday afternoon but we never had any of our packages show up on the USPS web site as being in American Samoa until late Saturday night.

Priority Mail comes in on the Friday plane. Express Mail is the only mail that is shipped on commercial airline flights and it can arrive in the middle of the week. We have used priority mail exclusively because it is significantly less expensive, especially for the heavy packages.

Make sure you tell people who are shipping things to you to use either Priority Mail or Express Mail (Parcel Post waits in HI until there is a shipping container full and then they put it on a ship). Tell your family, friends, and vendors not to believe what the post office employees in the US tell them about delivery times. The clerks in the US get their information from a chart that does not take the single weekly plane bottleneck into account.

We have had things shipped from the east coast of the United States, via Priority Mail, on Monday arrive here on Saturday. We also had one priority mail box that was mailed side by side with a second box, disappear for a couple of weeks and finally show up with a label showing it has been mis-shipped to Australia. But, it got here.

You can get a lot of big stuff shipped. The Priority Mail weight limit is 70 lbs and there are also dimensional limits of 108" length and girth. We managed to ship a 2 kw generator in one box and 100lbs of rigging in two boxes.

Priority mail is not trackable but you can get a delivery confirmation service for seventy cents. The priority mail is usually scanned in Honolulu so you frequently know if it got there in time to make the weekly plane by checking the USPS web site on Thursday or Friday. Sometimes packages arrive without being scanned in HI.

Technically you have to pick up your boxes at the back door of the post office, after waiting through the line in the front to verify it's there. Sometimes, however, the postal clerk will just hand you the box over the counter and you don't see customs.

Customs operates out of the back door and will occasionally open boxes and look at the contents. We have had so much stuff shipped to us that they recognize us as yachts in transit and just wave us through with our boxes unopened. I think one of the reasons they trust us is that my brother has been very good about putting packing lists on the outside of the boxes. The customs folks have to deal with some annoying Samoans who get mad at them when they want to inspect boxes. A smile and lots of cooperation seems to be very welcome at the customs desk and we have always moved through quickly and with minimal inspection.

Defender knows how to get things mailed to you here. They won't even use Express mail because they have enough experience that they know the extra cost does not help that much.

If you need to ship things back to the states try to get it in the mail by Wednesday afternoon to make sure it gets on the Friday plane. If it is an envelope no special paperwork is necessary but if you are sending a box you need to fill out a customs form in addition to the address label. The people behind the counter can provide the forms and also priority mail boxes and envelopes.

Restaurants:

There are not a lot of restaurant options here but most are pretty good.

There is a McDonalds very close to the dinghy dock. We found that if we went there when there was a long line at the drive through the fries were fresh. At other times they could be limp and cold.

All the standard McDonald's fare is offered but some things come with rice. They don't have any salads. The coffee is awful. There is a little coffee shop in the Fagotogo center (big white building on left side of street as you walk away from the dinghy dock) that has much better coffee.

Right across from the dinghy dock is a restaurant in a hotel called Sadie Thompson's. It is very good and reasonably priced for the quality. Their American breakfasts really are American breakfasts and they have American style bacon which we have missed. A lot of cruisers have said that the steaks at Sadies are the best they have ever had. We have not tested that yet but will before we leave. The service is marginal. Some things have come to the table cold and we have had to chase down our waitress for refills on coffee.

There is a place called Evies taco bar that is upstairs over the post office. It was just OK. Cheap but not that great. Carl's is better for Mexican.

There is also a restaurant called Evies that is a short walk from the dinghy dock. (turn right and say on the water side of the sidewalk because of the bad dogs on the other side of the road). Evies restaurant has an all you can eat Mexican buffet lunch one a week and a dinner on Friday night. We did not think it was all that good and the Margaritas were marginal at best. The restaurant does have some interesting photos that were taken during the Tsunami a couple of years ago (one shows a sailboat moving through a public park that is at the end of the bay). There are also some pictures of Evie when she was a show girl in Las Vegas many years ago. They allow smoking in the bar and the smoke ends up in the dining room too.

Carl's Jr. is a chain that is mostly in the western US. They tend to be spotty in quality in the US because a lot of them are franchises where the parent company does not have enough control to maintain quality. The Carl's Jr here should be the training center for the entire chain. The place is spotless, the service very good and the décor is very nice. They have several big screen TVs showing sports channels and, if you are watching TV after you eat the workers will come and remove your trash from the table. The young people who work there are also frequently stopping by your table to ask if you need anything. The food is also very good. Everything has always come to the table fresh and hot.

This Carl's Jr is a combination restaurant with their Green Burrito chain and you can get very acceptable Mexican food here too.

The “don't miss” dining experience here is called **Tisa's Barefoot Bar and Grill**. Tisa's is located on 1800 acres of ancestral waterfront land on the southeast side of the island. It is a cluster of wooden buildings and decks that cascade down the side of a cliff to the beach and is a beautiful setting to enjoy the sunset.

You can go to Tisa's in the middle of the afternoon and spend the afternoon swimming on their beach. They provide showers if you wish.

Every Wednesday evening they prepare a traditional Samoan meal cooked in earth oven called an Umu. The food and hot stones are piled under banana leaves early in the afternoon and the Umu is opened right before serving the meal. The tables are set with banana leaves for plates and you eat with your fingers. The feast includes turkey, lamb, pork, fish, breadfruit, coconut, bananas (a couple of different kinds including a uniquely Samoan banana that reminds us of what it must be like to eat baked chipboard). The meal at Tisa's is the best of its type we have had in the south Pacific, including much more expensive versions in French Polynesia. Reservations are a good idea. They have a web site. www.tisabarefootbar.com/. This dinner was \$35 each and we felt it was a good value. Drinks are reasonably priced.

A big part of the pleasure of dining here is meeting Tisa. She lived in San Diego for a number of years and her son Jason, who is the bartender, was born there. When Tisa came back to American Samoa she apparently really set the place on its ear because she was not only the first woman in recent memory to dress in non-missionary designed garb. Tisa would show up at the bank in Fagotogo in skin tight leopard print hot pants. People living here at the time said she was responsible for traffic jams as all the men slowed down to get a good look.

After meeting Tisa it's not hard to believe these stories. She is an extremely confident woman and very charming. One would have a hard time imagining her taking much guff off anyone but she quickly puts everyone at ease. She sings and plays the Ukelele (tell her it's your birthday even if it's not).

Tisa and her grand children put on a little show after dinner that is very low key but well done.

You can take the Aoa (not Aua) bus to Tisa's. The last bus is supposed to leave the bus station near the dinghy dock at 5:00 but seems to leave when the driver feels like it so it's probably a good idea to leave early. Tell the folks at Tisa's that you will need a cab back to the dinghy dock and let them arrange it. No cab driver in his right mind would take one of Tisa's customers for a ride. I think we paid \$3 each for 4 of us to get back to the dock.

Provisioning:

American Samoa offers good provisioning opportunities.

There is a **Cost-U-Less** warehouse store on the Tafuna bus line. Tell the driver where you want to get off. No membership is required. It's not as well stocked as a Costco in the states and the availability of fresh produce and meat seems to be dependent on the time of the month. Junk food, beer, wine and liquor are all available here although the prices are not necessarily the best we found. The Cost-U-Less will provide delivery to the dinghy dock for \$20 per couple. You get to ride back in the truck so you save the bus fare back. Tell them you want this service when you first go into the store and they will even put the charge on your bill.

The Cost-U-Less has 110v appliances and limited computer gear. Prices are high enough and the selection is limited that it's worth ordering through Amazon if you are going to be here long enough to have things shipped.

They have fresh sliced pastrami in the meat section. It is excellent.

There is a supermarket called K&S that is right up the street from Cost-U-Less. It has a good selection of staples, meat, fish, and kitchen tools and storage containers. It's a good place for the things you want in smaller quantities than the warehouse type stores carry. If you visit K&S first you can leave your purchases at the bag check area of Cost-U-Less and take everything back on the delivery truck.

There are several smaller stores in the Fagotogo village area which is what they call the area near the dinghy dock. There is one little store right by the road near the dinghy dock. It's not cheap but is convenient. The standard sandwich bread here is excellent.

There is also a small grocery store to the west of the dinghy dock past the west end of the bay. We found beer and sodas there to be as cheap as Cost-U-Less and its only a \$4 cab ride to the dinghy dock. The lady who runs the store will call a cab for you.

We were told that there is a **liquor store** across from the Starkist plant that has the best deals on distilled spirits. While you are over there you can get your picture taken with the statue of Charlie the Tuna.

Conclusion:

American Samoa is more than just a convenient place to get things shipped. It is a pleasant place with friendly people, beautiful scenery, and a safe harbor. Because it is not a tourist destination, the people here seem to be less jaded than those elsewhere in the south Pacific.

It's close to Western Samoa (overnight sail) which gets very good grades from people who have been there and American Samoa is a convenient stopping point when sailing from the Cook Islands to the Vava'u group in Tonga or Fiji.

We plan to spend a second season in the South Pacific and will stop here again.

John Lewis - Shawn Maxey - s/v Active Transport - Tayana 37 Pilot House #581

5.1.13 Whoosh – August 2010 – Receiving Mail and Packages

Reported before they arrived: Got a LOT of help from Scott at St. Brendan's Isle (SBI) on sending stuff to Am Samoa as the USPS website and SBI's past records both had phone #s that didn't work, so my skyping them didn't work.

Bottom line: while we had multiple other delivery addresses (e.g. the Pago Pago Yacht Club), it was finally confirmed by the main post office in Pago Pago (actually a small suburb of Pago Pago) that all General Delivery mail is sent to that facility. And I'm pleased to say the Moon Guide Pago Pago area map shows the main PO only a short walk from the dinghy dock at the far W end of the harbor. So the address to use is simply the one that's printed everywhere:

Your name, Yacht Name if desired, General Delivery, Pago Pago, AS 96799

A recap on shipping a sail to American Samoa from North Sails in Sri Lanka: It's actually very reliable and you have multiple options depending on what you are trying to do. Our sail (and then - finally! our batten) packages were simply mishandled repeatedly by UPS (not the cause of the North loft in Sri Lanka nor the local agent in Pago) so just **avoid UPS**. This of course can be a bit difficult when a big outfit like North has a contract with a specific shipper (UPS in their case) to get lower rates, and I just KNEW this was going to be some kind of headache when ordering the sail. We always tried to avoid UPS for shipping outside the U.S. when I worked for J&J and had shipping as one of my areas, as they just always were giving us headaches as well as deliveries.

Summary of Sending Packages by US Priority Mail: We had a package that was mailed to us from Florida, USPS Priority Mail, go missing. But when it was all tracked down, the package went missing in Florida, not in Pago Pago.

The Main Post Office Branch in Pago Pago is first class in its operation with excellent 'back room' security. It was the Green Cove Springs branch that apparently screwed up. Every other boat using USPS that we've heard from said they got their deliveries 'on time' (meaning when the weekly Friday night plane was due to arrive).

As for USPS, use it just as you would back home stateside. It is fallible...but I think our experience was just one of those minority flukes. Just be sure to a) insure, and b) be clear upfront how you can have digital invoices and digital bills you can forward back to whomever handles the mail stateside if something should get lost.

For example, we had an expensive engine part in the box that went missing. The St. Pete Westerbeke dealer is still all-paper, so his invoice was IN the box that disappeared. No tickee, no laundry...so we had to email him, ask him to forward a fresh copy to Doug, and then pester a bit until it was done. That's the problem when you don't have all-digital records.

Another example is that Sailrite's invoice doesn't show shipping and special handling charges...so getting an insurance refund on those are impossible.

USPS Main Branch - well organized, very secure (USPS employees & Customs folks guard the storage area) and well organized to accept General Delivery mail. Excellent counter staff. Two levels of service:

-- USPS Express, which post-9/11 is the only mail allowed on passenger aircraft; comes in on Hawaiian Airlines flights 3-4 times weekly

-- All other USPS mail classes arrive on a Friday night flight, and all mail is sorted overnight. General Delivery mail is available for pick-up on Saturday at 0900. (In our 3 weeks there, we were the only crew that didn't have this work just as advertised. The islanders rely on it heavily).

Commercial Carriers:

-- UPS was, for us, a disaster. Our sail was shipped to Korea, Hong Kong, Hawaii and Alaska TWICE each, plus multiple U.S. destinations. It arrived last week from New Zealand. We still don't have the battens and the local agent, FAX Cargo at the PP Airport, seems out of their depth. Not recommended.

-- Fedex and DHL are both represented on the island. Heard several crew members mentioning their Fedex deliveries were late but not terribly so; don't think I heard anyone mention using DHL.

-- It appears acceptable to use the carrier's local agent address as the delivery address, if there is no other address available to them.

About using other addresses, for commercial service or USPS mail delivery:

-- there's old info floating around that the Pago Pago YC will accept mail and packages for cruisers but that's no longer true. The YC facility is in receivership and gutted. Other businesses there seem to come & go, like elsewhere in the islands, and using a local biz address that comes from a dated source is probably not a good idea.

5.1.14 Whoosh – August 2010 - Possibility of a Marina in Pago Pago

David Robinson, an elderly, no-BS ex-Aussie who seems to be extremely plugged in to the Samoan government, is working with the government to try to build a marina facility for yachts in Pago Pago. Stage 1 of the new marina facility may be closer than island projects often seem to be. Land rights have already been granted, dredging begins next month, and he's in NZ this month, meeting with marina construction outfit Bellingham, which has already done a set of prelim plans.

David's very clear about the benefits to a marina being a 'one stop shop' outfit, heavy on customer service. So as that biz begins to emerge, networking with him directly would I think be helpful to you (re: reliable advance delivery address and secure storage) and him (good rep, good viz among the yachties).

Update September 2011: A website has been set up for the Pago Marina project.

<http://pagomarina.com>

There seemed to be activity going on while Soggy Paws was there, in the place that was rumored to be the location for the new marina (at the very head of the bay), but we got no formal feedback on the status.

5.2 Outside of Pago Pago

5.2.1 Going To Western Samoa by Ferry or Plane

From Frommers.com-Flying: Polynesian Airlines (tel. 800/644-7659 in the U.S., 22-737 in Apia, or 633-4331 in Pago Pago; www.polynesianairlines.com), Inter Island Airways (tel. 42-580 in Samoa, 699-7100 in American Samoa), and South Pacific Express (tel. 28-901 in Apia, 699-9900 in American Samoa) fly between Faleolo Airport in Samoa and Pago Pago several times a day. I always fly on Polynesian because it is a licensed scheduled carrier while the others are charter airlines. Round-trip fares are about S\$310 (US\$124/£62) if purchased in Apia, US\$155 to US\$165 (£78-£83 plus taxes if bought in American Samoa

From Frommers.com-By Ferry: For the adventurous, a relatively modern ferry, the Lady Naomi, makes the 8-hour voyage between Pago Pago and Apia at least once a week, usually leaving the main wharf in Apia at 11pm on Wednesday and departing Pago Pago's marine terminal at 4pm on Thursday for the return voyage. Tickets should be bought at least a day ahead. One-way fares from Pago Pago to Apia are US\$60 (£30) for a seat, US\$75 (£38) for a cabin. The Lady Naomi is operated by the Samoa Shipping Corporation, whose ticket office is on Beach Road, opposite the main wharf in Apia (tel. 20-935; www.samoashipping.com). The American Samoa agent is Polynesia Shipping Services (tel. 633-1211). Because the trade winds prevail from the southeast, the trip going west with the wind toward Apia is usually smoother.

5.2.2 Java - Anchorages on the North Coast of American Samoa - July 2011

We struck out trying to anchor off Am. Samoa's north coast. Most of the bays are volcanic rock and coral without much sand. Anchoring depths aren't bad at 10-20m. but the holding isn't too good.

Here's a list of anchorages from E to W along the North shore and what we found.

- Big bay at town of Aoa by Easternmost point could be good (we didn't check it out since it's so far from Pago). Very protected from wind and sea and has a big beach so it could have some sand.
- The next bays, Masefua, Afono and Vaita are lee shores in Easterly winds.
- We tried anchoring in Fagasa Bay in 10m. But couldn't hold since there's no sand, just flat rock and coral.
- We continued sailing West and bypassed both bays where the towns on Fagamalo and Maloata are. They could have been good since they both show beaches, but we found that there's a very shallow coral reef (1 m.) along most shores, which then drops off to a secondary reef in 10m.
- We finally stopped at Poloa by the Western tip, but it was the same scenario with no sand or good holding. So, it was onto Samoa for us.

5.2.3 Visions of Johanna - Fagasa Bay With Special Permission - August 2010

Our time in American Samoa was priceless. What was special was our permission to anchor in a beautiful protected bay on the north coast at a very traditional village - Fagasa Bay.

Although port captains and customs cannot permit you to anchor there, I went to the Fono (legislature) to introduce myself to the village chiefs, and after 4 days of visitation, I garnered an invitation to the bay we wished to visit. What an experience. We initially met two chiefs who were friendly and hospitable, and on Sunday we (yes, even I went) to church in the morning and had just an outstanding day.

After church we were invited to the chiefs' council for lunch. We were introduced to all of the chiefs and ate WITH them...apparently a very rare privilege for a Palangi.

I think the intro was helped by the fact that we caught a Mahi Mahi on our way here and presented it to the village as a gift upon our arrival. We struck gold as presenting a gift of food is the right thing, and a fish, especially a 25-lb Mahi is a great gift. Not only that, the Mahi had 4 fresh mackerel inside its belly, and this was looked at as a good omen because the village waits every year around this time for the mackerel to run.

We then spent the afternoon with the wife of one of the higher chiefs. She is a Palangi so she understands where we come from as well as the Samoan ways. She drove us around the island, interpreted Samoan customs, was a wonderful host for the day. She is a private school principal. Her husband is an associate justice as well as a high chief in this village. We were treated as special village guests in that unique Samoan style - were taken on a day tour of the island, had a traditional Umu feast prepared for us, visited neighboring bays...outstanding.

You do not need to go to Western Samoa to experience the real Samoa...nothing is more real than this.

Your visit MUST be arranged and approved in advance, and it was not easy to arrange this. But the effort worth the end result.

5.3 Rose Atoll National Wildlife Refuge – Between Suvarrow and Samoas

Rose Atoll is a little south of a direct line between Suvarrow and Pago Pago, and a little east of a direct line from Palmerston to Pago Pago. If you're making those passages, you should know where it is so you don't run into it. It is located at approximately 14-33S / 168-09W.

Rose Atoll is an uninhabited island that is part of the Territory of American Samoa. The atoll and surrounding waters out to 3 nautical miles are currently managed cooperatively by the American Samoan Government and the US Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Pacific Remote Islands Area Refuge Complex, and the refuge is closed to public use. Access to the atoll is restricted by the Fish and Wildlife Service, and entry into the lagoon or onto the island is prohibited without prior approval. In order to prevent the introduction of alien species to the island and lagoon, Refuge staff maintains a rigid entry permit application and review process.

Here is a direct quote from one of the scientists involved in the protection of Rose Atoll, with whom Soggy Paws corresponded.

Rose Atoll National Wildlife Refuge is closed to all visitors due to the fragile nature of the ecosystem and the wildlife. We are very concerned with disturbance to wildlife and the introduction of alien species. Presently, we have at least 7 species of ant that have been introduced to Rose Atoll, and the most likely way they arrived was on a boat. When biologists go to Rose Atoll for research purposes, we require that they follow very strict quarantine protocols to prevent introductions. This includes wearing all new clothes that have been frozen for 48 hours, and treating all vessels for rats, insects and algae.

For more information, please visit the [Rose Atoll Marine National Monument](#) website, or email Frank Pendleton, Manager. Frank_Pendleton@fws.gov

5.4 Manua Islands - Between Suvarrow and Samoa

Officially, you are not supposed to stop at Manua until you have cleared into American Samoa in Pago Pago.

Note that the waypoints reported below by Java, while they seem to plot OK on the CMap chart when zoomed in--they appear in the middle of the island when zoomed out. So be aware, when passing by, that zoomed out charts may be as much as 1-2 miles off.

5.4.1 Java - July 2011

Ta'u was nice, but again not much in the way of anchoring, but there are sandy spots. After rounding the SW point there are 4 long, sandy beaches.

We anchored in Fagamalo cove in spotty sand and coral, WP= S14*14.75, W169*30.34 in 7m sand. If there's surf, you can't land there (Donna took in the kayak), but there is a good small boat harbor ½ mi North at S14*14.5, W169*30.5 that is narrow, but has red range markers to follow in. Not big enough for a yacht. Very protected from the trades on this side of the coast.

You can also go another ½ mi North and anchor off the conspicuous White church, which also has a small passage for a dinghy into shore or dinghy back to the small boat harbor. We went around the NE point to check out Faleasao Harbor, but the Easterlies made it too windy; it'd probably be good in SE wind only. This is where the Panga Ferry comes in from the other Manu'a islands.

So we sailed onto Ofu and Olosega islands about 8 nm West. The Sailing Directions, Pub 126 talk about anchorages by the N & S bays by the bridge connecting both these islands, but we didn't check it out, although it looked like you could anchor, very protected from wind, by the town of Olosega behind a reef that sticks out. Obviously we don't know anything about the bottom there, although we saw a nice beach so maybe it has some sand patches to anchor in. From the charts it appears that the shallow reef is closer inshore in the North bay of Olosega, which is probably protected from the trades also since Olosega is a tall island.

We then went around to the West coast of **Ofu**, but never found any sand and pretty much the same conditions we discovered on Tutuila, e.g. very shallow reef with another deeper rock and coral reef outside of it.

We sailed around **Nu'utele Island** (you can't go inside of the island due to the shallow reef which goes from the shoreline to Nu'utele Island) to check out the small boat harbor inside of Point Tauga. It was surrounded by reefs, but marked with a red and green buoy by the breakwater, but one would have to dinghy in first and see how large/deep the passage is and how much room inside the harbor, etc. One could probably tie up to the wharf inside since this is where the ferry enters from Tutuila, but we didn't check it out and decided to overnight onto Tutuila. So, that's about all I can give you for these islands.

6 (Western) Samoa

Samoa and American Samoa share a culture, a language, and a people. Actually they share two languages, Samoan and English, and somewhat like American Samoa, Samoans have a westernized-style of government (in their case based on the British Parliamentary system) that is overlaid on the centuries-old *Fa'asamoa* – the Samoan Way. Here is the same system of extended families (*aiga*) and *matai* (chiefs) who control the business of each village, the same focus on community life, the same traditions of food and sports, and the same intense commitment to Christianity. In the outlying villages,

the architecture of boxlike houses with oblong or rectangular *fales* (open pavillions) and crypts for the parents in the front yard continues. The main difference is that Samoa has much more space than its American sibling -- 14 times the land area to less than three times the population -- so that all the now familiar structures here seem less cramped, even in the "suburbs" of Apia. And everybody is still related. Families in Upolu and Savai'i (the two main islands of Samoa) have relatives in American Samoa, and vice versa, and everybody visits back and forth, keeping the ferry system between all the islands busy.

Today, Samoa (they have recently dropped the "Western") has its own currency -- the *tala* (worth today about \$.38), their fuel comes in liters, temperatures are in Centigrade again, and electricity is 230v/50Hz. Clinging more tightly to tradition, Samoans here do seem less influenced by "western" ways. However, their per capita incomes is about one quarter of their neighbors', and the practice of subsistence agriculture -- coconuts, taro, breadfruit, bananas, and papaya -- is the cornerstone of most families' survival! Fortunately, Nature is bountiful and these foods grow everywhere.

6.1 Apia

6.1.1 Rowan -- Apia Update Sep 2023

Just had a lovely week in Samoa

Why go there?

- friendliest people we have met anywhere on earth. Utterly genuine
- great natural beauty - waterfalls, beaches, jungle
- cheap!

Checking in

- call port control when 30 minutes out
- anchor out and wait for health to visit
- once they have signed you off you can either go into the marina, or stay out if you prefer
- immigration and customs will follow on.
- staff are friendly and helpful. Prepare to fill out lots and lots of forms

Checking out

- go to immigration in the main government building - 1st floor
- take the form they give you to customs, just outside the marina
- the whole process takes 1.5 hours
- remember to call port control on 16 to ask permission to use the channel before you do so

Where to eat

- paddles, right outside the marina, you need to book. Italian and Samoan food
- sinalei resort on the other side of the island
- curry house

What to do

- so Tua Trench - water filled lava tunnels with great coral and fish/ life
- giant clam reserve on the other side of the island
- loads and loads of great water falls
- lava cliff walk. Spectacular!

If you cross to Savai'i. Visit the blowholes. Amazing

Anchorage

- anchor south of the big yellow buoy in 5m with thick mud. Good holding and good protection

Marina

- small, friendly and cheap
- About \$50 a night

Whatsapp Sharon on +6857714351. Very friendly and quick to respond. If you want to wind her up call her Shazza. Or Karen.

6.1.2 Apia Overview From Noonsite – Aug/Sep 2016

<http://www.noonsite.com/Countries/Samoa/Apia/Countries/Samoa?rc=Formalities>

It is necessary to give 48 hours prior notice of arrival. This can be done by emailing portmaster@spasamoa.ws or spa@spasamoa.ws

Clearance

Note on International Date Line: Since 2011, Samoa has been on the New Zealand side of the International Date Line. If you arrive from the Cook Islands or French Polynesia you will skip a day. None of the cruising guides mention this, but as the Samoan authorities do not clear boats at the weekend, it is worth planning for. American Samoa, however, is still on the French Polynesian side of the Date Line.

Noonsite has now been advised that it is necessary to give 48 hours prior notice of arrival. This can be done by emailing portmaster@spasamoa.ws or spa@spasamoa.ws.

Apia is the only official port of entry on Samoa.

Call the Apia harbour master on VHF Ch. 16 when 1 or 2 hours away and they will give permission to enter the harbour. You may need to try several times.

Do not go alongside the main wharf, or drop anchor, until permission and directions are given by harbour control. If arriving at the weekend, clearance will take place on Monday, but Port control will advise on protocols. It is also not possible to clear in the evenings.

Officially you must contact each clearance department (Customs, Immigration and Quarantine) separately via the Samoan Government website which can be found here: <http://www.samoagovt.ws/>

However, in reality, you may find after contacting Port Control, they will contact all the authorities on your behalf and arrange for them to come to your boat for clearance. Be patient, as you may find that they all arrive separately. You may have to go into town to visit Immigration (\$5 tala taxi ride).

Notice September 2013: Cruisers report that drug searches are being stepped up in Apia. If you arrive in Apia with clearance from a Central or Southern Americas port, Officials will search your boat. Also, if Apia is not the named destination on your clearance they will search you. The searches can last all day and involve more than ten persons and two drug dogs.

If you want to leave the boat at the marina while you fly home, give yourself enough time, as you need to apply in writing for permission and wait until it has been granted.

Quarantine

International yachts entering Samoa waters are considered to be of a high biosecurity risk and are closely monitored by Quarantine. It is important to be aware of the clearance procedures for yachts.

The skipper must complete a Master's Declaration Form declaring all biosecurity risk items on board that are either restricted or prohibited.

Items to declare include:

Foods (tinned/packed), including meat, sausages, salami, ham, poultry, eggs, milk, butter, cheese, honey etc;

Plants or parts of plants (live or dead) including vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, bulbs, flowers (fresh or dry), mushrooms, straw, bamboo or any other articles made of plant materials;

Animal products including feathers, fur/skin, shells, hatching eggs.

All refuse generated on the vessel must be placed in a suitable leak-proof container, with a lid, and the container is securely fastened at all times and kept aboard the yacht. The refuse can only be removed from the yachts under the directions of the Quarantine Officer and costs \$4 Samoan dollars (Tala) per bag to drop off at the Quarantine office.

Clearing Out

It is important to clear out of Apia, even if you plan to visit other anchorages (for which you MUST have a Cruising Licence). Your clearance date can be several weeks or more ahead of the date you actually leave Apia. A letter from Immigration is needed to confirm the date of finally leaving Samoa.

This requires a visit to the Immigration Office which is in town (taxi ride \$5 tala). Take your passports. This office is very crowded. Do not take a number, instead ask at the desk "where do ship captains get clearance?". You will be shown into a back room to complete the paperwork.

Then go to the Customs Office to obtain clearance. A clearance fee is payable at the Customs Office, so it's important to arrive no later than 2pm as the cash office closes at 4pm.

Contact Info

Samoa Port Authority

PO Box 2279, Apia, Samoa

Tel:+685 64400 Fax:+685 25870 ,VHF Channel 16, 14

<http://www.samoaportsauthority.ws>

spa@spasamoa.ws

Opening hours: 8am to 4.40pm daily

Samoa Quarantine Office

Tel:+685 20924 Fax:+685 20104

<http://www.samoaquarantine.gov.ws/index.php/contacts>

Immigration

Everyone must have a passport valid for at least 6 months beyond the end of their stay.

Immigration grant a 60 day visitor's permit on arrival to all visitors except residents of American Samoa, who must obtain a 30 day single entry permit or multiple entry permit, before arrival.

An extension to the visitor's permit for an additional 60 days is granted if there are valid reasons for a longer stay. It costs \$100 (WST) and has to be applied for in person at the Immigration Office in Apia.

Immigration Office

Convent St, Apia , Immigration Division, Ministry of Prime Minister & Cabinet , PO Box L 1861, Apia, SAMOA

Tel:+685 20291,+685 20292 or +685 21474 Fax:+685 22243

<http://www.samoaimmigration.gov.ws>

immigration@samoa.ws

Opening hours: 09:00-16:00 (Mon-Fri)

For visa extensions.

Situated on level two of the Lober building, next door to Magik Cinemas.

Customs

Firearms must be declared and will be sealed on board by customs or kept ashore until departure.

Major electronics (laptop etc.) must be noted on the customs form.

Copies of any prescriptions for medicinal drugs may be required.

Import of religious material may be restricted.

Importing Spares

There are Fed-Ex & DHL offices in Apia, but customs clearance is up to the receiver (or you can use a clearance agent - see below). The Customs office is next to marina.

Health

ZIKA VIRUS ALERT: (September 2016) There have been recent safety alerts from the US State Department, UK Foreign Office, and Center for Disease Control (CDC) regarding travel to parts of Central and South America, Africa, southern Asia, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific islands. Samoa is an area of interest. There is growing concern about the rapid spread of the ZIKA Virus and the impact of the virus on pregnant women and babies. ZIKA is transmitted by mosquitos in tropical and sub-tropical climates, and there is currently no cure or vaccine. This situation is evolving rapidly, so please refer to the CDC's dedicated website if you are intending to cruise in one of the affected areas.

Documents

A cruising permit is required if wishing to visit other harbours or anchorages besides Apia. This can be obtained on arrival in Apia from the 4th Floor office of the Government building. Take ship's paper, passports and itinerary with you.

Cruising Permits can also be obtained in advance. Write to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, PO Box L 861, Apia and send a copy to the Secretary for Transport, PO Box 1607, Apia. The letter should state the yacht's name, port of registry, the names and nationalities of the master and crew, ETA Apia, and a list of places one intends to visit, plus planned duration of stay.

On outward clearance it is possible to get permission to stop in Asau on Savai'i, before continuing on to other destinations, but be sure your Clearance document states the actual date of your departure for Samoan waters.

Fees

There are no fees for clearing into Samoa.

The fees for anchoring and using the marina in Apia are dependent on boat length:-

Up to 10m \$55.50 Tala

10 to 12m \$64.50 Tala

12 to 14m \$75.00 Tala

14 to 16m \$90.00 Tala

16 to 18m \$114 Tala

18 to 20m \$135 Tala

As the marina is not always staffed, the collection of fee can be erratic.

If however you want to cruise around the island it is advisable to apply for a permit in advance. There may be a charge if you need one after you arrive.

On clearing out, there is a \$55.00 Tala Customs charge.

A taxi ride to the Immigration office will cost approx. \$5 Tala.

Rubbish disposal via the Quarantine office costs \$2 Tala per bag. Ordinary garbage is free.

Restrictions

It is prohibited to enter the ferry terminal ports of Mulifanua and Salelologa, except with special permission from the Ministry of Transport.

Apia: All garbage must be put into sealed plastic bags and given to the quarantine office at the wharf gate for disposal. There is a charge per bag.

A cruising permit must be obtained before using any port or anchorage other than Apia.

Samoa Ports Authority has an employee whose job is to visit all yachts anchoring in Asau Bay to ask to see their Cruising Permit. It is useful to have an extra copy available to give to him. He paddles a blue outrigger canoe and has a SPA badge.

Clearance Agents

Super Yacht Services (Samoa) Ltd.

P O Box 225, Apia, Samoa

Tel:20628. Cell (685) 757 1234 Fax:26868

sib@sails.ws

Pets

Animals are not permitted ashore.

The animal must be quarantined ashore in a Government facility for 120 days after receiving an antirabies vaccination).

Marine Supplies

There are some good hardware stores with a little marine equipment.

Samoa Builders Supplies Ltd stocks International Yacht paints, also electrical hardware & plumbing fittings.

Fuel (Last updated June 2015)

Diesel fuel is available from the fuel station north of the river.

For larger quantities it is a much more complicated procedure, and may be simpler if a number of yachts needing fuel get together to complete the process. It pays to be a little pushy so you can get the paperwork all completed in a few hours. The process is as follows:

1. Go to the Customs Office located near the marina and write a letter asking for permission to get X thousands of litres/USg's of duty free fuel. Once granted, you will be given a letter stating that you can purchase duty free fuel.
2. Go to the Port Authority office across the road and again write a letter stating you require permission for PPS (the refuelling company) to be allowed access to the port terminal to allow them access to your vessel for bunkering. Again you will be given a letter granting permission.
3. With both letters in hand go to the PPS office at the other side of town (by taxi). Show them the two letters, request a time for bunkering and pay in cash (no credit cards accepted) for your fuel. They may

take US\$ but it may be advisable to go to the Western Union in town and have your currency changed into Samoan Tala.

4. An hour before bunkering contact the harbour master on VHF: CH16 to request a place to dock the vessel/s for bunkering.

5. Be patient - it may take some time for the fuel truck to arrive.

Water

Fresh water is available at a small charge, payable to the harbour master.

LPG (gas)

Twenty lbs Origin butane bottle can be exchanged at local stores (same bottles as in the Cooks, American Samoa and further west from here).

Gas refills are done at the Origin Energy plant.

European type bottles are difficult to fill - however the following contact is able to deal with these types of bottle: Tala at Hibiscus Gas. Tel: 720 9441

6.1.3 Duplicat – Update September 2017

We went into the marina and found Trevor to be very straightforward, likeable and easy to deal with. There were plenty of yachts anchored out and plenty of space in the marina - no-one is forced to use the marina unless they want to. Fees for the dinghy dock are SAT\$50/week if you want to use it - most seem to.

Current rates (in Samoan Tala):

Monohull	Daily	Weekly	Fornightly	Monthly
Up to 10m	\$37.00	\$246.06	\$466.20	\$888.00
10m to 12m	\$43.00	\$285.95	\$541.80	\$1032.00
12m to 14m	\$50.00	\$332.50	\$630.00	\$1200.00
14m to 16m	\$60.00	\$339.00	\$756.00	\$1440.00
16m to 18m	\$76.00	\$505.40	\$957.60	\$1824.00
18m to 20m	\$90.00	\$598.50	\$1134.00	\$2160.00
20m to 25m	\$120.00	\$798.00	\$1512.00	\$2880.00
25m to 30m	\$145.00	\$964.25	\$1827.00	\$3480.00

Multihulls pay 1.5x the monohull rate (as is pretty normal).

Water is included

Shore power if you want it (240v 50Hz) is \$5/day for normal use, or \$15/day if you're running AC

Dinghy dock use is \$50/wk

The rate sheet even says if you don't want to use the dinghy dock, to use the beach in front of the Sheraton (but does mention there is no security). I think everyone at anchor was using the dinghy dock. We did see a security guard at night, but nothing during the day.

Its easiest to go into the marina to clear - most of the officials will meet you there (apart from Immigration which is the SAT\$5 taxi ride away). Once cleared, you can request permission from Port Control to go back out and anchor. If you go straight to anchor, you'll need to dinghy the officials out to your boat and they don't seem at home on the water!

I would avoid 'Ouzo' the taxi-driver - he will avoid giving a price (the 'pay me what you think is fair' game) and get cross if you hire a car. Taula and Charlie are fine - or turn right from the pontoon and walk towards the junction in the road and you'll find a taxi stand just around the junction to the left.

For **mobile data** - we used a Bluestar sim. The sim is free and with our first credit (as little as SAT\$5) you get 1GB of data and 600 Bluestar to Bluestar minutes for 5 days. Great for us all to stay in touch when out running errands. After 5 days – just get another sim! There is a large Bluestar store across the road from the Immigration/Government building and opposite the **ANZ bank** - very convenient to do all 3 when you first clear in. Take a SAT\$5 taxi to the ANZ to get money (and pay the taxi), then Bluestar and finally cross the road to the immigration building (1 floor up from the main entrance). There are plenty of taxis by side of the ANZ bank to get back. It is also walkable, but on a hot, humid day we preferred the taxi!

Diving - we can recommend Justin and Ty at Samoa Dive and Snorkel. We paid SAT\$324 for 2 dives including lunch, water and ice-cream if you have your own kit, or \$360 using their kit. They collect from the marina and take you to the south or NE coast depending on conditions, not just around the corner (where Trevor says it's not so good).

Provisioning: For those looking for decent meat, Samoa Meat Supplies is happy to cut and vacuum bag their good quality Samoan beef and pork as you want. They'll even deliver to the dock and prefer cash-on-delivery. Call +685 30011 or e-mail olaiga_tom@yahoo.com.au. We took a SAT\$7 taxi up to their place at Alaoa, Vailima to talk to them and see the quality - they were happy to fetch meat from their freezer for you to see. We spent SAT\$177 on beef and port to cover us until NZ (not expecting much in Tonga!). They looked at us and asked, in all seriousness, if we thought we'd bought enough to get us as far as Tonga. Samoans do like to eat!

Clearing out - we did immigration first, which was quite quick. They provided a letter for Customs, which we took there next. Customs was a little slower but got the job done. Only fee paid was SAT\$54 (and that's both clearing in and out!). We left at 5am the next morning, waking Port Control up when we radioed for permission to leave.

6.1.4 Blue Heeler - August 2016 – Marina Update

From Noonsite: <http://www.noonsite.com/Members/sue/R2012-08-02-1>

The 2nd pontoon still not re-built in Apia harbour as of August 2016, but is being used as mooring pens for some local boats.

1. The word is that they do not want people anchoring in the harbour if the marina has places - the marina is owned by the Harbour Authority. Through it does not seem to be rigorously enforced. There is a dinghy fee of \$50 per week. This allows the docking of your dinghy in the marina and, I assume, access to the simple toilet and shower. Facilities are a single toilet/ shower room with a key provided by the marina. However, you have to walk through a waterfront bar complex to access this, so it's not heavily used, apart from a morning ablution.

There is water and power for each slip. The marina has floating concrete finger wharfs, with rubber guards fitted. All in good condition.

2. There is no security at the marina. Not even a locked gate. There is supposed to be a guard, but we have not seen one and the taxi drivers, who service the marina, have complained to the harbour master, as they end up being defacto security. This therefore applies to dinghies too, so they need to be locked.

3. The marina is right next to some late night venues, which means a bit of noise on the weekend and Wednesday nights. Party spots for the yachties!, but also the risk of drunk people coming down to the boats, Though I have not seen it happen, there is nothing stopping them.

4. There are rats in the area who know how to climb ropes. We have had one on the boat ourselves. Cut empty plastic soda bottles and feed them onto the lines to prevent visitors, It's important that yachts do not export rats to environmentally sensitive islands when they leave.

5. The marina is a 15 minute walk from the centre of town or a \$5 WST taxi fee. Taxis are cheap and plentiful.

6. Scan of fee schedule:-

Cruising Permit: Free

Normal Garbage: No cost

Quarantine Garbage: \$2 WST per bag

Customs Exit Fee: \$55 WST

Marina fees:-

Up to 10m \$55.50 Tala

10 to 12m \$64.50 Tala

12 to 14m \$75.00 Tala

14 to 16m \$90.00 Tala

16 to 18m \$114 Tala

18 to 20m \$135 Tala

There was a local article disputing the cost for berthing - i.e. someone was charged \$200 for being at anchor. But as far as I know everything is on that list. And at least 2 boats I know were not charged anything at anchor.

This perhaps reflects the fact that the marina is often un-staffed. So on the one hand that makes it tricky if you need something, but also means they do not notice everything that goes on either.

By the way, normally they are on channel 66 at the marina. But as they are often not in the office, it's best to try and get a cell phone number when you do meet one of the marina people.

7. Note: The Marina will arrange for Customs, Health, and Quarantine to visit the boat. Then the captain can go to town to see Immigration.

8. Important - Currently it appears boats must clear out of Apia - even though they are likely to visit and then leave from more downwind locations. Also boats MUST have cruising permits to go to other anchorages - they check locally. The solution is to officially clear out of Apia using a forward exit date which accords with the cruising permit, e.g. We officially cleared customs and Immigration on the 26th of August, but obtained a cruising permit for 3 weeks from the Prime Minister and Cabinet's office, and a letter from Immigration saying our final exit date was September 17th.

9. Note: It's hard to get European gas bottles filled here. The one person who can do it is Tala at Hibiscus Gas. His number is 720 9441.

Overall the Samoans are very hospitable and helpful. There is plenty to do and see. It's not unusual to be invited to someone's home for lunch or even to stay the night with the extended family. The food is fresh and plentiful and cheap compared to French Polynesia.

6.1.5 ?? – August 2016 – Bad Apia Experience

A British yacht reported on a public forum in August 2016 that the fees had gone up 400% and that all yachts were required to go into the marina, not anchor out. More recent reports indicate this is no longer true (see 2017 reports above).

From a Letter to the Editor of the Apia Newspaper, found [online](#):

6.1.6 Soggy Paws - Apia vs Pago Pago - September 2011

We went both places, here are some of the tradeoffs:

Things that are better in Apia:

Marina - It's nice to be tied up to a marina--easier access, no problems with anchoring and dragging, etc. However, it did cost us \$20/night, and it was hot, as we were there in a light spell. It was nice to have dock water to do a washdown, and much easier coming and going. Electricity would have been nice, but we weren't ready to deal with 240v/50cycle power, so we just stayed on the solar and were fine.

Car Rentals - We rented a car in American Samoa for \$120/day. In Apia it only cost \$40/day. They were comparable cars. We did a lot more checking on prices and negotiating, though in Apia. We rented for 4 days and saw all of Upolu.

Taxi's - Taxis are plentiful and cheap around town.

Sightseeing - Upolu is a much bigger island than Tutuila (the island of American Samoa), there are more people, and more places to see.

Market - There is a huge downtown market with many fruits and veggies for sale and prices were reasonable.

Check-In / Check Out - The officials (usually) come to the marina. The entire cost of check-in check-out was 33 Tala (\$15 USD).

Things that were worse in Apia:

Internet - Internet was ridiculously expensive. A 2 hour 'card' (bought online) for Lavaspot was \$25Tala (\$11.35 USD). The Lavaspot, when it was working, was pretty fast, and easily picked up in the marina, but it was quirky, and if you forget to log out, it will eat up your time (ie not automatically log you out).

General Groceries: The things in the grocery store that we checked that we remembered the prices of from Am Samoa seemed more expensive. We had bought so much stuff in Pago that we didn't shop much though.

Bus System - Compared to the frequent, uncrowded buses in Pago Pago, we found Apia's buses to be a little daunting. We never saw them anything but packed. Driving around remote places we saw very few buses (so it would be hard to do a lot of sightseeing by bus).

6.1.7 Mooring Fees in Apia - 2010

Also, as of August 23, 2007, yachts visiting Apia, Samoa are required to berth in the brand-new marina, as the old anchoring grounds are needed as turning space for container ships. The rates are as follows:

10.5 meters	WS\$28/day
12	34
14	40
16	49
18	65
20	78
25	89
30	102

Exchange Rate 1 USD = WS\$ 2.5524

1 C\$ = WS\$ 2.10

1 € = WS\$ 3.15

On the other hand, the \$50USD which you had to pay to the Harbormasters Office previously, will not have to be paid any more.

Note that according to Java (below), these fees may be slightly higher now.

6.1.8 Periclees - August 2011

Arrival: We had a very pleasant sail through the night to Western Samoa. As we approached Apia we called the port control on channel sixteen to ask permission to enter their harbour and they answered. They told us to proceed and they would send out a boat to meet us. As promised a boat with four young men approached, told us to prepare our starboard side to tie up. We didn't know what to expect but were pleasantly surprised to find a modern American style marina with fingers, electricity and water. (OH Luxury!) The floats are even made by Bellingham marine just like home. This is an oasis in the middle of the Pacific.

The officials came to our boat to check us in. They were all very friendly and informative. Because English is their second language we very rarely have trouble communicating. The people here are far less rotund than their American Samoan neighbors and they seem to have a different attitude. It is obvious they have a sense of ownership and responsibility in their nation and a lot of pride. We saw very little trash on the streets and even the leaves are swept up every morning, leaving a neat and tidy look.

Provisions: The shopping isn't bad either. We found several wholesale outfits selling to the public, an open fruit and veggie market, lots of competitive grocery stores, excellent bakeries with Australian meat pies and even a Liquor Planet store filled with all types of competitively priced spirits, beer and wine. I managed to refill my propane tank and was pleasantly surprised to find they use the same tanks and valves as we use at home. (Not always the case.) As far as I know diesel is only available from the service station and to get it you must jerry can it to your boat.

Sightseeing: The cars drive on the left side of the road here so you must be very careful to look both ways when crossing the roads. It seems every taxi driver offers a full day of sightseeing. The price can be as low as two hundred tallas. One Talla cost about 44 cents US so that works out to about a hundred dollars for four people.

6.1.9 Java - August 2011

Java is now in Apia Marina, which is pleasant, but a little pricey for us...\$ST52/day which is about \$US25. There's a cut-off at 12 metres so we're in the higher slip fees. (Java is a 50' catamaran)

There's also a \$ST8 for however long your stay is for facilities charge...no big deal.

They have cold showers, dock water and 240V electricity which they say they can provide a transformer to 120V, but they haven't seem to be able to come up with one for us, although a couple other boats have them. Apia is a good town with lots of markets where you can re-provision, but not as cheap as Am. Samoa.

6.1.10 Chatauqua - 2009

Entry: Once close to the entrance, call the port officials on the VHF, and they will give you directions for entering the outer harbor area and send a small boat out to guide you in for the inner harbor and into a slip in the marina. Do not take a slip that is right next to the harbor walls, be a few slips over down the pontoon, as the closest 1 or 2 slips may get a bounce from any swell that hits the harbor walls. Nothing serious, and not really bothersome. Being closer to the harbor wall does have a benefit of being able to pick up the wifi signal. More about that later.

Customs, Immigration, etc: The harbor officials notify the authorities as you enter. So you have nothing to do except wait for the various officials to show up on your boat. First is the health officer, to make sure you are healthy, etc. No sweat. Nice lady, fills out a form and off she goes. Then there was the food quarantine officer. The first bag of garbage you take off goes to his office area, you pay a small fee, \$2-3, and they burn the bag. (all garbage after that, you can just put in the bins on land by the pontoon gangway) Immigration does the passports. Customs was last. All straight forward and easy, except.....

Mr Murphy visited us on arrival. Except for the health officer, and a belated quarantine officer, the immigration and customs officers didn't show; even after repeated calls on the VHF. So I taxied down to the Immigration office in town, did the paperwork, he hand wrote with a quill pen the entry into the passports. Pretty cool! Came back to the boat, and went to customs - turn left coming off the pontoons, so away from town, and they did their thing, received paper, and all was good. Just time consuming. But people are unbelievably friendly, nice and helpful. This is heaven, western values combined with local traditions & values. Politeness still exists.

Now, once the health officer says you are ok, the guard at the small hut at the head of the gangway, will tell/encourage you that it is ok to go across the street - restaurant, ice cream, or turn to starboard towards town for a convenience store, on the left at a main side street, for any quick needs. We and others did this, even though the official regs say you shouldn't. But people are pretty relaxed here. Samoa is not Americanized as is American Samoa.

Fuel: We split a rental car with another couple, did some touring, and then hauled diesel by 5 gal jerries, had about 20 of them among the 4 boats, over 100 gals of fuel from the nearest station. We did 4 boats. You can get paperwork for tax free fuel from customs, but one had to take their boat over to the commercial wharf, and other cruisers who had been here before, said it was not worth it, and there is the concern of boat damage on the commercial wharf. it is very high, to accommodate freighters.

Water: Potable water on the dock.

Electric: 240v 50 cycle electricity on the dock. They have transformers you can use to convert 240v to 120v. However, the transformer DOES NOT convert 50 cycles to 60 cycles. The typical U.S. Inverter won't work on 50 cycles. Some people are using their generators at the dock. Others put a long ext cord from the transformer into the boat, to use for charging various electronics that can run 120/240v 50/60 cycle, and for fans and things that don't care how many cycles... carefully check the 'brick' on each piece of equipment before you plug it in.

Provisioning: Several good stores in town, going up the 'T' intersection of the waterfront road, and onto the main street in town, then over to the right, also an indoor open market, which is 24/7 (fruit/veg/handicrafts); some of the locals with stands sleep and live there. Amazing. We would walk to town with our two wheeled cart, load up and then walk back or sometimes take a taxi back if we really outdid ourselves with groceries.

From here on west, food becomes more reasonably priced; supplies are good, fresh produce is great, and one starts thinking about where to settle down and stay for the rest of one's life!

Liquor: There is also paperwork to get tax free booze, but we are not big drinkers, so we didn't pursue this.

You'll also find plenty of clothing, book, general goods type shops.

Touring: Talking with taxi driver one day, he told us he also had car rentals, and was cheaper than others; so we rented a car from him.

Robert L. Stevenson house, the Malua Turtle pond with turtles that you can feed-they are BIG -several feet across,the Sopoaga Rest Area for picnicking and viewing the spectacular falls and plants; and, not to be missed: THE PAPASEEA SLIDING ROCKS There are facilities to change into bathing suits; take a picnic lunch and sit on the rocks afterwards and beam at your achievements.

We wish we'd done a two or three day rental. The island is big. It was a bit of a rush (and a lot of distance) to cover in one day. We also had to miss some things -- ferry over to the little island with some archeological sights, some first class beach snorkeling, etc.

Whenever we stopped to chat we were treated to the innate courtesy and friendliness of Samoans, even though in some areas they were recovering from the tsunami and giving directions to tourists was not high on the list! Bring your food and drink and maybe a jerry of gasoline as once away from Apia there isn't much available.

When we were there, Samoa had just converted over from U.S. style to British style side of the road driving. Lots of signage, and no accidents!

Buses: There is a reasonably good bus system for the close in sights -- Sliding Rocks, RLS house, etc., but be prepared to walk as you may be dropped off quite far from the site. You may have to wait on the return as the timetable isn't too accurate. Catch buses at the market.

Showers & Heads: Coming off the dock, turn left(towards customs), but stay by the water, and there is the building with showers (cold water). Nothing special, but good to have.

Restaurants: There is a moderately priced restaurant across from the docks. To the right of the restaurant, a great ice cream stand. And there is a McDonald's in town if you just want toeat healthy???? There are plenty of good eating places in town and sometimes the little shops sell wonderful prepared food.

Entertainment: The tourist bureau is excellent. They give away a good road map, about 95% accurate, which is fine as that allows plenty of opportunity for spontaneous exploration and meeting locals, two of our favorite activities!

Aggie Grey's - If you walk towards town, on the left side, across from the water, there is a hotel/restaurant called Aggie Grey's. This is where several of our friends who were in harbor during the Tsunami were told to run to and stay until the all clear signal was given. Their boats were undamaged, as the Tsunami only hit the south coast of the island. Here in Apia, their boats and the floating docks just went up and down a few meters on the pilings. She has passed on, but her daughter runs it. They have a weekly evening event-local dancing and music on the stage(\$20? for the two of us), which is quite entertaining; and then you can also pay for the massive buffet (we didn't do that-can't do justice any more to an all you can eat gastronomically stomach enlarger), two of the other boats did and they quite enjoyed it/excellent value. Even if you don't do this, stop by in the lobby, read about her. But best of all, the hotel is very easy going, and you can go there, walk thru the lobby and sit by the pool, take a swim, etc without being a guest.(try that in the States)

Police band/flag raising - every morning, the entire police force parades from the station to the main

area by the waterfront and has a Samoan national flag raising ceremony. This parading is done to music as the police force has this terrific band that leads the procession marching along. Cars come to a stop and wait for the force to pass by. We watched them go by one morning; it was great. (just can't picture the NYC police doing this) If you are walking towards town, they start from the left side of the street, down near the Ozzie consulate and proceed towards the large building by the waterfront. I think it occurred around 8AM, but not sure. Any of the locals should be able to tell you, or ask a policeman or woman. They do not carry guns; but their presence, men in traditional skirt uniforms, carries authority, which is respected and that is all that is needed!!

Wifi - The same restaurant above sells wifi access. If you are close enough to the main dock (we were just 3-4 pontoons in on the first main dock by the gangway), the signal is strong enough on the boat; if not, others took their laptops up to the restaurant and did wifi there with the access ticket.

Laundry: Coming off the docks, make a right and go towards town, then make a left onto a good sized side street, but before town, and on the left side of the side street was the laundry. Sorry I can't give better directions, but the locals should be able to. You leave your laundry and detergent, the woman does it, and you pay/pick it up later; no extra; so no wasting a morning doing the laundry.(and it keeps a person employed; the Pacific islands are about keeping locals employed; not necessarily about efficiency of, or reducing labor requirements)

Cooking Gas Refills: The 4 boats shared a taxi and took our bottles; the taxi driver knew where - along the shore line past town, if memory serves me correctly, and then a left turn into the place. Did them while we waited; no problem with American fittings.

Clearing Out: First, we paid the marina bill, which is the office near the customs building. Very nice lady, with a great Pacific Map behind her desk. Had a great long talk with her as she wasn't busy. Memory says we went to the Immigration in town first, and they must give you a piece of paper, which then gets handed in to the customs office, so they can do their thing. You normally wait a few minutes at the customs office, and then they call you back to the window and get your zarpe. Leaving the harbor is easy, as you will now know the way out, retracing your steps in.

Other: There were some ants on the dock, and to prevent them from getting on the boat, we just sprayed the pontoon and a portion of the dock lines (not the whole length) with some bug spray. It worked fine. Don't let this change your mind about visiting Samoa - it is a gem.

We spent two weeks in Samoa, and could have stayed for months, except we wanted to get to Oz to see our friends for Xmas.

US Consulate: There is an office in the town, you will see the large American flag flying from the second floor of the building they are in; just in case you need any assistance for anything.

Other Consulates: Ozzie and Kiwi high commission offices are on the main street going towards town. You can apply for visas here (we did our Ozzie visa in Savu, Fiji), I think you can first apply for a Kiwi visa after arriving in NZ.

6.1.11 Sapphire of London - 2006

We were delightfully surprised at how genuinely friendly the local people are. (Everything I had read had suggested this might not be the case in Samoa - my books are wrong!). We made our way directly to the

huge fresh produce market as we had run out of fresh food some time ago. As we wandered through the many stalls selling local produce, people would stop us and welcome us to Samoa. This was a very different situation to French Polynesia where the locals seem weary of tourists. Another huge and very welcome difference was the refreshingly affordable prices. The town itself is not pretty but interesting and the people are very warm. I particularly wanted to see Samoa after reading Gavin Bell's *In Search of Tusitala* which tells the story of Robert Louis Stevenson's travels years ago.

On Sunday we went to Church. The unaccompanied harmony of the Samoan singing has to be heard to be believed. (Friends told us that the singing was also incredibly powerful in the Cook Islands.) The music was simply magnificent. There are hundreds of churches of various denominations on this island and everyone goes to their church on Sunday. The women all wear hats and get very dressed up and the men look wonderfully distinguished in their lava-lavas. Other than church, work is forbidden here (as it the case throughout a lot of the Western Pacific) on Sunday. This is the day when extended families cook and share their huge meal usually cooked in the traditional umu.

We joined friends yesterday in hiring a taxi to take us for a day trip around the island. We stopped at the Robert Louis Stevenson's Museum which used to be his magnificent house. The author settled in Samoa after sailing across the Pacific with his wife and step children. Unfortunately his health was always bad and enjoyed only four years here before he died at a young age. He produced thirteen books during his days in Samoa. During the four years, though, he seemed to earn a place in the hearts of the locals due largely to his efforts at promoting peace between various chiefs. He was also supportive in the Samoans in their bid for independence. The Samoan people called and still call Robert Louis Stevenson *Tusitala* which means teller of tales .

We drove across the centre of the island and then along the south coast. I was really surprised to see how traditionally so many of the people still live. Many live in houses called *fales* . A lot of these dwelling have no walls. They are a concrete slab or raised wooden platform with a roof which is held up by pillars. Some have furniture and others little or none. They have blinds that they can pull down if it rains. Many of the people are virtually self sufficient in growing their own fruit and vegetables for consumption or sale. The main sources of protein are fish, chicken or pork. The Samoans know how to use a lot of plants for medicinal purposes too.

A lot of the homes have graves in the front yards as it is customary for the family to bury deceased members themselves. The chiefs get taller graves!

Everywhere we went we were greeted with huge smiles and waves. We have not come across people this openly happy and friendly since Brazil. The beaches are pretty and very clean and the interior is phenomenally lush and green with lots of steep gorges and waterfalls. The island has invested heavily in hydro electricity as a source of sustainable energy.

Samoa is effectively governed by chiefs. Until quite recently only the chiefs could vote but now everyone over 21 is eligible. However only the chiefs can stand for election.

We saw lots of groups of children and men playing *kirikiti* which is the Samoan version of cricket. The bat looks similar to a cricket bat though instead of having effectively two sides it has three and one of the sides is curved! How they have any control over where the ball ends up is beyond me.

From what we have seen, though Apia is relatively developed, the people of Samoa seem to know that they have a jewel in their possession - both the pristine islands and their rich and warm culture. They seem to be making real efforts to preserve this whilst encouraging and welcoming visitors to their country.

Each day in Apia the Police Band, along with the police force on duty that day march down the main road of Apia. As they march past, the local people stand still as a mark of respect. They looked fabulous

in their lava-lavas. At eight o'clock they reach the town square where the flag is raised to the sound of the national anthem. It is a really dignified ceremony and as the flag is raised, a siren sounds and everything stops - all the traffic, shop business and even conversation.

One day we spent nearly all day refueling. We did this messy job with our jerry cans as we wanted to be sure of filtering the fuel. This was a good call as there seemed to be a lot of water in the diesel.

Snorkeling: I went for a snorkel at the Palolo Deep National Marine Reserve which is right by the marina. There were cages underwater protecting several giant clams. The Deep is a large hole around 50 metres from the shore. Up to that point the water is only a foot or two deep but there the depth drops rapidly and the coral is beautifully colourful and the fish are abundant. It was much better than any snorkelling we did in French Polynesia but far from being as spectacular as Suvarrow.

Eating Out: One evening we joined a group of friends for a buffet / dance show at Aggie Grey's hotel. We had a great night. The company and food were thoroughly enjoyable and the dancing was wonderful. The dancers were all hotel staff. (In fact I recognised one of the dancers as being the doorman who had welcomed us to the hotel upon our arrival.) The inevitable moment came when the dancers pounced on unsuspecting members of the audience to perform with them and sure enough, Kev was hauled up to demonstrate yet another of his many talents. What made the performance particularly special was the clear enjoyment of the singers and dancers. They seemed to be having a ball and delighted in demonstrating their skills to the guests. The finale was a fire dance performed by the young men. That was extremely impressive.

6.1.12 Tackless II - 2005 - Visiting the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum

Our final tourist endeavor was squeezed into our last afternoon after all the checking out and shopping had been done. We grabbed a taxi and let it carry us up the mountains behind Apia to the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum. Plagued by poor health his whole life, Stevenson and his wife Fanny made Samoa their home for his last four years before his death. The house, high on a hillside estate with a fine view of the sea, is now beautifully restored by an American owner after having been the residence of a German minister, a New Zealand Minister, and a Samoan Minister during the years in between. Our charming young guide painted a vivid picture of the lives of the inhabitants (whom she referred to by their first names ... "Robert liked to", especially amusing as a book I looked at in the gift show said he went by "Louis"! Beautiful residences like this always evoke a nostalgia for the gracious living of times gone by, at least before you consider the very primitive health care that was available. <C:\Users\sherr\cgi-bin\blowup.pl>

One of the most interesting features of the museum was a display of photographs from the turn of the century. These included stunning black and white portraits of the Samoans of Stevenson's time. What a handsome people! A small card made the critical observation that photographers back then insisted on focusing on the more sexual aspects of the society, but that is surely not how it came across to us.... Although it is true that women's blouses only made their appearance toward the end of the period.

6.1.13 Kanaloa - 2004

The entrance to Apia is pretty straightforward and C-map is pretty much spot on.

When you come in, go alongside the commercial wharf on your port side towards the landward end. Go to the harbormaster's office, a white building with antennas on top at about 11 o'clock if you stand on the wharf with your back to the boat. You can sometimes get them on VHF Channel 16. They will arrange all the check-in procedures. Customs and Quarantine are at the port, Immigration is downtown, turn left at the clock tower coming from the port then the first right. You will find them on the first floor about 100 yards along on the left. Health is at the local hospital. However, they should all visit you.

Don't forget that you gain a day when you leave Tonga. We arrived on Sunday Tongan time, thinking that we could clear the next day, only to find that we had a second Sunday! If you do arrive on the weekend, anchor off in the harbor and wait on board with your Q flag up until Monday morning. When you have cleared, anchor off. We anchored off the mouth of a shallow river that runs into the harbor just to the left of Aggie Grey's hotel.

If you take your dinghy around the end of the wharf where you tie up, you will find an inner basin with a small jetty and steps near the harbormaster's office. You can leave your dinghy there all day without any security problems.

Things to do: Definitely visit Robert Louis Stephenson's house. Take a taxi or hire a car. Walk up to his tomb, it is a lovely view. We arrived in time for their Independence Day, which was very entertaining, especially the whaler racing (long rowing boats with 42 oarsman, a coxswain, drummer and captain, very spectacular). Do hire a car and drive around the island. The villages are lovely, very well kept and really traditional, a complete contrast to Tonga. Go to the dancing at Aggie Grey's on Wednesday evening. There is a reasonable fresh market plus a good fish market - keep to seaward past the clock tower about 300 yards farther on.

Wallis - C- map is spot on, but do get to the pass at slack water as the current can run up to 6 knots with nasty overfalls. Anchor off the village of Gahi (pronounced Nahi). The channel is well marked, and C-map is pretty close. If you anchor off the main town, expect it to be very rolly and the tide goes out a long way! There is a largish white house on the starboard side of the bay near the ramp. This belongs to the village chief, Noah. Introduce yourselves to him. His wife runs the village shop where you can get most basics plus fresh croissants and baguettes.

To check in, walk out of the village up the hill by his house to the main road, turn left and thumb a lift to the main town of Mata Utu. Everyone has a car, and there is little or no public transport. Go to the gendarmerie first for Immigration (at the main crossroads turn right and it is 200 yards on right), then to Customs (back to the crossroads, turn right and it's about one to two km farther along the main road on the left next to a boat store). Chat with your driver, and they will usually drop you off where you want. It's all very laid back. There are three very good supermarkets in the main town, but a bit pricy. Lovely French food, though! The bank, together with an ATM, is again off the crossroads; approaching from Gahi turn right. It's in a shopping mall about a km on the left.

For more info see our website (www.kanaloa55.com).

6.2 Outside of Apia

For information on anchoring elsewhere see SV Outsider Australia's excellent [Cruising Guide to Samoa](#). (download directly from Noonsite 30MB)

6.2.1 Sightseeing Upolu by Bus

Below is the bus schedule for Upolu, departing from downtown Apia, which we (Soggy Paws) got in September 2011 from the Samoa Tourism Bureau.

*Please verify with bus drivers before leaving Apia. Bus schedules are independently set by operators and the times shown here approximates. (it would also be a good idea to get an updated copy of this schedule from the tourism bureau downtown near McDonalds's). This is mainly provided so you have an idea of frequencies and costs (in Western Samoan Dollars).

The below schedule shows departure times for departures from the Fugalei Food Market and Savalolo Flea Market.

Bus Name	Destination	Departure Times	Cost
* Vaoola	Hotel Insel Fehmarn	*every hour	\$1.00
	Robert L S Museum / Tomb		\$1.80
* Siumu	Bahai Temple	*7.30am, 10am, 2pm	\$3.90
	Tiavi Falls		\$3.90
	Sinalei Reef Resort		\$5.50
	Coconut Beach Resort		\$5.50
	Aganoa Black Sand Beach		\$5.50
* Salani Falealili	Togitogiga Waterfall	*8.30am, 2.30pm	\$4.40
	Salani Surf Resort		\$7.10
* Fagalii	Apia Park Stadium	*every half hour	\$1.20
	Royal Goif Course		\$1.50
* Saluafata	Saoluafata Beach Fales	*8.30am, 9am, 10am	\$3.00
		12pm, 3.30pm, 5.20pm	
* Falefa	Piula Cave Pool	*8.30am, 10.30am, 12.30pm,	\$3.10
		2.30pm, 4.30pm	\$3.20
* Saleapaga	Sea breeze Resort	*10am, 11am, 2pm, 3pm, 5pm	\$4.90
	Saieapaga Beach Fales		\$5.50
* Lalomanu	Faofao Beach Fale	*10am, 11am, 11.30am,	\$5.50
	Boomerang Creek	2pm, 2.30pm, 3.30pm, 4pm,	
	Lalomanu Beach Fales	4.30pm	\$5.70
* Faleolo	Malua Theological College	*6am, 8.30am, 10.30am,	\$2.30
	Faleolo Int' Airport	12pm, 2pm, 5pm	\$3.10
* Pasi O Vaa	Aggie Grey's L B R & S	*6am, 6.30am, 8am, 8.30am,	\$3.20
	Mulifanua Wharf	10am, 10.30am, 11am, 2pm	\$3.20
* Manono-uta	Airport Lodge		\$3.50
	Le Vasa Resort	Every 2 hours	\$3.50
	Manono-uta & ferry to Manono		\$3.70
* Seesea	Mormon Temple	*every hour	\$0.80
	Papaseea: Sliding Rocks		\$2.20
* Lefaga	Tanumapua Rainforest	*7am, 10am, 11.30am,	\$1.40
	Cloud 9 Ecolodge	1.30pm, 3pm, 4.30pm	\$2.10
	Return to Paradise		\$4.40
	Matareva Beach Fale		\$4.40
Saanapu/Sataoa	Virgin Cove Resort	*9.30am, 2.30pm	\$4.40
(via Aleisa)	Saanapu Mangrove		\$4.40

6.2.2 Going To American Samoa from Apia by Ferry or Plane

From Java 2011: s/v Far Fetched is provisioning from here by flying to American Samoa (\$US 100) and taking the ferry (5hrs) back to Apia for \$US 40 (¾ fare). If you took the Ferry both ways it costs \$US 65). It goes to AS on Wednesday morn and returns on Thursdays so it gives you a day to shop and an overnight stay in AS. Just another way to do it.

From Frommers.com-Flying: Polynesian Airlines (tel. 800/644-7659 in the U.S., 22-737 in Apia, or 633-4331 in Pago Pago; www.polynesianairlines.com), Inter Island Airways (tel. 42-580 in Samoa, 699-7100 in American Samoa), and South Pacific Express (tel. 28-901 in Apia, 699-9900 in American Samoa) fly between Faleolo Airport in Samoa and Pago Pago several times a day. I always fly on Polynesian because it is a licensed scheduled carrier while the others are charter airlines. Round-trip fares are about S\$310 (US\$124/£62) if purchased in Apia, US\$155 to US\$165 (£78-£83 plus taxes if bought in American Samoa

From Frommers.com-By Ferry: For the adventurous, a relatively modern ferry, the Lady Naomi, makes the 8-hour voyage between Pago Pago and Apia at least once a week, usually leaving the main wharf in Apia at 11pm on Wednesday and departing Pago Pago's marine terminal at 4pm on Thursday for the return voyage. Tickets should be bought at least a day ahead. One-way fares from Pago Pago to Apia are US\$60 (£30) for a seat, US\$75 (£38) for a cabin. The Lady Naomi is operated by the Samoa Shipping Corporation, whose ticket office is on Beach Road, opposite the main wharf in Apia (tel. 20-935; www.samoashipping.com). The American Samoa agent is Polynesia Shipping Services (tel. 633-1211). Because the trade winds prevail from the southeast, the trip going west with the wind toward Apia is usually smoother.

6.2.3 John Neale - 2010 - Savai'i Island Anchorages

This came from [Noonsite](#):

A source for harbour and anchorage details is the Admiralty Sailing Directions, Pacific Islands Pilot, Volume II.

Before sailing to any harbours other than Apia, it is necessary to get written permission from the Ministry of the Prime Minister & Cabinet; fifth floor in the large government building on the Apia waterfront. Claire, the woman who manages Apia Marina in Samoa Ports Authority can give directions. Bring passports and ship's papers when requesting this letter.

Samoa Ports Authority has an employee who lives near the Asau Wharf named Sanele Tufuga. His job is to visit all yachts anchoring in Asau Bay to ask to see their letter of permission. It would be a good idea to have an extra copy available to give to Sanele. Sanele paddles a blue outrigger canoe and has a SPA badge.

Matautu Bay - This is the northernmost bay on Savaii, 45 miles sail from Apia and provides good protection from all but N through WNW directions. Chart NZ 865 provides a reasonably accurate harbour plan. Upon entering the east reef to port extends nearly half way across the entrance, forming a natural breakwater. Just inside the shoreward eastern end of the reef is Dive Savaii who monitors VHF Ch 16 & 17. They contacted us as we were anchoring off the resort and suggested we follow their dive boat to a more protected, sandy-bottomed anchorage further in the bay.

We anchored at 13 26.825 S, 172 21.875 W and found nothing but sand in 7 meter depths noting the shallow reef extending from shore drops off to 7-10 meters. This was a comfortable anchorage even in fresh trades, but shore access through the reef was only visible at LeLagoto Beach Resort nearby or further away at Dive Savaii.

Asau Harbour - This large bay had a dredged entrance channel providing access to a commercial wharf built to service the timber mill which has since closed. The channel has claimed at least two vessels

recently; one 20 m steel fishing boat visible on the west reef of the channel and a 15 meter fiberglass yacht, the remains of which are ashore next to the commercial wharf. There is a NZ harbour chart, copies of which were unavailable in Apia. The channel entrance is at a fairly sharp SE angle to the outer reef and when lined up on the range one passes very close to or through large surf breakers to port or eastern side of the channel entrance. There are no marks or buoys at the entrance, only one white post on either side marking the channel edge half way through the channel. The Admiralty Sailing Directions state, "The best conditions for entering the channel are at first light and at LW".

There is a range (139 degrees true) of which the furthest (and higher) of the two range markers is a large steel white downward-pointing triangle on a steel tower, located on the shoreline at coconut tree height. The lower or inner half of the range mark is a much smaller faded orange steel triangle pointing up, located on steel post upon a coral head 0.3 nm into the bay, towards the pass.

Note: On our first time through we had a momentary depth reading of 3 meters. A yacht following us experienced a similar reading in the same location. We transited the pass four times by dinghy with sounder and lead line and twice swam it with a depth sounder to check for a shoal but found none. We found minimum depths of 7.5 meters, as long as we stayed exactly on the range.

Entrance instructions - Print off Google Earth image of Asau Harbour, this image is very helpful in understanding the channel. Email (vaimoana@ipasifika.net) or call (685-581-40, Mob: 685-772-2703) Sale, (pronounced Sally) is the owner of Va-I-Moana Seaside Resort. Sale may also monitor VHF ch 16. He doesn't mind running out to the channel entrance to guide yachts in with his 7 meter aluminum skiff.

First waypoint: 13 29.983S, 172 39.361 located outside the pass This will put a vessel on the range in 11 meters of water, well clear of the breakers. The range will be distantly visible from this position, but the lower (smaller) up-pointing triangle will look quite small. If you can not locate the range, do not try entering this pass.

The range will take you close to the breakers on your port side, but DO NOT steer to starboard to give the breakers a wider berth. Watch the wave sets to try and avoid "sneaker waves" that have set yachts to starboard onto the reef. The wreck of a steel fishing boat is on a second reef to starboard while the reef to port has a drying sandbank with black lava rocks. We kept our mainsail up with a third reef and kept a steady powering speed of 6 knots to avoid current and eddies in the channel. Have someone continually calling depth. It was a helpful to follow Sale in as at 8:30am the light was bad for spotting the reef, but the most important thing is to stay aligned with the range marks.

A **second useful waypoint** 13 30.285 S, 172 39.094 W places you on the range and abeam of a white post to port. Shortly after there is a white post to starboard, marking the outer edge of the channel The LW depth at this point should be 9.5 meters.

From the second waypoint continue on the range until clear into the bay and the Va-I-Moana Resort is visible. You may then steer to the anchorage position.

Anchorage

Anchorage Position 13 30.967 S, 172 38.726 W

Anchorage off the swim platform/dinghy dock:

Va-I Moana Resort generously welcomes yachts. Dinners and drinks are very reasonably priced and the boys play and sing in a Samoan string band tradition after dinner. Saturday night is their Samoan Night and for ST\$30 they put on an incredible spread of traditional umu-cooked foods. Many cruising kids enjoy playing on the white sand beach and swimming rafts. There are shops, a post office, a local water washing/swimming rock pool and a petrol station nearby along with very friendly people. Sale arranged a half day circle-island tour for the crews of three yachts with a total of 12 adults and three kids for

ST\$450 which worked out very well. Lonely Planet Samoa and Tonga is an excellent land guide that explains the sights and custom entrance fees for the various sights.

6.2.4 Tackless II - 2005 - To Savai'i by Ferry

In square miles, Samoa's second main island Savai'i is bigger than Upolu. In fact it is the third largest island in Polynesia after New Zealand and Hawaii. The guidebooks and eco-tour marketers tout Savai'i as the more pristine, more traditional of the big Samoa islands, and indeed it is quieter and less-developed than Upolu. The center of the island is dominated by a string of volcanic mountains and dense jungle that make it relatively impenetrable except by hardier tourists than we. Since we were so pleased with the Upolu tour, we decided to sign up for Green Turtle's Savai'i tour, instead of trying to see it by boat. There are several good reasons to do this. There only a few acceptable anchorages in Savai'i, and special permission to go there by boat must be applied for. This is not all that hard to accomplish, apparently, as several cruisers we know did that. However, it is a disadvantage to sail that far west, if your next destination is Tonga, since the resulting course line is likely to be hard on the wind

As packing the ferry ride to Savai'i and the tour into one day would make for a long one, we decided to book ourselves into one of the "beach resorts." A Samoan "beach resort" is a collection of one-room, open-air fale with a mattress on the floor, a mosquito net and a communal bathroom. It is as close to the way Samoans actually live as these two captains were likely to get (Samoans don't use mattresses; they sleep directly on the pandanus mats!) Several of the Upolu beach resorts we'd stopped by had appealed to us, so we requested being booked into whatever resorts on Savai'i most closely matched them. This led us to plan an overnight at Vacation Beach Fales on Manase Beach in Matavai.

Unfortunately, we woke to overcast skies and rain in Apia. Being troopers, we forged ahead with the plan and shared a fifty-tala taxi with our friends Dale and Heather of C'est La Vie to the ferry dock at the west end of Upolu. The ferry ride was boisterous (I hardly noticed, deep into the 6th Harry Potter book that Heather had lent me), and we landed to have another fifty-tala taxi ride to Manase Beach. Huddled together on a strip of beach seaward of the road, Vacation Beach Fales were not quite as appealing at first glance as the ones that had piqued our interest in Upolu, but, although Dale and Heather were right in the middle of the cluster, we did luck out and get a fale on the beach separated from the others by a creek.

Our fale was an oblong about 8' x 20', with a thatch and tin roof and palm-frond "Venetian blinds" all round that one could lower to keep out the rain. We spent the cloudy afternoon relaxing and reading in our fale, and capped it with a beach walk and swim. Dinner was surprisingly nice (clearly one of the features that gave the "resort" its "10" rating), and we retired to our mosquito net for the evening. Before bed, Don raised all the palm "blinds" so that we would wake to a view of the ocean, but heavy nighttime rain squalls had him up lowering them in succession as the wind backed around the hut. Still, we slept surprisingly well and woke pretty pleased with the adventure.

Unfortunately, the weather was not looking much better. In fact it poured during breakfast. As luck would have it a small store across the road was having a special on umbrellas, and we four stocked up. Our driver Aitu, arrived about ten and – we being the only passengers – took off counter clockwise around the island. One of the downsides, we discovered, about staying at Manase Beach, was that the part of the "tour" covering the NE section of the island between the ferry dock and Manase was simply dropped. As this included the swim with the turtles, Heather was quite disappointed.

However, we continued onward, driving through more villages of houses and fale, with stops to descend into a large lava tube, and to taste local fruits offered at a family homestead eeking out a plantation on a craggy lava field.

On a turn in the road we saw evidence of the ongoing logging operations that Lonely Planet calls Savai'i's biggest on-going issue. On the West End of the island we stopped to see some spectacular sea arches and "Lover's Leap" precipices, jammed the brakes on for a cloud of bright blue Monarch-type butterflies just emerging from their cocoons, and ate an uninspiring lunch at another beach 'resort' that raised our appreciation of Vacation Beach by several points.

Because of the nature of the village structure, most every stop on the tour called for a token fee to be paid. Although most of the amounts were small and although it is very hard to begrudge these folks their tokens, it begins after awhile to eat away at the pleasure of a packaged tour! For this reason, and because time until the return ferry seemed to be slipping away from us, we by-passed several featured stops, a Canopy walk (like a small version of the ones we did in Costa Rica) and a tapa cloth weaving demonstration (this probably because it was Saturday.)

However we did not miss the natural highlight of the tour: the Taga Blowholes. We've seen blowholes before, but none as spectacular as these. And the locals know how to make a show of it.

Two young girls carrying a basket of coconuts led us across the craggy shore of black lava. A white line has been painted across the rocks to keep tour groups back, but we stepped right over it to within about ten feet. Like the Bubbly Pool in the BVI, the blast obviously depends on the state of the swell, but our blustery weather had stirred up plenty enough for a good show. And, yes, as you might guess, the purpose of the coconuts was to feed the hole with ammunition, which made a pretty good demonstration of the forces involved as they were launched as high as a hundred feet in the air.

<C:\Users\sherr\cgi-bin\blowup.pl> Perhaps it was the weather – low clouds which obscured the mountains – but I'd have to honestly admit that, other than the blow holes, there was nothing that we felt was all so special about Savai'i. We enjoyed our fale overnight, (between the ferry rides and the leisurely afternoon I finished off the whole Harry Potter book!), but I think we'd just as soon have stayed at one of the ones on the south shore of Upolu (Vavau Beach and Virgin Cove being our favorites based solely on their spectacular landscapes). As Don wryly observed half-way around, "I think I've got a grip on Samoan Village life" and honestly the touted friendliness of the Savai'i islanders was no more pronounced than on Upolu or Tutuila. On the other hand, our friends on Wandering Star who did take the boat to the anchorage just east of where we stayed had such a wonderful time they say they could actually live there.

6.2.5 Interlude - July 2006 - To Savai'i in Our Own Boat

We obtained our cruising permit from the Prime Minister's Department on the fifth floor of the Government Building, stocked up on a month's supply of fruit and veggies, collected our dutyfree liquor from Customs and prepared for the day-sail to Matautu Bay, Savai'i.

We had been in email contact with Fabien at Dive Savai'i divesavaii@samoa.ws and the Le Lagoto Beach Resort lelagoto@samoa.ws and they were ready to receive us.

After an easy six hour downwind sail, we arrived at **Matautu Bay**. The charts were not very accurate, but the entrance was easy. Fabian greeted us in his dive boat and confirmed our choice of anchoring location in 35 feet in an indentation in the reef just off the lava rock sea wall.

We certainly fared better than the three-masted London Missionary Society (LMS) schooner JUNO which, in 1889, piled up on the reef and was washed into the bay by a big cyclone a few years later. This wreck is now one of Fabien's dive sites with the iron hull broken into three pieces in 60 ft. His other sites are mostly on the reefs around Matautu Bay but in calm weather, he will take you to dive the lava fields to the east.

After a couple days of diving, we took another guided tour around this island with the tour bus from the Le Lagoto Resort. Savai'i is the largest island in Polynesia next to the big island of Hawaii.

Legend has it that Hawaii is named after this mythical island that is said to be the home island of all Polynesian migrations (Hawaiki, Havaiki, Avaiki, etc). Our tour guide was a daughter of the local chief and she pointed out that the village of Fangamalo in Matautu Bay where the LMS wrote the first Samoan Bible.

Our tour went counterclockwise around Savai'i with a stop at Asau Bay to see the cyclone damaged wharf. The entrance to this bay is very narrow and long and there really isn't much of a town left after the big cyclones of '90 and '91 devastated this coast.

Next, we visited the Falealupo Rainforest Preserve with its canopy bridge walk. Then around Cape Mulinuu which is westernmost piece of land on the east side of the dateline. After a lunch stop at Lover's Leap and a stop at a black sand beach, we watched some kids blasting coconuts into the air with the big blowholes at Alofaaga.

Polynesia's largest structure is Pulemelei Mound, a square stone pile truncated pyramid roughly 150 feet on a side and 40 feet high. No one really knows why or when it was built but it was fun to go walking through the jungle to find it. After a stop for fresh fruit at the market in the main town of Salelologa, we headed up the east coast to the Saleaula Lava Fields. The main attraction here is a 1800s church with a lava flow through it.

Our last stop was for a swim with some sea turtles in the Satoalepai Wetlands. This road trip took over eight hours and combined with the diving in Matautu Bay, made our trip to Savai'i well worth the effort. In fact, most tourists say they would rather have spent more time on this more rural island than on Upolu.

Samoa is one of the cleanest, friendliest Pacific countries we have visited.

6.2.6 White Princess - Asau Harbor Entrance - Sep 2011

A boat here tried to cross the reef using co-ordinates from a compendium that they got from you. The co ordinates ARE NOT CORRECT, and would lead a boat onto the reef.

The correct coordinates for the pass transit are 13deg 30.097'S 172 deg 39.282W on the outside to 13.30.611S 172.38.815W on the inside. Pass is marked with leading line and port and starboard beacons. All marks are small and are difficult to see until you are on top of them. Marks are lit at night - but I wouldn't try this in the dark.

Soggy Paws' Note: plotting all 4 coordinates carefully on a Maxsea/CMAP chart indicates they all line up, so perhaps the other boat didn't get them plotted correctly and/or did not use to range to keep from getting swept sideways onto the reef.

6.2.7 Kanaloa - Visiting Asau, Savai'i - 2003

To get your cruising permit, go to the fifth floor of the Prime Minister's office with your passports; they will clear you at the same time.

We visited the lovely anchorage of Asau in Savai'i. Nice, clear, warm water with freshwater thermoclines.

The entrance can be tricky to find as C-map is wrong. From seaward, the waypoints are: (1) 13°29.778'S, 172°39.528'W, (2) 13°30.477'S, 172°38.931'W. The delta offset for C-map is lat. +0.48', long. +0.33'. *SEE NOTE ABOVE ABOUT THESE WPTS, however, when I plotted them on Maxsea, they all line up properly together.*

For further details see our website (www.kanaloa55.com). It is best to access it through Google. Click on "Log of the Voyage," then "Year 2003," then "Pacific" and "Samoa."

6.2.8 US Sailing Directions - Savai'i Matautu Bay

An anchorage with good shelter in the trade wind season, but exposed at all seasons, may be taken by vessels with local knowledge, in 14 to 26m, sand, between the reefs.

6.2.9 US Sailing Directions - Savai'i Asau Bay

Asau Bay (13°30'S., 172°38'W.), entered about 13 miles W of Safune Bay, is completely fronted by a reef of sand and mud.

Tides—Currents.—Off the entrance, the tidal current sets in an E direction from 4 hours before to 1 hour after HW at Asua, and in a W direction from 3 hours after to 6 hours before HW reaches a maximum rate of almost 0.8 knot at springs.

In the dredged channel, there is a continuous NW flow, reaching a maximum rate of 1.5 knots during a falling tide, with a minimum rate on the rising tide.

There are heavy tide rips in the channel 0.2 mile NW of the seaward end of the airstrip.

Depths—Limitations.—The approach channel through the reef to Asau Bay is 54m wide, while the center 37m has been dredged to 6.7m. Due to sea and swell conditions, an underkeel clearance of 1.5m is recommended. The best conditions for entering are at first light and LW. There is a wharf with a least depth of 8.5m close S of Utulua on the E shore of the bay.

Three sets of range beacons mark the channel edges and center; all three sets stand in line bearing 139°.

Anchorage.—Anchorage may be obtained, in 31m, 0.2 mile N of the entrance, but may be untenable when the wind backs to the NE.

Close W of Asau Bay, separated from it by Cape Mauga, lies Sataua Bay, which has a sandy shore and a reef. Anchorage may be obtained by vessels with local knowledge, in 27 to 37m, in the middle of the bay where there is good shelter from the trade winds.

Caution is advised as silting has been reported on the W side of the approach channel off the airstrip.