

American Samoa

Official Map and Guide

National Park of American Samoa
American Samoa

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Top: Sand beach and fringing reef, framed by a dramatic volcanic landscape, comprise the Ofu unit of the park.
Rick Sutter

Above: Coastal rainforest grows along the road south of the village of Fiti'uta on the island of Ta'ū.
Stan Jorstad

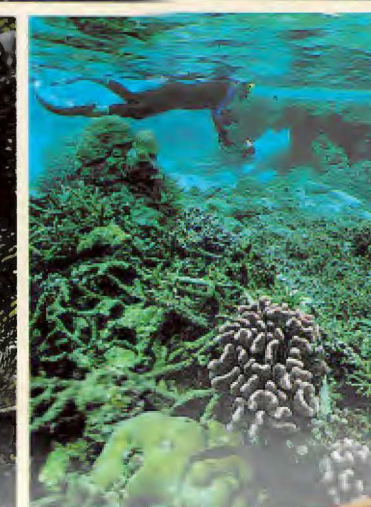


The Samoan flying fox (*Pteropus samoensis*) is the rarer of the two species of flying fox (fruit bat) found in Samoa.
Anne Brooke

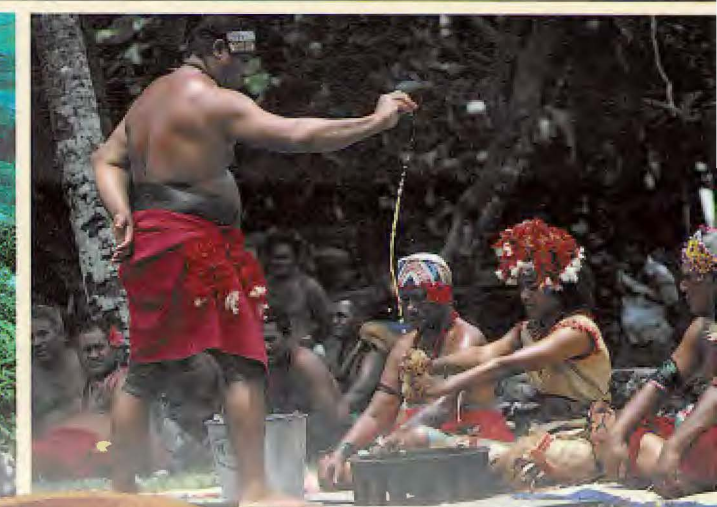


Pola Island (center), seen here from the Amalau Valley, rises more than 400 feet straight out of the ocean off Tutuila. A

short walk from Vatia village, The Pola is an ideal nesting site for many species of seabirds.
Christopher E. Stein



The lagoon along the south coast of the island of Ofu offers the best snorkeling waters in the park.
John Brooks



A wooden ava bowl (left). Ava is a ceremonial drink made from the crushed root of the pepper plant mixed with water. Leaders from other villages are welcomed through the sharing of ava (above).
Smithsonian Institution, left
Rick Sutter, above

Exploring the Islands of Sacred Earth

Talofa! The people of American Samoa and the National Park Service welcome you into the heart of the South Pacific, to a world of sights, sounds, and experiences that you will find in no other national park in the United States. Located some 2,600 miles southwest of Hawaii, this is one of the most remote national parks in the United States. It is also one of the newest; it was authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1988 and officially established in 1993 when a 50-year lease was signed. There are no federally-owned lands; parkland is leased from native villages and from the American Samoa Government. The park preserves the only mixed-species paleotropical rainforest in the United States, habitat of rare flying foxes (fruit bats), as well as Indo-Pacific coral reefs. In keeping with the meaning of the word Samoa—"sacred earth"—the park helps protect *fa'asamoa*, the customs, beliefs, and traditions of the 3,000-year-old Samoan culture.

As a visitor to the National Park of American Samoa, you have the opportunity to see lands and waters that are largely undeveloped.

You will not find the usual facilities of most national parks. Instead, with a bit of the explorer's spirit, you will discover secluded villages, rare plants and animals, coral sand beaches, and vistas of land and sea. The 10,500-acre park includes sections of three islands—Tutuila (pronounced too-too-EE-lah), Ta'ū (tah-OO), and Ofu (OH-foo). Almost all the land area of these volcanic islands—from the mountaintops to the coast—is rainforest. About 2,500 acres of the park is underwater, offshore from all three islands.

On the main island of Tutuila, the park area encompasses the north-central part of the island, from the steep ridgeline above Pago Pago (PAHNG-oh PAHNG-oh) Harbor to the north coast. For a sweeping view of Pago Pago Harbor and Rainmaker Mountain (North Pioa Mountain), hike to the top of 1,610-foot Mount 'Alava. The village of Fagasā is a short drive away. There is another panoramic view of the harbor area along the road from Pago Pago up through Āfono Pass, between Rainmaker Mountain and Maugaloa Ridge. This road continues down the other side of the pass, through the village of

Āfono, and around the headlands on the north side of Tutuila to the village of Vatia. From here you can view Pola Island (The Pola), a tiny uninhabited island just offshore, whose sheer cliffs rise more than 400 feet abruptly out of the ocean. The craggy rocks are home to numerous seabirds, including frigatebirds, boobies, white (fairy) terns, tropicbirds, and noddy terns.

Along the road to Vatia is the Amalau Valley, home to many forest bird species and to Samoa's two rare species of flying fox. One species has the unusual habit of flying around during the day. You are likely to see this bat in early morning or late afternoon. Look for its 3-foot wingspan. In flight, they can easily be confused for birds.

Sixty miles east of Tutuila—a 30-minute flight—are the Manu'a Islands: Ta'ū, Ofu, and Olosega (oh-low-SENG-ah). The island of Ta'ū, according to Samoan tradition, is the birthplace of all Polynesia. It is believed that ancient people voyaged by sea from the sacred site of Saua to settle all of the Polynesian islands. From Saua around Si'u

Point is the dramatic southern coast of Ta'ū, where waves crash against the rocky coast and sea cliffs stairstep to the 3,000-foot summit of Lata Mountain. These are some of the tallest sea cliffs in the world. Ta'ū is also where anthropologist Margaret Mead conducted studies in the 1920s for her controversial book *Coming of Age in Samoa*.

On the island of Ofu you will find coconut palms swaying in the warm ocean breeze along a secluded beach, views of the distant mountains of Olosega, and the best snorkeling waters in the park. The park section offshore from Ofu has one of the best examples of a coral reef in this part of the South Pacific, an ideal place to observe hundreds of species of fish, corals, and other marine life.

While visiting this park—as with all national parks—be aware that with the opportunity to explore comes responsibility. It is crucial that the park remain a sanctuary for natural and cultural environments to be enjoyed today and preserved for tomorrow.

Fa'asamoa—The Samoan Way

The Samoan culture is Polynesia's oldest. The first people on the Samoan islands came by sea from southeast Asia some 3,000 years ago. Over the centuries, distinct cultural traits emerged that we now call fa'asamoa (fah-ah-SAH-mo-ah). From Samoa, seafaring explorers and settlers journeyed to other Polynesian island groups hundreds of miles away.

The concept of a national park—particularly a park encompassing both natural and cultural aspects—fits well with the traditional Samoan way of life, the *fa'asamoa*. Samoans consider this island world to be sacred. Lands, waters, and food sources are managed in order to sustain them for the future. Samoan culture, customs, and traditions emphasize the importance of the extended family, the *aiga* (ah-ING-ah). Each *aiga's* lands are managed by its chief, or matai (mah-TIE), for the common good.

The Samoan people welcome visitors; in fact, a

stay with a family can be an important part of your island experience. Whether you are a guest or simply passing through a village, please observe these customs as a sign of respect.

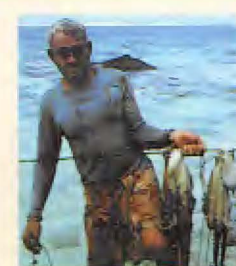
- Always ask villagers for permission before taking photographs, using the beach, or engaging in other activities, however unobtrusive they may seem. Permission will almost certainly be granted.

- In a traditional home, called a fale (fah-LAY), sit down on the floor before talking, eating, or drinking. Cross your legs or pull a mat over them; it is impolite to stretch out your legs uncovered.

- Sunday is the day for church, for rest, and especially for quiet in and around villages. Activities that are acceptable on other days, such as swimming, may not be permitted on Sunday.

- Each evening around dusk, villagers observe a time for prayers called Sa. Hours are generally posted at village entrances. If you are entering a village during Sa, stop and wait quietly until Sa ends. You may even be invited to join in a family prayer. It is not necessary to stop for Sa on the main roads.

- It is considered an honor to be asked to share ava (a local drink made from the



Subsistence fishing
Douglas Cullard

root of the pepper plant). To show respect, spill a few drops on the ground or mat in front of you, then raise your cup and say "manuia" (mahn-WE-ah) before drinking.

- Do not eat or drink while walking through a village.

Rainforest

From the mountaintops down to the ocean's edge, the islands are covered with mixed-species, paleotropical (Old World) rainforest. Samoa's rainforest is closely related to that of Asia and Africa, as opposed to neotropical (New World) rainforests of Central and South America. In mixed-species forests, no single tree or plant species dominates. This is the only rainforest of its kind protected within a U.S. national park.

Of the park's total area of 10,500 acres about 8,000 acres are rainforest. Depending on elevation, the forest can be characterized as coastal, lowland, ridge, montane, or cloud

forest. In addition to many species of trees, plants found here include vines, ferns, lichens, epiphytes (air plants), and mosses.

Because *fa'asamoa* is important to this park, subsistence farming is allowed on some park lands. Near villages that border on the rainforest are small plantations where taro, coconut, banana, breadfruit, papaya, mango and other crops are grown for a family's consumption. Don't confuse these crops with native rainforest.



Futu, or fish poison tree
W. Arthur Wistler

Coral Reef

Each of the islands of American Samoa supports a coral reef ecosystem in its coastal waters. Two islands, Rose Atoll and Swains Island, are coral atolls with well developed reef systems. The remaining five islands are extinct volcanoes surrounded by narrow fringing reefs. Offshore from the volcanic islands of Tutuila, 'Aunu'u, Ofu, Olosega, and Ta'ū are drowned barrier reefs.

Coral reefs support a wide variety of marine life representative of the tropical Indo-Pacific waters. To date, nearly 900 species of fish and nearly 200 species of coral have been documented. The fringing reef on the south side of the

island of Ofu within the park is one of the best preserved reefs in this part of the South Pacific. It is an excellent place for snorkeling. Remember that coral is made up of living organisms and can be easily damaged. It is unlawful to collect coral—or any other marine life.



Clownfish in sea anemone
Larry Madrigal

Birds and Bats

Bats are the only native mammals found in American Samoa. They are harmless to people. There are two species of flying fox (fruit bat) and one insect-eating bat species here. The fruit bats, the Samoan flying fox and the white-collared flying fox, are as large as one pound with a wingspan close to 3 feet. They eat pollen and fruits, serving an essential role in the ecology of the native rainforest by pollinating plants and dispersing seeds. The Samoan flying fox has the habit of flying during the day as well as at night. There are several locations in the park where these bats are likely to be seen; look especially along the ridges



White tern
Bryan Harry

of the Amalau Valley on north-central Tutuila.

On oceanic islands, birds are usually the most abundant and diverse animals. This park is home to more than 35 species, both resident and migratory, including seabirds, water birds, forest birds, and shorebirds. The cliffs and sea

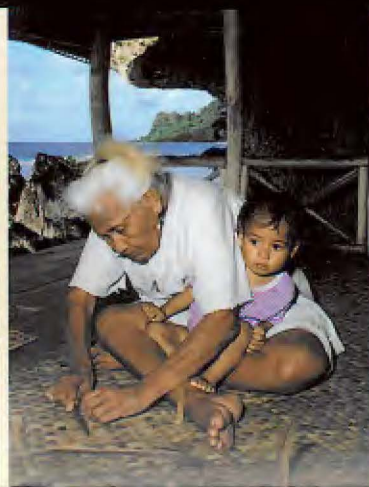
stacks are ideal nesting habitat for tropical seabirds, while the rainforest is home to collared kingfishers, cardinal and wattled honeyeaters, blue-crowned lorries, Samoan starlings, purple-capped fruit doves, Pacific pigeons, and banded rails.

Discovering American Samoa



With secluded sand beach and fringing reef, the Ofu unit of the park is an ideal

place to snorkel or simply enjoy the solitude. Nearby is the ancient site of To'aga. Felicity Arango

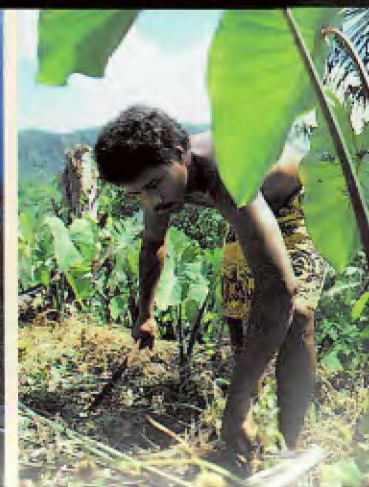


Samoans weave mats for various purposes such as sitting, sleeping, or gifts. Rick Sutter



Clouds cover the national park area above Pago Pago Harbor. Rainforest descends

from the mountaintops to the coast. The tan-colored areas indicate fringing reef. Larry Madrigal



Subsistence farming continues within the park; crops grow next to native rainforest. Rick Sutter



Si'u Point is a good place to view the park; crops grow next to native rainforest. Stan Jorstad

sea cliffs in the world's tallest 3,000 feet to the summit of Lata Mountain.

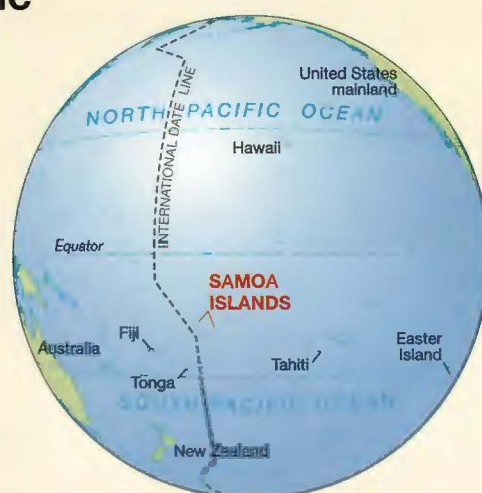
Samoa: The Heart of the South Pacific

The Pacific Ocean occupies a third of the Earth's surface. Of the thousands of islands scattered throughout this vast world of water, most are not large enough or hospitable enough for humans to live on. There are some, such as the Samoa Islands, that possess such beauty and exotic quality that they have inspired famous works by artists and writers.

The Samoa Islands are part of Polynesia, a triangular area of the Pacific bounded by Hawaii, New Zealand, and Easter Island. The Samoa Islands have been populated for 3,000 years, but known to the western world for little more than two centuries. So important is Samoa to Polynesian culture that many believe this was where all Polynesian people originated.

The Samoan archipelago includes the U.S. territory of American Samoa and the independent nation of Samoa (formerly Western Samoa). The islands are located 2,600 miles southwest of Hawaii and 1,800 miles northeast of New Zealand, between Fiji and Tahiti; Tonga is 550 miles southwest. The Samoan chain stretches east to west for more than 300 miles between 13° and 15° south latitude (below the equator). It is just east of the international dateline, in the time zone that is one hour earlier than Hawaii.

(Right) A High Talking Chief's fly whisk, or fue (fo-ay). During speeches, the whisk is used with a staff, to'oto'o (toe-oh-toe-oh). Smithsonian Institution



Your trip to this part of the South Pacific should include both Samoa and American Samoa, which share a common language and culture, yet have distinct natural features. English is widely spoken throughout the islands.

American Samoa, the only U.S. territory south of the equator, consists of five rugged, highly eroded (and extinct) volcanic islands, and two coral atolls. The land area of the territory is 76 square miles. The population is approximately 60,000, with most people living on the main island of Tutuila. Tuna fishing and canning are major industries. Many native Samoans practice subsistence farming.

The nation of Samoa lies 60 miles to the west of Tutuila. The main islands of 'Upolu and Savai'i constitute a much larger land area than American Samoa. Between these two large islands are the small islands of Manono and Apolima. Several uninhabited islets lie just off the eastern shore of 'Upolu. 'Upolu: Just outside Apia is Vaillima, Robert Louis Stevenson's home for the last years of his life, 1890-94; Vaillima is now open to the public. On the southern part of the island is O Le Pupu Pu'e National Park, one of several areas that preserve the natural environment. Savai'i: With less modern development than on 'Upolu, this island provides a setting where the principles and practices of fa'asamoa are prevalent. A canopy walkway located in the Falealupo Rainforest Preserve takes you through the treetops.



Exploring the Park

Transportation and Visitor Facilities There are scheduled flights from Honolulu, Hawaii, to Pago Pago International Airport on Tutuila. Regularly scheduled flights (small planes) serve park areas on Ofu and Ta'u, and the nearby nation of Samoa. Local "Alga" buses travel Tutuila from dawn to dusk. Taxi service and rental cars are available. There is



hotel-style lodging on all three islands. Camping is prohibited within the park. Samoan people are hospitable and eager to share their culture with park visitors. You are encouraged to stay with a Samoan family in a village during your visit. Make arrangements through the park staff.

Climate American Samoa is in the South Pacific Ocean, between the Equator and the Tropic of Capricorn; tropical climate prevails. Temperatures are warm or hot year-round (high 70's to low 90's F) with high humidity. Rain showers are frequent.

Clothing Wear lightweight, casual clothing. Be aware that it is customary

in Samoa to cover much of your body. Even while swimming, be sure to wear modest clothing; no bikinis.

What to See and Do The National Park of American Samoa includes sections of three islands, Tutuila, Ofu, and Ta'u. On Tutuila: Stop first at the visitor center in Pago

Pago. A scenic road leads from Pago Pago to the north coast. Allow a few hours for this drive, including stops. You may wish to stay overnight in the villages of Afono or Vatia; please observe local customs (see the "Fa'asamoa" section on the other side of this folder). Along the scenic road there are panoramic views, especially from Afono Pass. The

Amalaui Valley is a good place to watch above the trees for flying fox (fruit bats). There is a foot trail out to Pola Island from the village of Vatia. Mount 'Alava lies to the north of Pago Pago Harbor. A hiking trail leads to the 1,610-foot summit; the trailhead is located at Fagasa Pass, a short drive west of Pago Pago. The hike is 6 miles round-trip; allow 3 hours

for your hike up and 2 hours for your return to the pass.

On Ofu: A section of this island's pristine shoreline and fringing reef is protected within the national park. The beach is fine coral sand, ideal for walking long stretches uninterrupted. Coral communities are some of the healthiest in the South Pacific. This

is an ideal place to snorkel; you must bring gear from Tutuila. Before you visit Ofu, check with the park staff about special rules that may apply.

On Ta'u: The park area includes the southeastern half of this island. Stay overnight in the village of Fiti'uta on the northeast coast or in Faleasao or Ta'u in the northwest. You

can rent cars locally. Visit Saua, a sacred site considered by many to be the birthplace of the Polynesian people. Hike along the beaches; if you hike in remote areas, go with a guide. Arrange guide service through the park staff. Watch the sky for flying foxes. The south shore has 3,000-foot sea cliffs, some of the tallest in the world.

For a safe visit Solar radiation is intense! Wear sunglasses, sunscreen, a hat, and protective clothing. Carry insect repellent. Always snorkel with a partner. While on beach areas, watch out for falling coconuts. Coral rubble beaches are difficult to walk on; watch your step. Be especially careful of rocky areas, which are slippery. Ask at the visitor

center about trail conditions. Never hike without water; carry 2 to 3 liters per person. Don't touch coral! Cuts from coral take a long time to heal. Medical treatment is available only on Tutuila.

Administration The National Park of American Samoa is part of the U.S. National Park System. For more information, write: Superintendent, National Park of American Samoa, Pago Pago, AS 96799-0001; call: 011-684-633-7082; FAX 011-684-633-7085; send e-mail to: NPSA_Administration@nps.gov.

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