



## **VAVA'U 8-DAY ADVENTURE PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION**

**FRIENDLY ISLANDS KAYAK COMPANY**

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## ITINERARY OVERVIEW

- Day 1** Arrival. Orientation talk. Overnight at Hilltop Hotel or Vava'u Backpackers or Port of Refuge Villas (subject to availability). Optional upgrade to Boathouse Apartments.
- Days 2-5** Safety briefing at The Adventure Centre, Toulā. Three to 4 days kayaking and 3 nights camping in the Vava'u Archipelago.
- Day 6** Sailing or diving. Overnight at Hilltop Hotel or Vava'u Backpackers or Port of Refuge Villas (subject to availability).
- Day 7** Whale watching. Farewell dinner. Overnight at Hilltop Hotel or Vava'u Backpackers or Port of Refuge Villas (subject to availability).
- Day 8** Trip concludes.

## INTRODUCTION

Spread across 700,000 square kilometres of ocean, just west of the International Date Line and east of Fiji, the Kingdom of Tonga comprises four major island groups. From south to north these are Tongatapu, Ha'apai, Vava'u and the Niua. A total of 171 mostly raised coral islands (fewer than 40 of them inhabited) cover a total land area of 747 square kilometres. The population of Tonga is estimated to be approximately 106,465, with two thirds of that number living on the main island, Tongatapu. Tongan and English are the official languages, and Tonga boasts a 98.5% literacy rate.

Tonga is unique in that it is the only Polynesian country never to have been colonised as well as the only surviving monarchy in the Pacific. Vava'u and Ha'apai cover approximately the same land area (119 and 110 square kilometres respectively). The populations of Vava'u and Ha'apai are around 20,000 and 5,500 respectively. Vava'u is the water sports capital of the Kingdom with tour operators offering sea kayaking, scuba diving, snorkelling, whale watching, sailing and game fishing tours. The Ha'apai Conservation Area is the largest in the Pacific. The above activities are also offered in Ha'apai though on a smaller scale. Ha'apai is also known for its laid-back atmosphere and traditional way of life and history. Ha'apai is where the Mutiny on the Bounty took place.

## VAVA'U ARCHIPELAGO

Situated approximately 240 kilometres north of Tongatapu, the Vava'u Island Group is a smattering of 50-odd islands covering an area 23 by 25

kilometres most of which is protected by a semi-circular reef. Although reefs or open water separates the islands, they are not great distances apart. In his book, *The Happy Isles of Oceania: Paddling the Pacific*, author Paul Theroux describes sea kayaking in Vava'u thus: "It was a perfect area for paddling a kayak - perhaps the best in the Pacific. There was a surfy side and a safe side to each island - the lee shores usually had the beaches - all were secluded, all were lovely."

On our Tonga sea kayaking expeditions we strive for a healthy balance between relaxation and adventure. We generally paddle in the mornings leaving the afternoons free for snorkelling amidst colourful coral and inside legendary marine caves; exploring lush tropical bush; and, observing the traditional village lifestyle. The pace of life in Vava'u is slow and relaxed - much like it was a century ago. We spend our evenings on deserted beaches beneath swaying palm trees and the Southern Cross bathed by a warm South Pacific breeze.

## **FITNESS AND EXPERIENCE**

Whilst no experience is required for our sea kayak tours, a moderate level of physical fitness and a sense of adventure are important. A typical day entails two to three hours of paddling interspersed with rest stops. The guides endeavour to balance the group by pairing slower paddlers with stronger, more experienced paddlers. However, the slower paddlers always dictate the pace. Base camps offer the luxury of paddling empty kayaks or a lay day for exploring and relaxing. Paddling into southeasterly trade winds of 12-18 knots requires extra effort and can make the distance we travel feel longer. Those who engage in regular exercise such as walking, cycling or swimming tend to derive more enjoyment from their adventure. Physical conditioning exercises and camping experience are recommended.

## **KAYAK GUIDES**

A minimum of one Tongan professional guide accompanies all of our trips. Depending on the group size, there is an additional guide (guide:guest ratio of 1:6). The guides are responsible for making safety related decisions, coordinating logistics and activities, preparing meals as well as interpreting the natural and cultural features of Vava'u. Our guides lend invaluable local knowledge and cultural flavour to the experience and also offer outdoor safety, first aid and risk management expertise.

## **SEA KAYAKING**

The concept of sea kayaking is still new to many people, who may have visions of paddling in small unstable kayaks typically used on river trips. In contrast, we use stable, seaworthy double kayaks (Necky Tofino) especially suited to novices and the ocean environment. No previous kayaking experience is required, but a moderate level of fitness is necessary. Non-swimmers are welcome since everyone is required to wear a life vest. The issuing of single kayaks (Necky Arluk III, Quality Kayaks Southern Aurora and Puffin) is at the guides' discretion as this depends not only on the paddler's ability, but also on weather, sea conditions and group composition.

Your guides cover boat handling basics; paddling strokes; use of the foot-controlled rudder; boat entries and exits; and rescue procedures in the protected warm waters of the Port of Refuge. They also cover trip safety and carry a cell phone and flares for emergency use. Sea kayaking is a very safe sport when conducted properly. The expedition always paddles as a group, but there is still ample opportunity for individuals to enjoy their personal space on land if so desired. Certain rules of sea kayaking must be agreed to and observed by all trip participants to ensure everyone's safety and enjoyment. We discuss these rules and why they are necessary as well as contingency plans. We do everything reasonable to minimize the risks of this outdoor pursuit to ensure your safety and expect you to do the same.

## **WHALE WATCHING & SNORKELLING**

From July to October Tonga's warm sheltered waters are annual breeding and calving grounds for the southern ocean humpback whale. Join our preferred whale watch operator for a fun, educational day on the water. Their knowledgeable guides provide interesting facts and anecdotes about these amazing mammals, once on the brink of extinction. Witness the whales' acrobatic aerial displays and, with the aid of a hydrophone, listen in on their mystical songs. You might also see spinner dolphins and seldom-sighted pilot whales. You will have the opportunity to snorkel in Vava'u's spectacular underwater world. Confident swimmers who elect to swim with the whales do so at the skipper's discretion and at their own risk. From November to June when the whales have returned to their Antarctic feeding grounds, join our preferred sailing operator for a relaxing day of sightseeing and snorkelling in the beautiful Vava'u Archipelago. Both excursions include snorkelling gear, wetsuits and lunch.

## SCUBA DIVING

Experience diving at its best in warm clear waters where visibility is often up to 40 metres. The distinctive landscape of Vava'u creates a unique diving environment with dramatic drop-offs, caverns, and swim-throughs. Explore the myriads of reefs with colourful hard & soft coral, sea fans, abundant reef fish, sharks, manta rays, nudibranchs, crustaceans, pipefish and more. In winter you might even hear the humpback whale song! Time permitting, enjoy a swim or snorkel from a pristine outer island beach. Includes full equipment, snacks and water.

## SAILING & SNORKELLING

Enjoy a relaxing day with our preferred operator sailing and exploring the myriads of reefs in warm crystal clear waters. In winter the average water temperature is 25 degrees Celcius and in summer up to 29 degrees. Snorkel directly from the vessel and/or from pristine beaches. A perfect way to discover the stunning Vava'u Archipelago and learn about the flora, sea birds, and marine life along the way. You might even see southern ocean humpback whales in season (July - October). Snorkelling gear, wetsuits and lunch included.

## AIR TRAVEL TO VAVA'U

The following is a summary of air services to and within Tonga. This is subject to change and should be confirmed by your local travel/booking agent. Tonga's domestic airline, Real Tonga, has an inter-island flight service to Vava'u from the main island of Tongatapu. Alternatively, Fiji Airways offers a direct flight to Vava'u from Nadi, Fiji.

**Air New Zealand:** From Auckland to Tongatapu x 6 flights per week  
(Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sat)

**Virgin Australia:** From Auckland to Tongatapu x 2 flights per week  
(Tue, Thu)  
From Sydney to Tongatapu x 4 flights per week (Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu)

**Fiji Airways:** From Auckland to Tongatapu x 4 flights per week  
(Mon, Thu, Fri, Sat)  
From Nadi to Tongatapu x 6 flights per week (Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat)  
From Nadi to Vava'u x 2 flights per week (Wed, Sat)

**Real Tonga:** Between Tongatapu/Vava'u/Ha'apai (Mon-Sat)  
Website: <http://www.realtonga.to>

Email: info@realtonga.to

Phone: +676 23777

We recommend a minimum of 2 hours connection time between your international flights and domestic flight within Tonga.

## **SAMPLE ITINERARY**

**Note:** The following sample itinerary is subject to alterations and delays owing to weather, sea conditions and/or logistical considerations.

**B = BREAKFAST    L = LUNCH    D = DINNER**

### **Day 1: Arrival / Orientation**

**Meals:** On own.

**Accommodation:** Hilltop Hotel or Vava'u Backpackers or Port of Refuge Villas (subject to availability).

A driver awaits your arrival at Lupepau'u Airport in Vava'u and transfers you to your accommodation. Shortly after check-in, your guide welcomes you and confirms the time (normally 4:00pm) and venue for this afternoon's 45-minute orientation talk. It is important that all participants attend this informative talk.

### **Day 2: Kayaking**

**Meals:** L, D (B on own).

**Destination:** 'Euakafa Island.

**Paddling Time:** 3-4 hours.

A safety briefing commences 9:00 a.m. at The Adventure Centre before departing for 3 nights of camping in the Vava'u Archipelago. Our journey begins at the entrance to the Port of Refuge, reputedly the most protected and beautiful harbour in the Pacific. Inside renowned Swallows Cave, don your mask and snorkel, slip over the edge of the kayak and marvel at the schools of tiny zebra fish and iridescent neon fish. Paddling southeast across a large bay, we reach our lunch stop on the southern side of Kapa Island where snorkellers can enjoy vibrant coral and fish life in the channel. After lunch our Tongan guide navigates us through reef-strewn turquoise waters and across a wide deep channel towards the distinctive tabletop island of 'Euakafa - our campsite tonight.

### **Day 3: Kayaking**

**Meals:** B, L, D.

**Destination:** Taunga Island (Base Camp).

**Paddling Time:** 2 hours.

In the cool hours of the morning, our local guide leads us through lush bush up the mount, explaining traditional Polynesian culinary and medicinal applications of diverse plants along the way. Reaching the site of a royal tomb within the fortress of a Tu'i Tonga king we hear the legend of how the queen met her fate. This afternoon, we paddle to nearby 'Eueiki Island where we can snorkel and, at low tide, explore an immense cave with Tarzan-like vines cascading down through a hole in the cave ceiling. A short paddle across the channel, and we reach tonight's camp on the scenic isthmus of Taunga Island. This evening, the villagers host an authentic Tongan feast consisting of roast suckling pork complemented by fresh root vegetables, octopus, reef fish, vegetarian dishes, and tropical fruits such as papaya in coconut milk, all steamed in an underground oven or 'umu. Tasting kava, Tonga's traditional ceremonial drink, and stories around the kava bowl provide an insight into the local culture.

### **Day 4: Lay Day**

**Meals:** B, L, D.

**Destination:** Taunga Island (Base Camp)

Today, Sunday, is by Tongan law a day of rest and worship. Those who choose to attend the morning church service in Taunga village are impressed by the splendor of the Tongans' elaborate attire and harmonized singing. On Sunday tour operators are not permitted to offer guided physical activities anywhere within the Kingdom. However, as with guests staying at resorts, you may use the kayaks as transport to access recreational areas such as beaches and bays. Exploring on foot the inter-tidal zone of Taunga, Ngau and Pau Islands, interconnected by a sand bar at low tide, is a must. Bathing in the warm sea, reading, eating and socialising are also pleasant diversions on this enforced lay day.

### **Day 5: Kayaking**

**Meals:** B, L (D on own).

**Destination:** The Adventure Centre.

**Paddling Time:** 2-3 hours.

**Accommodation:** Hilltop Hotel or Vava'u Backpackers or Port of Refuge Villas (subject to availability).

On our paddle westward back to the Port of Refuge we may be fortunate enough to sight turtles, dolphins or humpback whales. The latter migrate annually to Tonga's warm sheltered waters (July-October) to breed and calve. En route we stop for a picnic lunch and snorkel at Mala Island. Once the home of a cannibal demi-god who ate passing outrigger canoeists, Mala is now home to a friendly tourist resort! From the beach confident swimmers can snorkel across a channel to the entrancing Japanese Gardens. Back at The Adventure Centre, transfer by taxi to your accommodation property and hot showers.

### **Day 6: Diving or Sailing**

**Meals:** L (B, D on own).

**Accommodation:** Hilltop Hotel or Vava'u Backpackers or Port of Refuge Villas (subject to availability).

**Excursion Time:** Diving 7:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.; Sailing 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Join our preferred water sport operators for an active morning of scuba diving (two tanks) or a more leisurely day sailing and snorkelling. Vava'u is a marine playground for both activities.

### **Day 7: Whale Watching / Snorkelling / Sightseeing**

**Meals:** L provided (B, D on own).

**Accommodation:** Hilltop Hotel or Vava'u Backpackers or Port of Refuge Villas (subject to availability).

**Excursion Time:** 7:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m.

A team of whale educators discusses humpback whale migration, mating, surface activity and song. From July through October you can observe the impressive acrobatic displays of these magnificent mammals who migrate from Antarctica annually to breed, give birth and nurse their new-born calves in Tonga's sheltered, warm waters. Outside the whale watch season, enjoy a day of snorkelling, picnicking and sightseeing in the scenic Vava'u Islands.

### **Day 8: Departure**

**Meals:** On own.

The trip concludes today with a transfer to Lupepau'u Airport.



**Tour Cost:** FIKCO reserves the right to amend the tour cost to reflect significant increases in exchange rates, airport transfers, accommodation rates, meal charges and/or any other ground costs beyond our control. However, once we receive a tour deposit, the tour cost will not alter.

**Single Supplement:** Applies to single participants if they prefer a private room or if we are unable to pair them with another participant.

## **CAMP ORGANISATION**

On the first camping day the guides orient participants to the camp kitchen and protocol for erecting and breaking camp. The more assistance with camp duties rendered, the quicker meals are served and the earlier the group gets out on the water each day. We typically aim to be on the water by 9:30 a.m. in order to take advantage of the cool morning hours for paddling and to reach our camp by lunchtime.

On arrival at camp the guides require assistance erecting the overhead tarpaulin; hanging up life vests and spray skirts; and unloading the kayaks. Once these duties are completed, everyone is free to pitch their tents. Assistance with meal preparation and dish washing is not expected but always appreciated. Packing bags and tents prior to breakfast makes the job of breaking camp more efficient.

## **MEALS ON TOUR**

Snacks and three meals per day are provided on the kayak tour. Our camp food has an international theme so you are likely to find Thai, Indonesian, Italian, Mexican and, of course, Polynesian cuisine on the menu. The meals are predominantly vegetarian supplemented with fresh fish. We try to make extensive use of the delicious tropical fruits and vegetables and fresh seafood caught by our Tongan guides. Lunch and beverages are included on the whale watching and sailing tours. Snacks and water are provided on the diving excursion. Please let us know well in advance of the tour of any food and/or drink allergies and/or dislikes.

## **FOOD AND WATER**

There is a wide selection of eateries in Nuku'alofa and Vava'u. In Nuku'alofa (Tongatapu), we recommend Café Reef, Fakalato Restaurant, Fresh Juice Bar, Friends Café, Little Italy Pizzeria, Lunarossa, Seaview, Taste of India, The Two Sisters and The Waterfront Café. In Neiafu (Vava'u), the Aquarium, Bella Vista, Dancing Rooster, Mango, Tongan Beach Resort, Café Tropicana and Vava'u Villa.

The tap water in Tonga is treated well water with a high mineral content, giving it a metallic taste. While the tap water is potable, for people unaccustomed to the local water, it is advisable to drink rainwater or bottled water. Both are readily available on request at shops, restaurants and accommodation properties.

We re-provision with water from cement tanks at outer island villages. The water is untreated rainwater collected from roofs and stored in cement holding tanks. We have never encountered a problem on tour with water-borne diseases or infections.

There are no waterfalls, rivers or lakes in Tonga and so on tour we bathe and wash laundry in the sea with biodegradable saltwater shampoo or soap. Provided there is not a drought, we fill solar shower bags with rainwater from the villages.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

Tour package accommodation is based on double occupancy. A single supplement applies to those who prefer a private fale/room or who cannot be paired with another single participant. Let us know if you wish to upgrade to a beachfront resort and we will provide a quote. If you plan to extend your stay in Tonga and/or need to overnight in Tongatapu, please advise us of your accommodation requirements in advance and we will be happy to book on your behalf. For details and images of our preferred properties please refer to our web site <http://www.fikco.com/tours-accommodation.html>.

Self-inflating mattresses and two-door tents with mosquito screening are provided on the camping portion of the tour.

Contact details for the package accommodation properties are as follows:

### **Hilltop Hotel**

Email: [sunset@kalianetvav.to](mailto:sunset@kalianetvav.to)

Phone: +676 70209 or +676 70838

### **Backpackers Vava'u**

Email: [Lupe.Aleamotua@pacdev.to](mailto:Lupe.Aleamotua@pacdev.to)

Phone: +676 862 2510

### **Port of Refuge Villas**

Email: [vavautours@yahoo.com](mailto:vavautours@yahoo.com)

Phone: +676 874 0000 or +676 887 4744

## CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Visitors who observe Tongan codes of behaviour are more likely to be accepted. Respect is extremely important within the Tongan culture. A clean, modest appearance signifies respect for your self and for others. Women are advised to dress conservatively (i.e. high necklines, covered shoulders, loose skirts, dresses or slacks) in the villages. Low-cut tops, sheer and or tight clothing should be avoided. Swimsuits are acceptable on the beach, but covering up with a *lava-lava* (wrap-around cloth) is a polite gesture to approaching villagers. Men should wear long shorts in the daytime and long pants or a *lava-lava* in the evening. Men are required by law to wear a shirt in public except when on the beach. Footwear is removed before entering a Tongan *fale* (home).

At the village feast we eat the Tongan way: Seated on the floor (men cross-legged and women side saddle) and with our hands - either hand is acceptable in Tonga. Note that it is considered rude in Tonga to sit with one's knees drawn towards one's chest. As a show of respect to us, their honoured guests, our Tongan hosts withdraw while we eat. It is also customary in Tonga to provide considerably more food on the *pola* or feast table than their guests could possibly eat. What we leave, our hosts and their families will consume privately later in the evening so no need to feel embarrassed about not finishing what is put before you.

It is advisable to maintain a low profile until outside village areas, especially on Sunday when physical activity, noise and fishing are prohibited.

## ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

In an effort to preserve Tonga's natural environment, Friendly Islands Kayak Company strives to promote environmental sensitivity and minimize our impact on the marine and terrestrial environment. To this end, your guides impart our company's minimum impact guidelines with respect to waste disposal and conservation of reefs, marine life, flora and fauna. We carry out all non-decomposable rubbish and, space in the kayaks permitting, other people's rubbish as well. Snorkellers are briefed on correct use of their fins and the importance of not touching the fragile reefs.

We employ a variety of methods for disposing of human waste. On most islands the guides dig a pit toilet within 50-75 metres of camp. Given that our campsites are not used year 'round we consider this method to be the best compromise. We generally use the inter-tidal zone at night.

## **CLIMATE**

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

During the wetter summer months (December to May) the weather is hotter (25-32 degrees C), more humid and changeable with an increased risk of tropical cyclones. Most cyclones either brush past Tonga leaving little or no damage or miss Tonga altogether.

## **TIME AND COMMUNICATION**

Tonga is 12 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. International phone calls may be placed from Tonga Telecommunications adjacent to the post office in Neiafu where 'phone cards may also be purchased. There are currently two cell phone networks in Tonga: Digicel and Vodafone. You will need to confirm with your cell phone provider whether you will be able to use your phone in Tonga.

## **CURRENCY EXCHANGE**

The national currency of Tonga is the pa'anga (currency code TOP) divided into 100 seniti. Check for exchange rates either online [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) or with your bank. If you have not already exchanged your money by the time you arrive in Vava'u, you can do so Monday to Friday 9:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. at the ANZ Bank, Westpac Bank of Tonga, Malaysian Banking Finance (MBf) or Western Union in Neiafu, Vava'u. On Saturday, Westpac Bank of Tonga is open from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. and Western Union from 9:00a.m. to 11:30a.m. ANZ and Westpac Bank of Tonga have 24-hour ATM machines with Cirrus, MasterCard and Visa functions. The maximum withdrawal amount from ATMs is TOP\$1,000. The larger accommodation properties, tour operators and restaurants accept MasterCard and VISA. A 4.5% - 5% credit card surcharge usually applies. Most other businesses in Tonga accept cash (TOP\$) only.

## **BUDGETTING**

Consider bringing TOP\$50-\$100 in small denominations on the kayak tour for purchasing handicrafts direct from the villagers and drinks at outer island resorts. Budget TOP\$100-\$125 pa'anga per day for meals (not including alcohol) off tour and for taxis in the capital, Nuku'alofa and Neiafu.

## **PASSPORTS**

Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months from the date of entry to the Kingdom. On arrival you must present an onward ticket in order to be granted a 30-day visitor visa.

## **VISAS**

You do not need a visa prior to arrival if you are a citizen of the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Canada, Cook Islands, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Finland, France, French Polynesia (New Caledonia, Tahiti, Wallis & Futuna), Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kirabati, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niue, Norway, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Sweden, Switzerland, The Bahamas, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Vanuatu.

All other nationalities require a visa prior to arrival. This can be obtained by contacting the Immigration Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tonga: [visatonga@gmail.com](mailto:visatonga@gmail.com). You may be able to extend your stay for up to 6 months if you are able to provide evidence of sufficient funds.

## **AIRPORT TAXES, EXCESS BAGGAGE FEES & SHUTTLES**

Airport taxes and excess baggage fees are your responsibility and are not included in the trip cost. Departure tax is included in the cost of all air tickets.

The maximum baggage allowance for inter-island flights within Tonga is 23 kg for passengers holding international tickets valid within 24 hours of travel. Excess luggage between Tongatapu and Vava'u up to 5kg is subject to a surcharge of TOP\$10 minimum and T\$4.50 per additional kg and may have to travel unaccompanied. Please refer to Real Tonga's website [www.realtonga.to](http://www.realtonga.to) for excess baggage charges on other inter-island routes (e.g. between Tongatapu and Ha'apai and between Ha'apai and Vava'u).

The waiting areas at the domestic and international terminals in Tonga can be breezy and cool particularly at nighttime so have a fleece and or

windbreaker handy (i.e. in your carry-on luggage). While security guards patrol these waiting areas, never leave luggage unattended.

Local taxis operate a shuttle service between the international and domestic terminals in Tongatapu for every inbound and outbound international flight (including those that arrive/depart at night or in the early hours of the morning). A one-way taxi fare is approximately T\$10 pa'anga per person.

## **TIPPING**

Tipping is not customary in Tonga, but is not considered offensive either. In fact, the local people graciously accept tips. A guideline for tipping guides would be TOP\$4 to \$5 per day per guide.

## **GIFTS**

Tongans are exceptionally generous, and gift giving is a central feature of their culture. If you wish, bring a few small gifts such as T-shirts, postcards, photos, lapel pins, hair ties, hats, watches, yoyos, washable tattoos, kites, lighters and pocket-sized games. Since educational resources are in short supply in the outer island schools, the children and teachers also greatly appreciate receiving pens, pencils, stationary and primary level books.

## **SECURITY**

Theft is uncommon in Tonga. However, in a culture where "what's mine is yours" and items are "borrowed" indefinitely, unattended personal belongings and valuables are at risk. We recommend you bring your passport and airline tickets in a dry bag on the kayak trip so that, in the unlikely event of evacuation, your guides can readily access these documents.

## **MEDICAL MATTERS**

### ***Medical Forms***

Every trip participant must provide an accurately completed medical form. Participants aged 65 years and over must also provide a medical certificate.

### ***Vaccinations***

No statutory vaccinations are required for entry into Tonga. However, we require every participant to have a current tetanus vaccination and recommend vaccinations against hepatitis and typhoid.

## ***Dengue Fever & Zika Virus***

Dengue fever outbreaks can occur during the summer months (December-May) when the weather is hot and humid and when there is a high prevalence of mosquitoes. Zika virus is also present in Tonga. The symptoms of Zika virus are similar to those of Dengue fever and the same protection measures apply. Pregnant women should take extra care to protect themselves from mosquito bites. So long as our guests take sensible precautions the risk of exposure is minimal. These include regular applications of insect repellent and, where possible, avoiding sheltered areas outdoors and dark corners indoors. Other precautions include covering up as much as possible e.g. wearing long sleeved tops, socks, trousers etc. Our tents and the rooms at our preferred accommodation properties all have mosquito screening. Our guides select breezy campsites to keep the mosquitoes at bay.

## ***Medication***

Please advise us of any medication you are taking and any possible side effects. Bring an adequate supply of medication, as certain drugs are difficult to obtain in Tonga. Also consider giving half to your trip leader for safekeeping in case your supply gets lost or wet. Most paddlers are not troubled by seasickness, but if it is of concern to you your doctor can recommend medication to help. Be sure to let us know if seasickness is a problem for you.

## ***Dental***

As Tonga's dental facilities are basic it is advisable to have a dental check-up prior to departing your country of origin.

## ***Hospitals***

Vaiola Hospital in Tongatapu and Prince Wellington Ngu Hospital in Neiafu, Vava'u are experienced with cuts, fractures, and tropical disorders. For most other conditions it is advisable to seek diagnosis and treatment in your own country. Ensure that your travel insurance policy includes comprehensive medical cover including evacuation insurance.

## ***Medical Supplies***

Although your guides will be carrying a comprehensive first aid kit, all tour participants are encouraged to bring a basic personal first aid kit including the following items: :

- Medication (including pain relief & preventative drugs such as a mild anti-nausea drug)

- Antiseptic swabs and cream
- Anti-histamine cream (for insect bites)
- Antibiotic cream or powder (powder is best in the humid tropical climate)
- Fabric plasters (more waterproof than plastic plasters)
- Lip sunscreen
- General sunscreen (water resistant at least SPF15)
- Insect repellent (DEET is the most effective)

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographic opportunities abound in Tonga! Tongan people are very photogenic and enjoy having their photo taken except when they are eating. Asking their permission first is a polite gesture. A zoom lens is handy especially for photographing whales. However, bear in mind that the humidity and salt water can damage camera lenses and electronics. For this reason, some prefer to leave their expensive camera at home and bring an inexpensive disposable or waterproof camera instead. If you do decide to bring an expensive camera, store it in a dry bag or waterproof case with silicon packs and insure your camera.

## GEAR AND CLOTHING

Large dry bags, duffel bags and backpacks cannot be accommodated in the kayak hatches. Please bring no more than 2 medium sized (20L-25L) dry bags per person - one for clothing; the other for miscellaneous items - plus one small (10L) dry bag per person for items you need to access in the cockpit (e.g. wallet, documents, sun screen etc.). A mesh bag containing your snorkelling gear is additional to the above items. Nylon stuff sacs lined with heavy-duty rubbish bags are a more affordable option if you do not already have dry bags. However, a dry bag for the cockpit is essential. Camera and optical equipment should be waterproofed and insured.

Quick-dry clothing is recommended for Tonga's warm tropical climate. Long-sleeved shirts with a collar offer good sun protection. *Lava-lavas* (2 metre wrap-around cloth) may be purchased in Tonga. It is a good idea to bring along two *lava-lavas*, one for wearing over shorts or a swimsuit when entering villages and a clean one for other occasions.

If you have any questions about clothing or equipment, consult your local canoe or outdoor equipment retailer or contact us. Any excess baggage can be left at your own risk at our base, which is unoccupied overnight.



## PERSONAL EQUIPMENT LIST

### Essential Items

- Passport
- Cash (pa'anga); EFT-POS card
- Basic first aid kit
- Toiletries
- Toilet paper (preferably unbleached)
- Sun screen (SPF30+)
- Lip screen (SPF30+)
- Insect repellent (DEET most effective)
- Sun hat (stiff brimmed) with chin strap
- Sunglasses (polarized) with neck strap
- Pack towel (microfibre)
- Drink bottle (1-2 litres)
- Lycra swimsuit, sports bra & briefs
- Lightweight rain jacket with hood
- Lightweight fleece jacket
- Cotton/quick-dry T-shirts (long & short sleeved)
- Quick dry shorts & pants
- Lava-lava (can be purchased in Tonga)
- Cotton socks & underwear
- Cotton bandanna, hankie
- Sturdy sandals
- Snorkelling gear (prescription lenses for mask) & mesh carry bag
- Up to 3 (2 x 20L-25L and 1 x 10L) dry bags or nylon stuff sacs per person
- Heavy-duty rubbish bags (for lining stuff sacs)
- Waist pack
- Ziploc bags (medium & large)
- Flashlight/headlamp, spare batteries

### Optional Items

- Binoculars
- Hand sanitizer, wet wipes
- Talcum powder and/or Vaseline (for preventing chafing)
- Camera, spare batteries
- Favourite snacks, drink crystals
- Fishing lures & hand line
- Pocket knife, sewing/repair kit
- Reading & writing materials
- Calf-length skirt/dress
- Half wetsuit 3mm (June-Sept)
- Cycling gloves (without fingers)
- Reef shoes or old running shoes (for intertidal walks)
- Rubber sandals/thongs
- Clothes line & pegs
- Lighter

## PACKAGE COMPONENTS

Your trip includes the following services:

- Airport transfers and transfers to/from activities
- A 45-minute orientation talk
- Four nights guest house or backpackers accommodation
- Three nights camping including tents and mattresses
- Three to 4 days kayaking with professional guides (guide:guest ratio = 1:6) including snacks and 3 meals a day
- A full day whale watching and snorkelling (July - October) or sailing and snorkelling (November - June) including lunch and beverages
- Choice of a 2-tank dive including snacks and water or a full day of sailing and snorkelling including lunch and beverages
- A Polynesian *'umu* feast in an outer island village
- A farewell dinner at a restaurant in Neiafu township

## NON-INCLUSIVE SERVICES

The following services are not included in your trip package:

- International and domestic airfares
- Visa and passport fees
- Personal travel insurance
- Airport departure taxes
- Excess baggage charges
- Airport transfers that are not included in the above itinerary
- Accommodations that are not included in the above itinerary
- Single supplement fee
- Beverages and meals that are not included in the above itinerary
- Clothing, liquor, laundry, postage, medical expenses and any other expenses of a personal nature
- Expenses incurred as a result of delays due to inclement weather, delays of scheduled aircraft, logistical delays, and resultant changes to the itinerary
- Emergency evacuation charges
- Gratuities to guides

## ITINERARY CHANGES AND/OR DELAYS

It is possible that route or itinerary changes and/or delays may become necessary for reasons of safety or enhancing the quality of the trip. These disruptions could be due to inclement weather, acts of God, delayed transport, political or cultural considerations, government

restrictions, participants' limitations, or any other cause. If our return from the kayak trip is delayed, Friendly Islands Kayak Company will continue to provide all camping and food needs in the outer islands. In the event we are unable to paddle, we will endeavour to offer alternate activities (e.g. snorkelling, cycling, bush walks, land tours, village tours).

The trip participant shall be responsible for any additional expenses such as accommodation, meals, transport, prepaid airline tickets, fees for visas, etc. in connection with changes and/or delays to a route or itinerary.

If possible, ensure some degree of flexibility in your travel plans. A sense of adventure and tolerance for the unexpected are essential attributes when visiting developing nations such as Tonga where "Tonga Time" is synonymous with delays and waiting.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

Personal travel insurance is not included in the trip cost and is a prerequisite for trip participation. We recommend you purchase a comprehensive policy that includes insurance for flight and trip itinerary changes, delays or cancellations and medical cover including evacuation insurance.

## EMERGENCY CONTACTS & DELAYS EN ROUTE

In the event of an emergency within Tonga or you are delayed en route, contact Friendly Islands Kayak Company on the following mobile numbers:

Tonga Office: +676 874 8506

Canada Office: +1 778 533 3196

Be prepared to leave your name, **a telephone number where you can be reached** and a detailed message. We will forward your information onto our team in Vava'u and, if need be, get back to you as soon as possible.

## FINAL NOTE

There will undoubtedly be further communiqués from us in the months to come as the trip departure date draws closer. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to let us know your concerns, questions and plans.