

Niue



Pictures courtesy of Darryl Toner, Charles Cooper, Steve Dickerson, New Zealand



DIVE 
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Niue

Niue is the world's largest single coral island and is affectionately known as "The Rock" of Polynesia. Niue is located 19 degrees below the equator between the Polynesian islands of Tonga, Samoa and the Cook Islands. However close Niue remains very different from its South Pacific neighbours; It doesn't have long stretches of sandy beaches, no exotic duty free shopping and no high-rise tourist resorts with raging discos and nightclubs. With less than 90 hotel rooms on the whole island you are guaranteed to avoid the crowds. Niue is a destination for the explorer who likes to get out and make their own adventures, for the diver seeking clean clear water brimming with coral, caves and underwater wildlife and for the traveller who simply wants to get away and relax in a laid back, peaceful and unspoiled natural environment.



The Environment:

The upraised coral atoll of Niue has a total land area of 269 square kilometres rising steeply from the ocean to 30 metres. The Niue coastline is made up of intimate coves and cliff faces with a fringing terrace of limestone reefs that allows access to the ocean before plunging off to abyssal depths only meters from the shore.

The surge of the Pacific Ocean against Niue's unique geological make-up has created a spectacular, rugged coastline of soaring arch-ways, deep chasms, cathedral sized sub-terranean caves, fascinating grottoes, reef pools and intimate swimming coves.

Over a quarter of the interior of the island is made up of virgin rainforest teeming with exotic birdlife and flora which you can explore in safety as Niue has nothing that is carnivorous, poisonous or large enough to harm you. This is only half of the reason that Niue is one of the safest places on earth.

Because of the coral make-up of Niue there are no rivers or streams. This means that when it rains the water filters through the porous coral rock out into the warm waters of the Pacific, completely devoid of any silt run-off. The pristine ocean surrounding Niue is some of the cleanest and clearest in the world with underwater visibility up to 80 meters and rarely less than 30 metres. Niue enjoys a long dry season from April to November with average temperatures of around 24 degrees Celsius. From December to March temperatures are around 28 degrees Celsius, with higher humidity and more rain fall.



Cultural History:

The Niuean people are descendants of Polynesian seafarers who visited and stayed over past centuries. In 1974 Niue gained full independence in free association with New Zealand and is said to be the world's smallest self governing country.

The People:

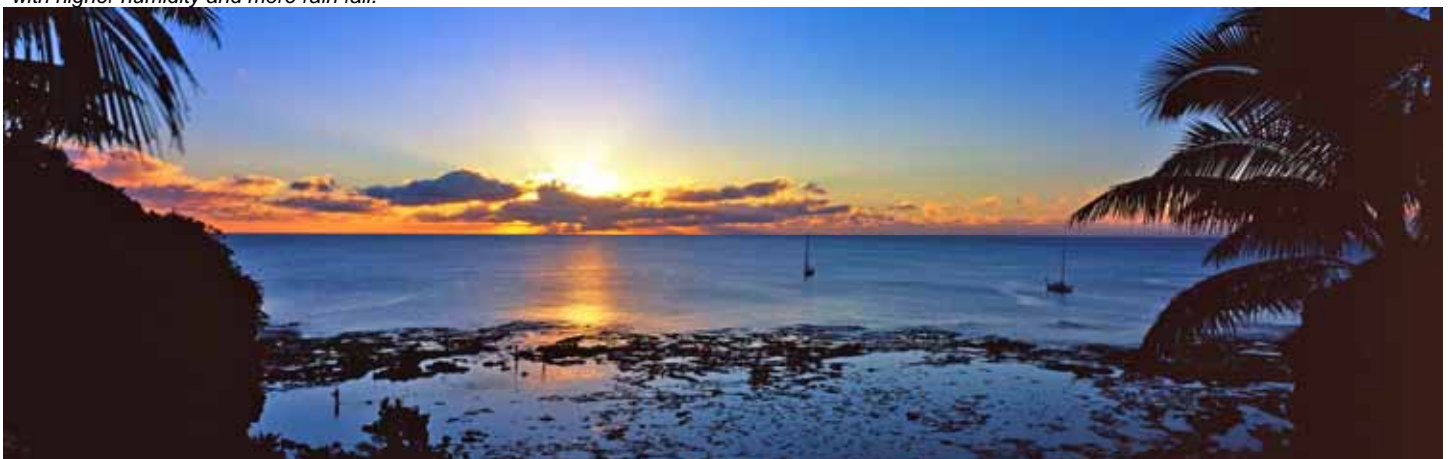
The Niueans are friendly, hospitable people who welcome visitors with open arms. Niue is considered a very safe place to stay or visit with crime, graffiti, drugs and pollution virtually unheard of. With a population of only 1500 most locals live in one of 14 villages found along the 67km road that circles the island. Although they live a traditional village life-style they do enjoy the use of many modern day facilities. The people are well educated and bilingual in Niuean and English. The Niuean women are highly respected for their craft of quality weaving. Individually woven articles such as hats, baskets, mats and other crafts can be purchased from the local women on market days.

General Information:

Niue has a small selection of supermarkets, general stores, restaurants and cafes, however the small population means they cannot afford to be open constantly. Visitors must be aware that opening times will vary. Eating out requires a reservations and the supermarket is open Monday to Friday 9-4 so it is good to organise yourself with the supplies you need soon after you arrive. Niue is a deeply Christian country so Sunday is truly considered a day of rest, all shops are closed and many boating excursions and dive trips will not run on a Sunday. The currency of Niue is the New Zealand dollar. Although there are no eftpos or ATM facilities there is a Bank of South Pacific and major credit cards are readily accepted. The island also has it's own hospital. There is no public transport system in Niue however cars, vans, motorbikes and mountain bikes can be hired. A local drivers licence must be obtained from the Police Station in the capital Alofi.

Getting there

Air New Zealand currently operates 1 flight a week from Auckland to Niue with connection options to and from Australia. A current valid passport and onward ticket is required and visitors will be issued with a free Visa for stays of up to 30.



Niue - Diving

Diving Niue

Niue is an underwater photographers paradise. The isolated location and lack of rivers on the island results in stunning clarity of the surrounding ocean.



Visibility is usually well over 40 metres with water temperatures between 27 degrees Celsius in Winter to 30 degrees in Summer.

Niue is the perfect spot to explore drop-offs, canyons, caves, tropical sea life and hard corals. Because there is no lagoon surrounding Niue all of your dives are done directly into pristine waters of the Pacific ocean. The reef is predominately made up of hard corals and descends down to around 40 metres before leveling off for a short distance and then drops off into the vastness of the abyss.



Most of the dive sites are less than a ten minute boat ride away, with the longest trip taking 30 minutes to reach. Only metres from the shore you can swim over canyons or through caverns and caves to deep drop-offs. No special training is required for the cavern dives as they are all easy to access and have natural light sources. The depth for most dives ranges from 5 to 30 metres. Because the Niuean people still use traditional fishing methods on the reef, tropical fish are plentiful and the coral is in good condition. As well as pods of Spinner dolphins;

reef sharks, barracuda, maori wrasse, surgeon fish, moorish idol, regal angelfish, large fin banner fish, the comical anemone, long nose butter fish and the elusive ribbon eel are all common sightings on many of the dive sites. One of Niue's best kept secrets is that it is the ideal place to see and swim with Humpback Whales.

Each year between June and November the migrating Humpback Whales are a common sight around Niue. While divers cannot approach the whales on Scuba, the dive shop will often run an afternoon boat trip to give snorkelers a chance to swim with the whales if they are about and weather permits. The adult whales with their young can often be seen frolicking around the bay and breaching quite close to the shore. The opportunity to swim with these gentle giant in the crystal clear waters of Niue makes for an unforgettable, once in a life time experience.



Some of Niue Dive's best dive sites include:

Limu; A twin cavern system connected by a tunnel. Depth range is 8-28 metres. Regular sightings of lion fish, ribbon eels, white tip reef shark, schools of trevally and midnight sea perch are common on this dive.

The Maze; A series of passages and swim-throughs in the shallow waters where parrot fish and sea snakes like to hang out.

The Dome; This dive is for the adventurous, and involves a 30 meter swim into a cave system under the island. You surface in a large air filled chamber which has the start of some stalactites.

The Chimney; Involves a descend down a vertical shaft into a medium sized cavern with an exit out at the seabed (around 28 metres). A side chamber of the cavern houses several painted crayfish.

Bubble Cave; A favorite with photographers this dive features a shallow cave system with lots of natural light and where sea snakes lay their eggs. You will surface in a small air filled chamber with stalactites and can look out through a large hole in the cliff face.

Egypt; Swim through a series of large columns that resemble ancient temple ruins, taking you back to the shallows of the sea cliffs. Turtles, parrot fish, eels and white tip sharks often feature here.

Snake Gully; One of Niue's most popular dive sites. A cave and cavern at less than 20 metres crammed with painted crayfish and dozens of sea snakes with streams of light coming through. Schools of barracuda, turtles, sharks and maori wrasse also make regular appearances.



Activities and Excursions:

Snorkelling; There are several stunning in shore swimming areas and coral pools like Matapa Chasm and Limu that offer a gentle introduction to the marine world beyond the outer reef.

Fishing; Niue is legendary amongst the know fishermen. The steep drop off to the abyss on the edge of the Pacific plate provides fishing just metres off shore.

Caving; Niue is laced with caves ranging in size from wormholes to giant caverns. Guided cave tours and expeditions are graded from easy to challenging dependent on visitors needs and abilities.

Forest Walks; A guided tour with a botanical expert will enhance your senses and knowledge of the ancient forest.

Mountain Biking; The mainly flat terrain and lack of traffic makes biking around Niue a relaxing and fun pastime. Well maintained bikes can be hired on the island.



Accommodation in Niue

Matavi Resort

Matavi Resort is Niue's premier accommodation. The resort is perched cliff-top blending into the rugged landscape of coral outcrops, coconut palms, rainforest and tropical flowers. The resort's restaurant and bar open up onto a large deck that boasts 180 degree views out over the Pacific Ocean. From here you can witness fabulous sunsets, pods of spinner dolphins frolicking and in season and Humpback Whales cruising by. The 24 well appointed guest rooms offer en-suites, ceiling fans, TV, in house movie channel, refrigerator, mini bar, hair drier and tea and coffee making facilities. The resort has 2 freshwater swimming pools, restaurant, conference facilities, complimentary use of mountain bikes, tour desk and gift shop.



Matavi Resort

Coral Gardens Motel

Coral Gardens Motel is located a 6km north of Alofi and offers 5 comfortable studio type, self contained fale's with cliff top ocean views. Each self catering fale has an individual patio, screened windows, ceiling and floor fans, fridge, TV, radio and spacious private bathroom. All fale's have been designed with your privacy, peace and comfort in mind, providing a relaxing atmosphere for those wanting to escape. Take a dip in the natural cave on site and then head to the Sails Bar for a selection of cool drinks and snacks. The Sails Bar is open 7 days a week and the resort also offers free use of portable BBQ's and wireless internet access, as well as stunning ocean views.



Coral Gardens Motel



Namakulu Motel

Namukulu Motel

The Namukulu Motel is situated just 10 minutes drive from Alofi. The 3 individual, self contained bungalows are set amongst tropical vegetation with magnificent panoramic sea views and only minutes away from the natural reef pools. Each bungalow sleeps up to 4 people and offers a large living room, kitchenette and bathroom with modern appliances including fridge and cooking facilities. Each unit has a generous sized deck area outside on which you can relax and enjoy a drink while watching the spectacular sunsets or whales breaching just off shore. Each bungalow features a fridge, microwave, gas hob, ceiling fans, radio, TV and insect screens. The resort offers a freshwater swimming pool, whale watch look out, BBQ area, laundry, home gym, small library and free internet access.



Sunset from Matavi Resort Pool Deck

Photo Credits go to the following photographers: Charles Cooper, Auckland, N.Z. Darryl Torckler, Wetstock, N.Z. Paddy Ryan, David Hyde, N.Z. Glenn Jowitt, Steve Dickinson N.Z.

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