

# Pacific Romance

YOUR GUIDE TO WEDDINGS, HONEYMOONS  
AND ROMANCE IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS



SAMOA

# SAMOA

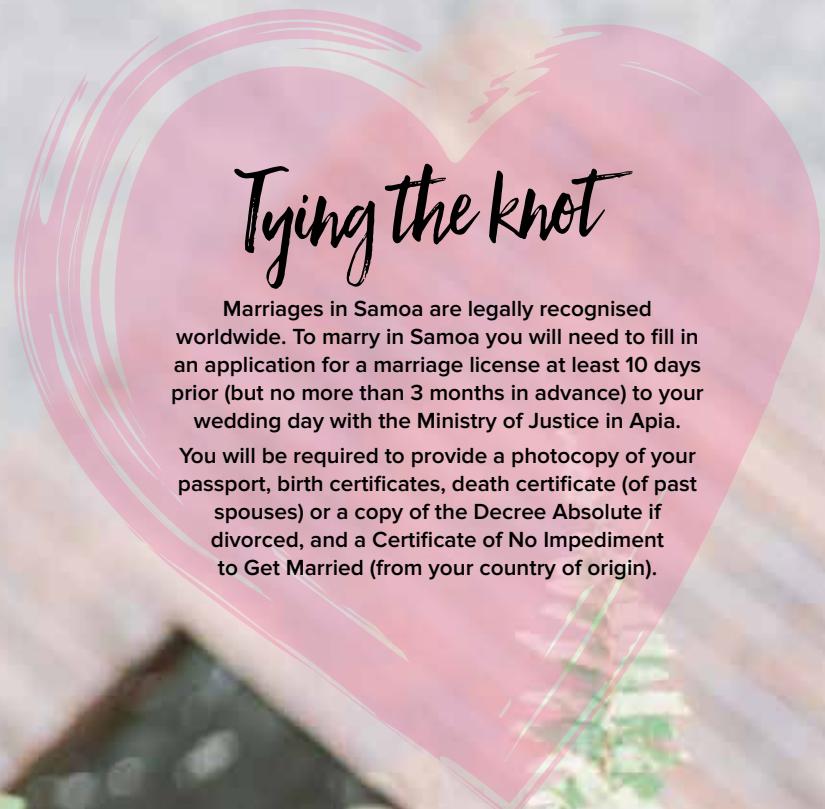


JORDAN KWAN PHOTOGRAPHY



# Natural connection

Lush rainforests, beautiful waterfalls, year round fishing, diving and surfing, cave pools and quintessential Pacific white sand beaches, Samoa is a haven for couples who love natural adventure.



## Tying the knot

Marriages in Samoa are legally recognised worldwide. To marry in Samoa you will need to fill in an application for a marriage license at least 10 days prior (but no more than 3 months in advance) to your wedding day with the Ministry of Justice in Apia.

You will be required to provide a photocopy of your passport, birth certificates, death certificate (of past spouses) or a copy of the Decree Absolute if divorced, and a Certificate of No Impediment to Get Married (from your country of origin).

Samoa has two main islands: Upolu, home to the capital Apia and a stunning Southern shoreline with unspoilt pristine lagoons and natural treasures like the To Sua Ocean Trench which will delight and surprise you. Savai'i, 'the big island' is less developed and offers an even slower pace. It's a place that has held tight to the Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan Way) and offers a true getaway for your romantic adventure. While Savai'i has a calm ambience, the island's natural wonders are dramatic - with lava fields, village ruins and explosive blowholes. Savai'i is just an hour boat ride from Upolu so visiting both islands is perfectly achievable during your romantic escape.



## NATURAL WONDERS

What can be more romantic than a gentle waterfall cascading into a freshwater pool in a lush forest? Samoa has hundreds of waterfalls which are at their most beautiful in the wet season between November and April. For some childish fun, visit Papase'e Sliding Rocks where gentle waterfalls have formed natural slides in the rocks with one up to five meters in length. Or for a relaxing float in the pool and a shoulder massage under the falls, head to the Togitogiga Waterfall, a 30 minute drive from Aga Reef Resort. For bird lovers, hike to Fulpsia Falls and experience the tranquility of the rainforest waterfall. In Savai'i, cool off in the natural plunge pool at Afu Aau falls, or jump from the surrounding cliffs into the deep water.

Couples will not want to miss To Sua Trench Ocean in the village of Lotofaga, Upolu. This is where you will find your ultimate Facebook cover photo. Climb down a long step ladder to reach a 30 metre crater filled with clear seawater. The beautifully maintained gardens surrounding the trench are a beautiful place for a romantic picnic.

Visit Alofaaga Blowholes in Taga, Savai'i and see several blowholes of various strengths shooting skyward. Pack your lunch and watch the ocean in all its powerful glory.

Go to the lava fields on Savai'i to experience a geological phenomenon, and a sight to be seen. The fields are a result of the three year Mt Matavanu eruption which buried five villages (thankfully no one perished because of its slow eruption). The local church and the chief's daughter's grave, somehow remained unharmed during the eruption and provides a haunting look into the past.

10 minutes by boat from Upolu's Lalomanu Beach is Namu'a Island which boasts a beautiful swimming beach and stunning marine life. Snorkel amongst the turtles or sea kayak on the sparkling water. You



JORDAN KWAN PHOTOGRAPHY



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**Saletoaga Sands Resorts** is a quality 4 star resort offering exceptional value and personalised weddings, nestled within its own private bay on the South Coast of Upolu in Samoa.

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SAVAI'I

can stay on Namu'a in open sided fale, situated on the beachfront with incredible views towards Upolu. There is no electricity or shops here, so bring your own food and drink and enjoy the seclusion.

You are bound to see turtles during your swims in Samoa, but for a small cost you can swim with endangered green turtles at Satoalepai Turtle Sanctuary, Savai'i, before they are tagged and released. The turtles swim in a part-fresh, part-salt water pool, and this is a great way to get up close and personal with the magnificent creatures, which can grow to 185kgs.

Samoa is also a land of natural beauty and natural healing ingredients. Indulge in a pampering treatment at the hands of taulasea (traditional

healers). Treat yourself with a coconut oil fofo (traditional Samoan massage), or a refreshing banana and papaya body wrap and facial. Or try Nonu, one of the treasures of the rainforest used to soothe and nourish sensitive skin. These treatments are available at many spas around Samoa.

You can spend the night in a traditional beach fale. Imagine waking up on the beach with the waves lapping the sand and the sun rising - it doesn't get much more romantic than that. A list of beach fales can be obtained from Samoa Tourism Authority and these circular structures held up by wooden posts can be your home for the night. They have no walls, but have blinds or mosquito nets that can be lowered.

Return to Paradise  
RESORT AND SPA  
Lefaga, Samoa

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF  
EVERYTHING

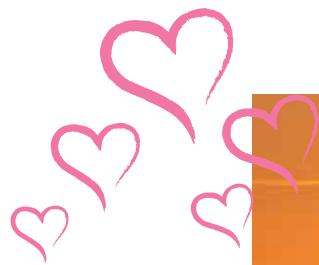
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## PLACES TO STAY

### Le Legoto Resort & Spa

Located on a secluded white-sandy beach, this boutique restaurant has just 11 rooms but with all the conveniences of a large resort, in a idyllic setting. Five of the bungalows are absolute beachfront, and the ocean view bungalows sit a row behind, but all have uninterrupted views of the ocean.

Relax on the beach or in the infinity pool, and finish the day watching the sensational sunsets from your room while sipping a delicious cocktail from the onsite restaurant. Each room comes with two complimentary 15 minute massages. Ultimate relaxation in a pristine environment.

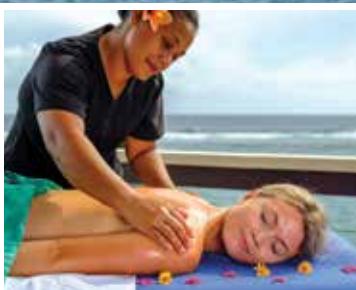
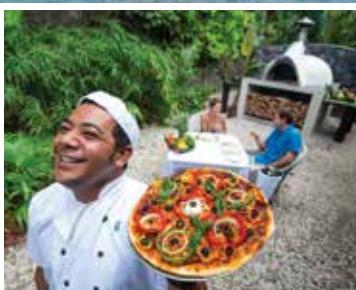
### Seabreeze Resort

Imagine being tucked away in a private cove away from the rest of the world. This is the feeling a couple can savour when they wind their way down the driveway to Seabreeze Resort. Seabreeze is a gem, or in this case, a hidden gem.

The secluded horseshoe-shaped cove comes with swaying palm trees and picture postcard ocean views. This peaceful slice of paradise is made for intimate weddings. The private beach is the most popular venue for a ceremony. Otherwise, you can set up next to the pool. Honeymooners will also fall in love with the peace and privacy of this wonderful resort.



*Nestled in a private, secluded bay, this intimate, luxurious resort caters exclusively for adults. An oasis of tranquillity perfect for a truly relaxing holiday, honeymoon or romantic escape.*



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### Taumeasina Island Resort

This deluxe resort is just five minutes from Apia yet offers a world of its own with breathtaking views of the mountains and sea. Choose from oceanview rooms or waterfront villas and dine at one of the three restaurants or enjoy a locally inspired cocktail at one of the bars. Sina's Restaurant offers views of the ocean and the sunset, Lapita's Restaurant has seasonally inspired menus and live entertainment every night.

For a romantic treat, order a three course romantic balcony dinner for two in your room. The resort offers a cascading swimming pool, tennis courts, cooking classes, and weekly cultural shows. Or simply retreat to Fofo Spa & Sauna for a treatment. Taumeasina offers a variety of wedding packages - choose from a barefoot beach wedding, a customary chapel ceremony at the Vasa wedding venue or a ceremony in the lush gardens. The resort's dedicated wedding coordinator will tend to every detail.

### Saletoga Sands Resort & Spa

Saletoga Sands Resort & Spa offers modern, comfortable rooms with indoor and outdoor showers, some just a few steps from the beach. Relax on your spacious deck overlooking the tropical gardens and the ocean. Saletoga offers a variety of wedding packages - for two or for much larger groups. Wed in the resort's intimate chapel on the beach or walk down the aisle along the 30 metre jetty on the water.

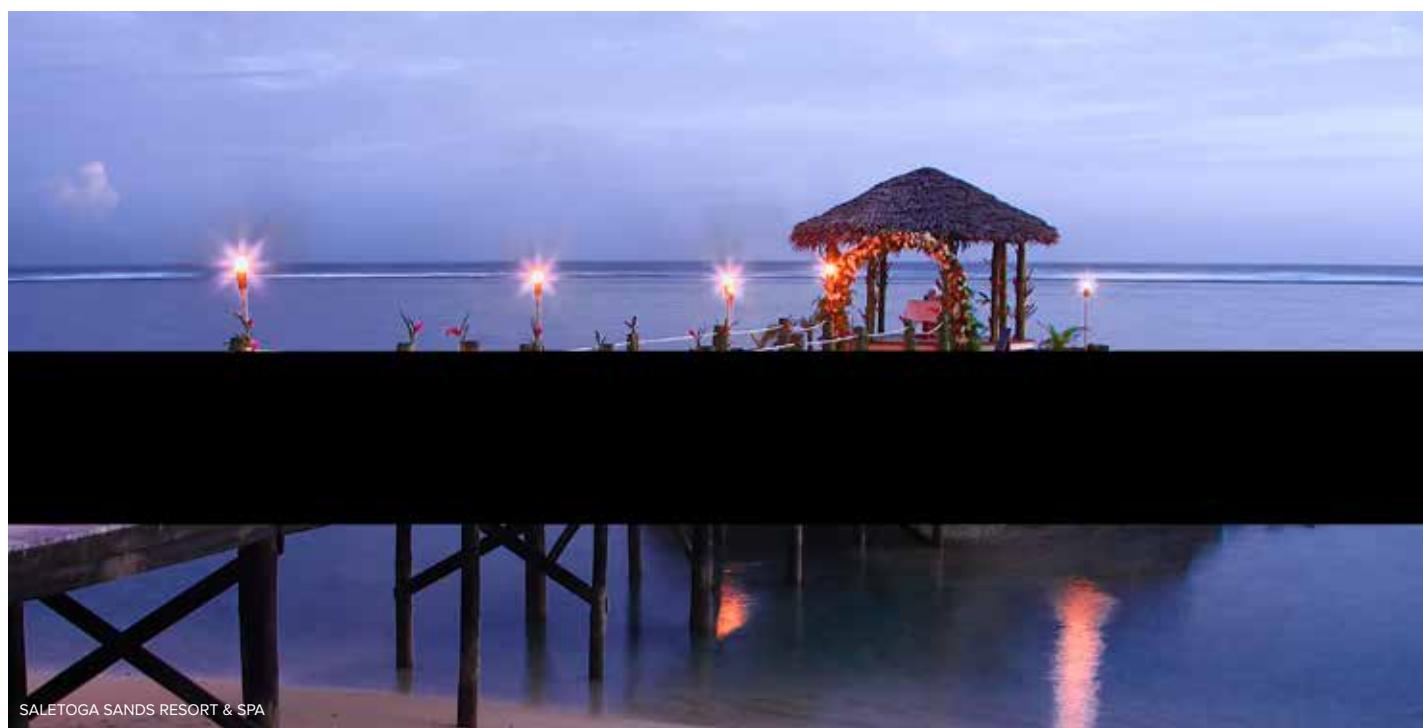
There is full pre-wedding pamper package or wedding day makeup and hair styling packages available as well as a relaxing 'His & Her' massages at the spa. Check out the all-inclusive group wedding package which includes everything you need for your ceremony, reception and accommodation for 20 people.

### Aga Reef Resort

This four star boutique resort offers a mix of private waterfront villas and comfortable hotel rooms, all with modern décor and amenities. All rooms offer a private balcony, views over the lagoon and a complimentary 15 minute spa treatment but if it's absolute luxury you're after try out the exclusive VIP Villa with a private plunge pool. Aga Reef Resort organises wedding ceremonies on the beach, by the pool or elsewhere on the island.

### Return to Paradise Resort & Spa

Return to Paradise Resort & Spa set on a beautiful lagoon and gardens, has over 60 beautiful beachfront rooms facing spectacular sunsets. The resort has a very special story - named after the 1953 film starring Gary Cooper and Roberta Haynes, the beach caught the attention of Hollywood location scouts as the perfect setting for Return to Paradise and became an international symbol of Samoa. It was protected from development for many years despite numerous financial incentives until the beach was trusted to Ramona Su'a Pale, a daughter of the village returning from New Zealand, to develop. It remains 100 per cent owned and operated by Samoans and staffed by the extended family. The resort has two restaurants and a bar. Paradise Kitchen is the signature restaurant with an international team of chefs who design dishes by sourcing fresh local ingredients. Cabana Cafe, by the pool is open daily for lunch in the high season serving snack foods, tapas and wood-fire pizza. The Rock Pool Bar is located in a traditional Samoan falé with an extensive deck, overlooking the beach. A beautiful place to watch the sunset with your loved one and sip a fresh coconut blended with Samoa's own cocoa liqueur. The resort offers a variety of wedding packages. 



SALETOGA SANDS RESORT & SPA

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# — PHOTOGRAPHERS — SNAPSHOT

## Jordan Kwan

### Jordan Kwan Photography

#### How long have you been a wedding photographer for?

I've been a wedding photographer for seven years, shooting mainly in Samoa and Auckland. My background is actually in geography and politics, but I've always enjoyed photography as a hobby, and eventually decided to make a living out of it.

#### Can you provide some technical information?

My principal camera is a Nikon D750, it gives me great resolution for editing and prints. It's also a beast in low light, and the autofocus system is exceptionally fast. I hardly shoot video, mostly because my talents lie in still photography.

I hardly, if ever, shoot or edit in black and white, mostly because part of the magic in getting married in Samoa is the beauty and vibrancy of the environment, which begs to be captured in full colour. With that said, if I see a shot is best highlighted in black and white, I'll definitely do so.

#### Do some couples only want video? How many want both formats?

In the last five years, more couples are getting a video done of their wedding. I have friends who are professional videographers, and I'm amazed at their ability to put together polished and cinematic wedding videos. It's understandable that couples are budgeting for video, too.

#### What questions should the bride and groom ask to ensure they get the photo album they want?

A consultation with me is compulsory. On-line blogs and articles cover this topic in detail, but personally I think it's more important to sit down and have a coffee with your photographer. My best weddings were always the ones where I got to know the couple well beforehand, and got a sense of who they were as people, and as a couple.

Plan your shoot. Your photographer is a fountain of knowledge, so make use of it and ask for advice and suggestions.



*Jordan Kwan*

#### How do you get everyone to relax for the candid shots?

If couples are worried about getting comfortable in front of the camera, I usually suggest they opt for an engagement shoot. This gives them a fair idea of what to expect once we shoot on their wedding day.

Couples often look at my portfolio and think the photographs look romantic and effortless. But more often than not it took a lot of work, sometimes hiking, often out in the burning sun, in horrible humidity, and so they need to be mentally prepared. A friendly disposition is always the best way to get people to relax for candid photographs.

#### Have you had any unusual requests for locations or scenarios?

Perhaps my favorite was a Harry Potter-themed one. Harry Potter was a big part of my childhood, and this shoot was personally exciting for me. It also taught me that growing up doesn't mean you have to let go of your inner child.

#### Anything else you would like to add?

Now and then someone will complain about the high cost of wedding photography, but I tell people their photographs will grow in value over the years. And if you can't afford a big wedding, a simple blessing can be just as moving. A friend married her partner in a simple ceremony during an early morning mass. And that was it. It was no less moving than some of the lavish weddings I've shot. At the end of the day, the only thing that's important is you two. The rest is details.



## Graham and Donna Debney

Sheraton Samoa Beach Resort

### What inspired you to have a South Pacific island wedding?

We had stayed at the Sheraton Samoa Beach Resort in 2017. We loved the simplicity and warmth of the locals and Samoa's natural, rugged landscape, which created the low-key but beautiful atmosphere we were looking for. We also loved the idea that our wedding would be a very special holiday with our closest friends and family.

### What made you pick that specific island ahead of all the others?

We have holidayed in Fiji and Rarotonga. However, Samoa felt off the beaten track, and not too commercial. There is still a very "local" vibe about it, which we love. Also, airfares and accommodation are great value for money compared with other Pacific Islands.

### What made you pick that specific resort?

When we flew to Samoa in 2017, a wedding group on board were also staying at the Sheraton Resort. We watched them walk past us to their wedding ceremony and Graham said, "Wouldn't it be great if we got married here." I said yes immediately, as we had been struggling to find the right location in New Zealand.

### Did you use an agent to book your trip? If so, who?

Yes, we used Lifestyle Holidays to book our airfares, accommodation and honeymoon. They negotiated a group booking airfare and accommodation rate for our 36 guests.

### What was the main benefit of using an agent to book your trip?

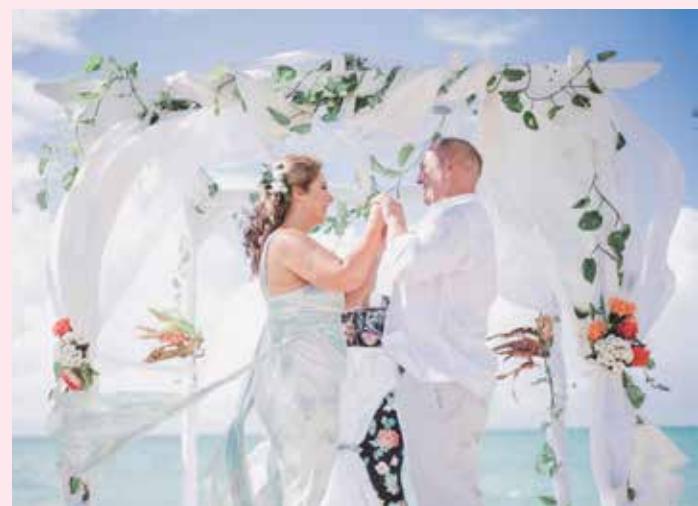
Lifestyle Holidays' local knowledge and contacts, and the excellent relationship they had with the Sheraton Samoa Resort. Our agent was in regular communication with the resort. A lot of our guests had special requests for their stay in Samoa, all of which they handled gracefully and confidently. They were able to organise lots of extras for us. One was a private bus tour for our guests to explore Upolu for the day. The tour included a stop at the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum, a spectacular waterfall photograph stop, lunch at a top restaurant in Apia and a walking tour around the Apia markets. It was a very special experience for all our guests.

### What were some of the advantages of getting married in the islands?

The best aspect was getting on the plane in Auckland and knowing all our wedding plans had been taken care of. It was our time to relax and enjoy the lead-up to our wedding day with our friends and family. The main advantage was our island wedding became a five-day event, rather than just an afternoon and an evening. We spent time with all our guests, creating amazing memories and sharing many fun times.

### Did your resort or wedding venue provide you with a wedding planner? If so, how did you find that experience?

Our wedding package at the Sheraton included a wedding planner, Louise, who was efficient, friendly and went to great lengths to cater to our needs. We were lucky to have met Louise in 2017. She gladly shared advice from previous weddings she had organised at the resort. She was very considerate of our budget and always gave us options for us to choose from.



### If you had a friend planning an island wedding, what would your Top 3 tips be?

1. Ensure a wedding planner is available as part of your wedding package.
2. Check you don't book during the rainy season/tropical cyclone season.
3. Book a resort where all your guests can stay at the same location and also where your wedding will be held. This makes everything much simpler and easier.

# Wedding Planner

**Lou Brightwell**

Saletoga Sands Resort & Spa

**How long have you had this role?**

It's around 15 years – time flies!

**What lead-time do you require to plan a wedding?**

We are pretty flexible and of course it depends on what a couple wants, but as a general rule we try and aim for the following:

Tropical Wedding – 1 week

Deluxe Wedding – 2 weeks

Le Taimane Wedding – 1 month

All inclusive Wedding – 2 months

**How many weddings do you organise each month?**

Some months are busier than others, but on average we would host two weddings per month.

**What are some of the unique things you can offer?**

There are numerous options such as sunset photos, and a wedding on our beautiful beach or private jetty. We can also create a traditional Samoan theme with amazing song from a village choir or warriors escorts.

**What are the main benefits of getting married at your resort?**

We have a wonderful location tucked away in our own slice of paradise. We also have the wisdom of experience, which makes a huge difference. And from a cost point-of-view we are experts at making a tight budget work!



*Lou Brightwell*

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**

I get experience all the satisfaction of making the day special for a bride and groom – creating happiness and life long memories.

**What are Top 3 things a planner needs to find out from a couple?**

Documentation, location, set up and how many guests are attending.

**Best advice you would give a couple?**

Communication is key!

**Do you help with honeymoon plans too?**

Yes, we do have honeymoon bonus, our location is perfect and very memorable for a couple.

**Any memorable unique wedding stories you can share?**

We had one bride and groom who met at university, and went on to marry different partners. Those marriages didn't work out, but later in life they met again and they got married with us. The groom sang while the bride walked towards him. We were their witnesses and we were all in tears, such a romantic one!



# Taumeasina Island Resort

## Escape to paradise

Experience first class quality at Taumeasina Island Resort, Samoa. Indulge in fabulous food, luxurious spa treatments and great service all in a pristine island location. Surrounded by a beautiful blue lagoon and framed by emerald green mountains, Taumeasina offers the perfect setting for a tropical honeymoon, romantic escape or your dream wedding. Share your special day with family and friends or marry in an intimate ceremony with just the two of you. The island offers a number of spectacular venues where you can exchange vows surrounded by a sparkling lagoon, white sand beach and lush tropical gardens. Our professional team including your own wedding co-ordinator will tend to every detail to make your destination wedding in Samoa the most seamless and unforgettable day surpassing your expectations.

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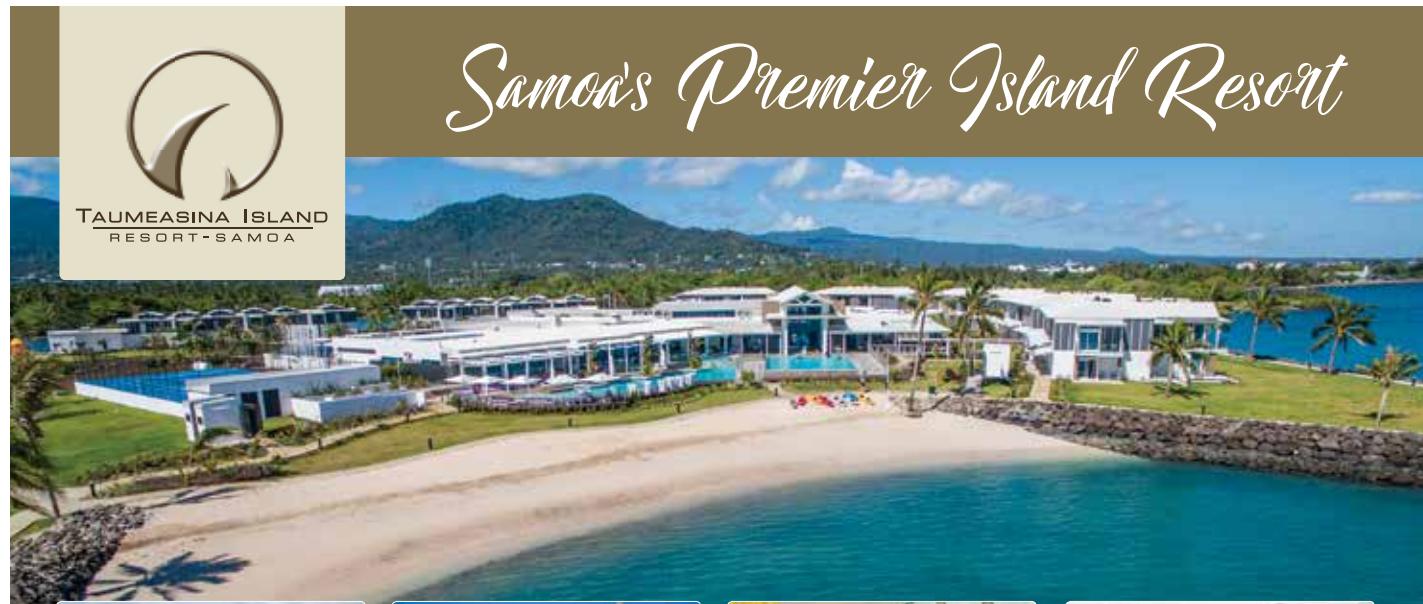
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TAUMEASINA ISLAND  
RESORT - SAMOA

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