

Samoa reopens border after almost two years

- A Monitor Desk Report

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After more than two years since the pandemic threw international travel into turmoil, Samoa's beautiful shorelines have once again welcomed international travellers on the first direct flights from American Samoa, Fiji, Australia and New Zealand.

Straight off the flights, passengers were greeted by the Minister of Tourism, Hon. Toeolesulusulu Cedric Schuster and the Samoa Tourism Authority Board of Directors and CEO, as well as the High Commissioner of Australia HE Emily Luck who was at Faleolo International Airport to welcome the first direct flight from Sydney/Brisbane.

Excitement ensued with a fresh ula offering and welcome by Miss Samoa and the Samoa Tourism team in traditional wear, the Return to Paradise Resort string guitar ensemble, and multiple cultural performances in the arrival hall and concourse by Samoa Airport Authority and Tasi and Alii's.

Tourism Minister, Hon. Toeolesulusulu Cedric Schuster commented on the

reopening saying “The past two years have been a trying time for the world over, but as Samoa reopens its borders, it is our acknowledgement that our internal protection measures are safe for our people and for the yearning travellers who are wanting to visit family and friends, and who are eager to explore our heritage and natural environment,”

“We look forward to hosting all visitors, and showcasing our culture and environment, and pray that we continue to be mindful of the necessary travel health advisories for all of our protection.”

Pre-COVID, Samoa welcomed 181,000 international visitors in 2019. Visitor spend in the same year totalled WST 528 million.

Newly appointed Samoa Tourism Authority CEO, Pativaine Petaia-Tevita, shared her excitement and optimism for the return of international visitors to Samoan shores.

“We are very excited to welcome back travellers on the first direct flights since our reopening. Samoa has been waiting for this moment for a long time and it was wonderful and uplifting to see passengers fill the terminal once again.”

“Our reopening is a special milestone which we celebrated in a special way along with the return of international visitors including family and friends.”

In preparation for the reopening, a series of developments and new processes were put in place to ensure Samoa would be travel ready, and that the health and safety of locals and international travellers remained of utmost priority. Samoa’s robust preparations include the achievement of high vaccination rates, training and upskilling for local employees, upgraded travel instructions and bolstered testing capabilities.

Vaccination rates were pivotal in the decision to reopen, with the most recent data showing almost 93% of Samoa’s eligible population, aged 5 years and over, has been fully vaccinated.

Big ticket attractions and much-loved natural treasures are primed and ready to receive the influx of travellers over the coming months, including the famous To Sua Ocean Trench, Piula Cave Pool, Afu Aau Waterfalls, Lalomanu Beach, and Samoan Cultural Village.

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