

# KINGDOM OF THE GIANTS

巨兽王国



There are very few places in the world where it is possible – due to legal restrictions – to swim with whales. For up close and personal encounters with humpback whales, dive into the remote playgrounds of Ha'apai and Vava'u.

由于律法的限制，全世界能够与鲸同游的地点少之又少。潜进偏远的度假胜地——哈派群岛与瓦瓦群岛，来趟贴近座头鲸的遇见之旅吧。

Text & Photo | Rod Klein

Humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) have visited Tonga's crystal blue waters for centuries. These giant vapor sprouting mammals migrate from their summer feeding grounds of Antarctica, to their winter breeding grounds in Tonga's warm tropical waters.

From late June through early November they gather around the islands of Tongatapu, Ha'apai and Vava'u in order to mate and give birth to new calves between July and September. Visitors are often treated to a series of boisterous courtship displays and mating occurs during these months. It's a very exciting time to be observing the whales of Tonga.

Feeding on their mother's thick, cottage cheese-like milk, the new born calves gain as much as 200 pounds per day, and by October, the new calves would be mature enough to travel. In November, most of the calves would have left Tonga to begin their journey south to the nutrient-rich waters of the Antarctic.

The whales must travel almost 6000 km to reach their favored feeding grounds. It's a long journey, but once there, they are rewarded with their favorite item

on the menu – acres of shrimp-like krill – which makes all their effort well worth it. Humpbacks have 240-400 baleen plates, which hang on each side of their huge mouth. Krill and small schooling fish are trapped in the hairy-fringed edges of the baleen. The whales gorge themselves during summer since they do not feed at all while in their winter breeding grounds and must subsist on fat reserves stored in their blubber.

## Delicate Balance

The whale watch operators are aware of the delicate balance, which must be maintained between viewing and harassing the whales. They have developed a code of conduct to help ensure this population of humpback whales continues to find a safe and peaceful haven in the Kingdom of Tonga.

All of the whale operators in Tonga must be licensed to take guests out to swim with the local whale population. As a general etiquette, only one boat can interact with a group of whales at a time. Vava'u is the area where most of the day boats operate and only groups of four – plus a guide – can enter the water at one time and stay a maximum of 90 minutes with any group of whales.





座头鲸旅居东加湛蓝蔚蓝的海域已有数个世纪。这些会呼气喷水的庞大哺乳动物，从它们位于南极洲的夏季觅食场所迁徙而来，前来东加温暖的热带水域渡过它们在冬季的繁殖时期。

从六月底到十一月初，座头鲸为了交配，会聚集在东加大埔岛、哈派群岛与瓦瓦乌群岛附近，并在期间的七月到九月孕育新生命。在这几个月里，旅客通常可以欣赏到一连串狂热的求爱演出以及交配过程，这是在东加赏鲸时，最令人兴奋的时刻。

鲸鱼妈妈用它们浓稠、如软乾酪般的乳汁哺喂鲸鱼宝宝。这些刚出生的宝宝们，每天以增加两百磅的重量激长著，到了十月份，鲸鱼宝宝们就能够成熟的足以应付之后的旅程。十一月时，大部份的小鲸鱼会离开东加，开始它们朝南方的旅行，前往南极丰沛肥沃的海域。

这些鲸鱼们必须游历近六千公里，才能抵达它们最喜爱的觅食地。这是一趟长时间的旅行，但是一旦到了那儿，它们就能够获得最棒的报偿，享用它们最爱的佳肴－许许多多像小虾般的磷虾（krill），这也让它们的努力非常值得。座头鲸有240至400片的鲸须板悬垂于它们血盆大口的每一侧，这些鲸须边缘毛茸茸的鬃毛，能够困住磷虾和鱼群。鲸鱼会在夏季期间狼吞虎咽的饱食一顿，因为鲸鱼在冬季的繁殖地丝毫都不会进食，到时候它们便必须完全依靠鲸脂内所储存的脂肪来维持生命。

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逗留于比米尼岸滨的斑点海豚已经被视为是世界上部份最容易接近的海洋生物。

Mothers and calves are given more leeway, and if it appears that they do not want to interact with the boat and its snorkelers, the operators must retreat.

Dive Vava'u and the Nai'a are different operations and each offers its own unique experience. Dive Vava'u is a family operated day boat operation, run with respect and love for the local whale population by its owners, Karen and Paul Stone. They have two fast boats and several crew per boat. Paul and Karen accompany guests on every trip, and their local knowledge and enthusiasm makes for a fantastic experience.

The Nai'a is a liveaboard that normally hosts divers in the waters of Fiji. During the southern hemisphere's winter months, the Nai'a spends four to eight weeks in the waters off Ha'apai in Tonga, offering guests the opportunity to swim with and watch the humpbacks mate and give birth.





### Can't Get Enough

During the 10 days while I was in Ha'apai, there were no other whale-watching boats in the area, and unlike Vava'u, the Ha'apai area has only several small resorts and limited whale encounter options. Since the Nai'a is a liveaboard, we were able to stay out in the open waters all day and only sought safe harbor each night, but still close to the prime whale action.

Every charter is different and it was during the first three days of cruising around the islands that we had our most successful encounters. The first sighting had whales at the stern of our boat. They approached with a curiosity, then entertained us with breaches, rolls, tail slaps and flukes and continued on their way.

If a whale stuck around the boat for a while, we would don our wetsuits, mask, fins and snorkels and quietly enter the water. Whale experts believe that is not possible to dive with whales in scuba gear because the bubbles are likely to be interpreted by the whales as a form of aggression.

The Nai'a crew has had a lot of experience in these waters and we tried our best to do as we were told and to stay calm when we did encounter a whale. Finally we decided to attempt an approach from the skiff, which proved to be successful. We were joined for several short minutes by a mother and calf while we snorkeled in a controlled panic to shoot as many photos as possible in our short time there.

Each day would be a new experience with the Naia's two skiffs taking us close to whales that we had spotted from the main liveaboard. Some days we swam with mothers and their calves or an enormous pregnant female, other days we enter into the deep sapphire blue water to hear the male humpbacks sing their beautiful haunting song. Probably the most memorable experience was the two hours we spent with a pair of "dancing whales". These two adults simply would not leave us alone in the water. The pair swam, sang, and danced around the group providing an incredible experience and a wonderful photo opportunity.

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right: XXX.

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### Guide to Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga comprises 4 main island groups: Tonga, Ha'apai, Vava'u & the Niuas, running South to North, along the "Tonga Trench", close to the International Dateline. A South Pacific island nation, and the only monarchy in the Pacific, Tonga consists of 171 islands, of which 45 are inhabited. Tourist facilities are concentrated in and around the main island of Tongatapu where its capital, Nuku'alofa, is located. Most of the whale activities are concentrated on the islands of Vava'u and Ha'apai.

### 微妙平衡

鲸鱼观察员必须要懂得小心拿捏观赏或打扰鲸鱼间的界线，这是一种微妙的平衡。他们已经发展出一套行为准则，用来协助确保座头鲸的族群能够继续在东加王国寻得一处安全且宁静的避风港。

所有东加的鲸鱼观察员都必须取得许可证，才能够带旅客出海与当地的鲸群共游。一般原则下，同一时间只能有一艘船与一群鲸鱼互动。瓦瓦乌群岛是最多游船运行的区域，每趟行程包含导游只能搭载四个人，可以近入海中与任何一群鲸鱼同乐，最多可待90分钟。鲸鱼妈妈与鲸鱼宝宝可以享有更多自由活动的空间，所以如果它们显得不想和船只与潜客们互动，那么观察员就必须带著大家撤离。

「Dive Vava'u」与「Nai'a」的经营者不同，他们各自都推出独一无二的体验行程。「Dive Vava'u」是由一家人共同营运的游船，船主Karen以及Paul Stone秉持著对当地鲸群的尊敬与热爱，经营著生意。他们拥有两艘快艇，每一艘船都配有几名船员。每一趟的行程，Paul 与 Karen 都会陪著旅客一道出海，他们对当地的了解与热忱让整趟旅行增添更多美好的经历。

「Nai'a」则是一艘宿船，通常载著潜客运行于斐济的海域。在南半球的冬季月份，

「Nai'a」就会在东加的哈派群岛海域上待个四到八周，提供旅客一个与鲸共游以及观察座头鲸交配和繁殖的机会。

### 怎样都不过瘾

在我停留于哈派群岛的那十天里，那里没有任何一艘其他的赏鲸船，而且不像瓦瓦乌群岛，哈派地区只有几间小旅馆以及不多的赏鲸选择。由于「Nai'a」是一艘宿船，我们可以一整天都逗留在开放的海域上，只有在每天晚上才寻找当晚停留的安全港，但都不会离野生鲸鱼的活动范围太远。

每天的行程都不尽相同，而在巡航于群岛期间的前三天，我们有了一次最圆满成功的相遇。第一眼看见鲸鱼群时，它们就出现在我们的船尾。它们好奇的靠近，接著为我们表演一连串破浪、翻滚、甩尾与倒挂金钩的精彩节目，演出结束后，又从容的继续著它们的路程。

假若有鲸鱼在船只附近徘徊好一会儿，我们就会穿上防寒衣、面罩、蛙鞋以及呼吸管，轻手轻脚地滑入海里。鲸鱼专家认为戴著水肺装备是绝不可能与鲸鱼同潜，因为水肺装备冒出的泡泡有可能会被鲸鱼视为是一种侵犯的象征。

「Nai'a」的船员在这些水域早已有过无数次遇见鲸鱼的经验，而当我们亲身与鲸鱼

相遇的那一刻，即使他们曾说过要保持冷静，我们还是得很努力的去镇定兴奋不已的情绪，最后我们决定从小艇上试著接近它们，结果证明一切都很顺利。我们还碰见了一对鲸鱼母子，在那短短的几分钟里，我们戴著呼吸管控制了一切混乱，尽可能的在短时间内拍下最多的相片。

有两艘小艇会载著我们更靠近从主船上就注意到的鲸鱼们，因此搭乘「Nai'a」的每一天都有新的体验。有几天我们和鲸鱼妈妈与鲸鱼宝宝们，或是一头庞然的怀孕母鲸一同潜游；也有几天我们潜入宝石蓝的海水中，聆听雄座头鲸吟唱著它们萦绕难忘的优美歌曲。最令人忘不了的经验应该就是我们与那对「舞鲸」共处的那两个钟头了！这两头成年的鲸鱼在海里完全不在乎我们

### 东加指南

东加王国包括了四个主要的群岛：东加、哈派、瓦瓦乌以及纽阿斯，沿著东加海沟由北至南绵延矗立，地理位置接近国际换日线。东加是南太平洋的一个岛国，也是太平洋唯一的君主政体国，由171座岛屿组成，其中的45座有居民居住。旅游设施集中在主岛东加大埔岛及其附近，那儿也是东加的首都努库阿洛法的所在地，鲸鱼的活动则大部份集中在瓦瓦乌群岛与哈派群岛。





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## Whales Watching Us

These magical moments in the water were the exception, since being wild animals, the whales have a mind of their own and don't always decide to offer prolonged interaction. I could have stayed in the water all day watching them despite the relatively cold water (22 to 23 deg C). The humpbacks have a grace and intelligence that becomes so obvious when they look you directly in their eye to acknowledge your presence.

On one occasion, a diver happened to be directly above the large tail one of the dancing whales. As the whale swam away, its tail gently lifted him out of the water, tossing him airborne and helpless about 1.5 meters/5 feet in the air. Surprised but unhurt the intrepid snorkeler was left with an indelible memory, knowing very well that serious damage could have been done. I quietly wished this little joy ride happened to me.

Since 1978, humpback whales have been protected during most of the journey between their feeding and calving grounds, but that has not always been the case. 19th Century whalers altered their idyllic lifestyle, slaughtering the whales in great numbers in Tonga, other South Pacific Islands and

in the Antarctic. Over 200,000 Southern Hemisphere humpbacks were killed from 1904 through 1963 before the Southern Hemisphere humpbacks were protected from commercial whaling. Tongan whaling did not end until 1978 when a moratorium was imposed by Royal decree.

Today ex-whaling nations are pressuring Tonga to lift this moratorium and resume whaling. Since 1991, Tongan humpbacks have been studied and monitored by University of Auckland research teams. The researchers have identified and catalogued 397 individuals to date. The legacy of whaling remains. Two hundred years ago an estimated 7000 humpbacks visited Tonga's waters, but by the late 1960's, there were as few as 15 mature breeding females arriving annually. In 2001, the population was estimated at around 700 individuals.

Recovery is on the rebound, but it is slow. Tonga is a special place for its people to experience this unique whale wonder. Visitors from all over the world visit this area annually just to experience its recovering population of whales. My hope is to return again to the Kingdom of the Giants with the hope that the population of whales will continue to grow and prosper.

的存在，这对伴侣游行著、欢唱著、绕著群鲸舞蹈著，让我们经历了一个美妙的体验，以及一个绝佳的拍摄机会。

## 鲸鱼也在看我们

这些在海里的神奇时刻都很难得，因为身为野生动物的鲸鱼们有著自己的意念，并非总是愿意与人类有太冗长的互动。我可以一整天的待在水里看著它们，尽管海水挺冷的（摄氏22到23度）。座头鲸风姿优雅且聪敏机灵，所以很显然的，当它们透过双眼直视你时，也代表著它们认同到你的存在。

在某个机会，一位潜水客就刚好在一头游舞鲸鱼的大尾上方。当这头鲸鱼游离时，它的尾巴轻轻地将他举出了水面，抛向空中，让他无助的腾悬在约1.5米（5尺）高的半空。这位勇敢的潜水客有受到惊吓却没有受伤，不但留下了难以抹灭的回忆，也充分了解到那样的事件是有可能造成严重的伤害。我暗自希望这样的「兜风」能发生在我身上。

自1978年起，大部份座头鲸前往觅食区与繁殖区的旅程已经受到保护，不过，并非总是尽如人意。十九世纪时，捕鲸者改变了他们的生活形态，在东加、其他南太平洋群岛以及南极地区屠杀大量的鲸鱼。在受到商业捕鲸限制的保护前，有超过二十万头的南半球座头鲸于1904年到1963年间被猎杀。东加的猎鲸行动并未结束，一直到了1978年，皇家法令强制禁止捕猎，才停止了这种残酷的行为。

而今，以前的一些捕鲸国家正迫使东加将禁止令撤销，好让他们重新猎鲸。从1991年开始，奥





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克兰大学的调查小组便负责研究与监察东加的座头鲸。迄今，调查员已经鉴定且记载了397头个别的鲸鱼，它们是捕鲸行动下的幸存者。两百年前，估计有七千头的座头鲸前来东加海域，但是到了1960年代末期，每年只有少少的15头成熟繁育的母鲸抵达。到了2001年，鲸鱼数量估计大约有700头。

鲸族的元气还在复原当中，不过有点慢。东加对于想体验这独特鲸鱼奇观的人来说，是一个很特别的地方，每年来自全球各地的旅客探访这个地区，就是要来见见这些正在复苏的鲸鱼们。我的希望就是怀著这些鲸鱼数量将会持续成长与壮大的愿望，再次回到这巨兽王国。

► 前往巴哈马

飞往首都努库阿洛法的班机有经斐济与澳洲的太平洋航空以及经奥克兰的纽西兰航空（[www.airnz.co.nz](http://www.airnz.co.nz)）或蓝太平洋航空（[www.flypacificblue.com](http://www.flypacificblue.com)）。想参加瓦瓦乌群岛任何当地陆上店家所经营的与鲸鱼同游活动，必须从努库阿洛法搭乘查塔姆航空（[www.chathamspacific.com](http://www.chathamspacific.com)）前往，航程约为一个钟头。

► 何时前往

七月至十一月是鲸鱼出没的季节，也是东加适合潜水的时期，而八月到十月之间则是最有机会遇见鲸鱼的几个月。

► 气候

野生鲸鱼拜访东加的几个月份正值冬季，天气状况常是有风又有雨。水温从摄氏22度到24度不等，所以务必携带暖和的防寒衣。

► 签证

必须出示护照与来回双程机票。未停留超过一个月则不需事先办理签证。东加征收离境税。

► 电力

标准电力为220/240V, 50Hz。三孔的澳洲式插座，可使用转换器。

► 保健

无重大健康问题。

► 语言

英语。

► 货币

东加潘加币（Tonga pa'anga；TOP）。

► 住宿资讯

瓦瓦乌：Vav'au: Backpacker Lodge (my favorite, [www.visitvavau.com/backpackers/](http://www.visitvavau.com/backpackers/)), Blue Lagoon Resort ([www.bluelagoontonga.com](http://www.bluelagoontonga.com)), Mystic Sands Beachfront Bungalows, The Tongan Beach Resort ([www.thetongian.com](http://www.thetongian.com)).

努库阿洛法：在没有度假饭店的努库阿洛法，「Waterfront Lodge（[www.water-front-lodge.com](http://www.water-front-lodge.com)）」显然是最好的选择，非常适合在赏鲸鱼之旅的前后想在市中心多待几天的人。

潜水中心：我只想推荐一家潜店：「Dive Vava'u（[www.divevavau.com](http://www.divevavau.com)）」，因为他们最专业且拥有最完备的船只与优秀的员工。

宿船：「Nai'a」宿船（[www.naia.com.fj](http://www.naia.com.fj)）在努库阿洛法城外经营航行至哈派群岛的船只。



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► Getting there

The capital Nuku'alofa, is served by Air Pacific via Fiji and Australia and Air New Zealand ([www.airnz.co.nz](http://www.airnz.co.nz)) or Pacific Blue ([www.flypacificblue.com](http://www.flypacificblue.com)) via Auckland. To swim with the whales in Vav'au with one of the local land-based operators, you will need to take a one-hour flight from Nuku'alofa on Chatham's Air ([www.chathamspacific.com](http://www.chathamspacific.com)).

► When to go

While diving is available in Tonga, the whale season runs from July to November with August through October being the months with the best chance for whale encounters.

► Temperature

It is winter during the prime whale months in Tonga with rain and windy conditions. Water temperature can run anywhere from 22 – 24 deg C, so make sure to bring a warm wetsuit.

► Visas

A passport and an onward/return ticket are required. Visas are not required for stays of up to 30 days. Tonga collects a departure tax.

► Electricity

220/240V, 50Hz is the standard. Plugs are three-pin Australia-style and converters are available.

► Health

There are no major health issues in Tonga.

► Language

English.

► Currency

Tonga pa'anga (TOP).

► Accommodation

Vav'au: Backpacker Lodge (my favorite, [www.visitvavau.com/backpackers/](http://www.visitvavau.com/backpackers/)), Blue Lagoon Resort ([www.bluelagoontonga.com](http://www.bluelagoontonga.com)), Mystic Sands Beachfront Bungalows, The Tongan Beach Resort ([www.thetongian.com](http://www.thetongian.com)).

Nuku'alofa: Waterfront Lodge ([www.water-front-lodge.com](http://www.water-front-lodge.com)) is by far the nicest, non-resort hotel in Nuku'alofa. Great for the traveler who wants to stay a few days in the main town before or after their whale tour.

Dive Operator: There is only one operator I would recommend: Dive Vava'u ([www.divevavau.com](http://www.divevavau.com)) as they are the most professional and have the best boat and staff.

Liveaboard: The Nai'a liveaboard ([www.naia.com.fj](http://www.naia.com.fj)) operates out of Nuku'alofa and sails out to Ha'apai.

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