



The Whales and Dolphins of Niue Island, South Pacific

August 2016 Tour

Niue (pronounced "New-ay") is a South Pacific gem – a remote and tranquil island of great natural beauty, and home to some of the most spectacular dolphins and whales in the world. It is one of the very few places that offers an opportunity for close-up encounters with both spinner dolphins and humpback whales just metres and minutes from the shore in warm, crystal-clear waters – and virtually no other visitors around.

Since 1999, POD (People, Oceans, Dolphins) has been offering this exclusive trip to paradise! The next tour runs in August 2016, and the emphasis is both the whales and dolphins of Niue and the island's spectacular – and little known – stunning natural scenery.



WHERE ON EARTH IS NIUE?



Niue is a single island that takes about 4 hours to gently cycle around. It is situated in the heart of Polynesia, about 3 hours direct flying time north of New Zealand, and neighbours Tonga, Samoa and the Cook Islands.

Niue is unique in many ways: it is a raised coral platform, with dramatic cliffs plunging into the Pacific Ocean. Although it does have a few tiny beaches, it is really quite different from the typical South Sea atolls and islands – Niue has seacaves, colourful rock pools, lush forests and – in the absence of any rivers – crystal clear warm ocean waters.

Niue is a developed self-governing nation, maintaining a 'free association' with New Zealand, and has a tiny population of less than fifteen hundred people, most of whom speak English as well as their native Niuean. All modern facilities are found on the island – including a school, shops, bank, hospital, power-generating station, port and government house – and yet the island offers a wonderful refuge from the stress and noise of everyday life elsewhere in the world. The pace of life is slow and relaxed, the weather very pleasant year-round and the people extremely friendly. Crime is almost non-existent, sanitary conditions are excellent and communications with the outside world are reliable. In sum, Niue is a very special island nestled in the South Pacific where it really is possible to get away from it all – and to meet the cetaceans (dolphins and whales)...

NIUE'S DOLPHINS AND WHALES



The Spinner Dolphins around Niue are some of the most acrobatic in the oceans! They get their names for the high leaps they make out of the water, sometimes spinning as much as 6 or 7 times before crashing exuberantly back into the waves. They spin along a vertical axis of their body, leaving the water nose-first and already spinning - all quite different from the artificial 'somersault' behaviours often seen in captive bottlenose dolphins. This is the real thing: wild, natural and full of life!

Each year several humpback whales can also be seen hugging Niue's dramatic coastline, making the long journey from the nutrient-rich waters of Antarctica, where they feed for several months during the Antarctic Summer. Swimming north to the warm and relatively sheltered waters of South Pacific islands, they rest, mate, give birth and rear their young. At any given time in the months of July to October there could be ten, twenty, thirty or more whales around the island, often with juveniles in tow. This is a time of great energy, playfulness and some spectacular displays of acrobatics that often includes breaching (jumping out of the water and splashing back down).

If the conditions are right (eg. if the whales seem calm and undisturbed – or even curious – after a person enters into the water nearby) then the small group on the 'zodiac' boat can enter the water with snorkel, mask and fins to view the whales in their own environment. Entering the water in the presence of whales, sometimes with inquisitive juveniles swimming over for a closer look, often provokes a feeling of deep respect and awe in people. Safe distances are always maintained, and the mood is relaxed and respectful. So few visitors ever visit this magical island that human impact on the whales is absolutely minimal, and in-water encounters only occur when the conditions are right and the whales are responsive to a small group of people in the water – sometimes they are very inquisitive! Past trips have even given us the chance to see a pod of friendly dolphins interacting with the large whales, the sea filled with the whistles and clicks of the smaller dolphins and, sometimes, the hauntingly beautiful songs of the humpback whales. It makes the body tingle with sound and energy!

TRIP DATES

The next Niue tour runs from August 6-13, 2015. The tour coincides with the weekly flight to/from Auckland on Air New Zealand. August is well clear of the cyclone season in the South Pacific (November-January), and it is also when the humpback whales are most plentiful. Humidity is low, and there are both pleasant air temperatures and sea temperatures (both averaging 26°C).



TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

There are so many highlights in this trip-of-a-lifetime destination that it's difficult to pick just a few highlights! During the week there will be a total of five trips out on the water to see the dolphins and whales – so lots of opportunities to get up close and personal.

In addition to the dolphins and whales, Niue is abundant with colourful fish-life, coral and underwater caves – all clearly visible by snorkellers at the surface (scuba trips are available at additional cost).



As well as the frequent trips out to see the dolphins and whales, trip participants can keep an eye out for cetaceans from the hotel deck, which has a panoramic view over Avateli Bay – a favourite spot for the humpbacks and spinners.

We shall explore the dramatic open sea caves (lots of light and wide open to the ocean) on Niue's eastern side. Here we see some of the wonderful stalagmites and stalactites in these former dwelling-places of the early Niuean settlers. We shall also visit the bathing place of former Kings on the island, and view the dramatic arches of rock with beautiful ocean backdrops.

We'll venture into a peaceful canyon with a still, clear natural bathing pool, and also visit the unique 'Star Wars' landscape of Togo Chasm, in which is hidden a small beach with palm trees entirely surrounded by sheer cliffs – a magical and sacred place for Niue's first settlers.

A visit to the pools at the northern end of the island will also offer the opportunity to explore the colourful reefs and brightly-coloured fish in these extraordinary and protected tidal pools, and swim through a vast archway through which the light turns the water a deep sunlight-strewn indigo.



No trip to a small island like Niue would be complete without a chance to visit the small collection of local shops that lie at the heart of the community. There are a few souvenir stores that sell local handicrafts, including *tapa* print cloths and weaving. A philately centre is available for those who prize the rare and beautiful collection of Niuean stamps, and the Niue visitor information centre offers a range of books and souvenirs, as well as advice and suggestions for spare-time activities, in the centre of Alofi – the main settlement on the island.



We shall also have the chance to sample a traditional feast with all the local delicacies: taro plants, local fish marinated in lime juice and coconut cream, sweet potato, breadfruit, coconut crab, baked papaya with coconut and the delicious local tropical fruits. There is often an opportunity to see local children performing traditional island dances at some of the events held around the island.

If you love dolphins and whales, but are not keen on living on board a boat for a week, then this is the trip for you. There will be lots of time for rest and relaxation – you may wish to go for a dip in the hotel's swimming pool, take a stroll into town, or even go for a bicycle trip around the island...after all, how many other countries can you cycle around in an afternoon?

The trip will be led by Dr Jason Cressey, founder of The POD - an experienced leader of tours to see and interact with dolphins and whales around the world. Jason first discovered the dolphin and whale eco-tour potential of Niue in 1998, and has been back many times since. Jason will provide daily presentations about dolphins and whales, with particular reference to the spinner and dolphins and humpback whales of Niue, and provide background information on social and mating behaviour, feeding, group dynamics, dolphins and whales in history, mythology and modern culture, and an overview of the apparently beneficial effects that interacting with wild dolphins and whales can have on your well-being.



As well as daily talks, there will be activity sessions throughout the trip (which are, of course, entirely optional) that will include topics such as daily yoga, relaxing visualisations, breathing exercises and story-telling...all inspired by the dolphins and whales!

WHO IS THE TRIP FOR?

Whether you're travelling alone, in a couple or in a group – tours of this kind typically attract a wide variety of people of different backgrounds and ages - the only pre-requisite is a love of dolphins and whales, together with a desire to visit somewhere *really* unusual and off the beaten track.



As Niue has a relatively rough terrain (with sharp rocks away from paved surfaces) the trip is not suitable for children under 12 years old, nor for those who are unable to easily walk for 1-2 km over rocky terrain. Being a strong swimmer is NOT important, *but it is a requirement that you feel comfortable with the idea of floating in deep ocean water* (with a floatation device, if you wish). Full guidance is given on how to use a snorkel and fins, and there will always be someone available to lend assistance if required.

Because of the need to get out of and back onto a small inflatable zodiac boat during the dolphin and whale encounters, a useful thing to consider when asking "Is this trip for me?" is whether you can sit in a plane seat without restriction. The vast majority of people would answer 'yes' to this, but if your body size/shape prohibits you from doing so, then the chances are you would have difficulty entering/exiting the water from the boat, and so you may wish to choose another trip (or, if you do join the trip, you would likely find it most comfortable to remain on the boat without entering the water).



The group size will be small, with the boat size limited to 10 guests maximum. What's more, it's quite likely that there will be no more than a few dozen other tourists on the island for the entire duration of the trip – we'll have the place pretty much to ourselves!

The trip is open to residents of *any* country – Niue has no visa entry restrictions. The tour officially begins and ends in Niue, and full information will be given on arranging your flight to Niue via Auckland, New Zealand. Because you make your own way there it really doesn't matter where you begin the journey! Many direct international flights serve Auckland from London, Vancouver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Australia, Japan and other points in Asia – getting there should present no problems!

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

While the tour does not include transportation to or from Niue, we shall send detailed information to everyone joining the tour (on receipt of the deposit) which outlines the travel options available to New Zealand as well as the flight details for getting to and from Niue, approximate prices, etc., from your part of the world.



IMPORTANT NOTE: Please note that Niue is served by only one airline (Air New Zealand) that flies just a single roundtrip per week between Auckland and Niue. The airline is reliable and normally punctual, and the price of the airfare to Niue has dropped compared to other airlines in previous years...but it pays to book early for the best deals. You will be given details of which flights to book upon receipt of your deposit.

WHAT EXPERIENCES CAN YOU EXPECT TO GAIN FROM THE TRIP?

- Spending time with and learning about the behaviour of dolphins and whales in the warm, clear waters around the island in a respectful, non-stressful and low-impact manner
- Relaxing in a comfortable hotel, overlooking a bay in which the dolphins and whales are often seen, with regular boat-trips travelling just short distances to encounter the cetaceans up-close
- Swimming amongst the underwater corals, limestone formations and colourful tropical fish around the island, as well as several chances to swim in natural pools with both fresh and seawater
- Exploring the exotic landscape, forests, caves and chasms of this charming island
- Learning about the local folklore, customs and traditional Polynesian ways of life on Niue, as well as the chance to enjoy the local fresh organic foods



TOUR COSTS, DATES & BOOKING DETAILS FOR 2016

Places on the Niue trip are limited, and will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. A non-refundable deposit for each participant is required to secure a place.

Niue Tour Dates	Early-Bird Price <i>(If non-refundable deposit is received by March 31, 2016)</i>	Regular Price <i>(after April 1st, 2016)</i>	Deposit Amount	Deposit Due By	Balance Due By
August 6-13, 2016	US\$3350 per person <i>(a discount of \$250 from regular full price)</i>	US\$3600 per person	US\$1000 per person	May 31, 2016 <i>(if space is still available)</i>	July 1, 2016

Upon receipt of your non-refundable deposit with the completed booking form (see accompanying page), you will be sent an acknowledgement, together with an invoice for the remaining balance, which is to be paid by July 1, 2016. You will also be sent a list of recommended personal items to pack, a detailed itinerary, a medical/release form and information about booking your flights.

Please note that, in the event that you need to cancel your place(s), refunds of any balance payments made in addition to the deposit will only be issued if your place(s) on the tour can be filled.

Included in the Tour

- Seven days and nights on the island in twin-share accommodation at the Matavai Resort
- Breakfast, lunch & dinner each day of the tour *(provided by the hotel and a selection of island eateries)*
- Five 2-3 hour boat trips to encounter whales and dolphins in the immediate vicinity of the island
- Snorkels, mask and flippers *(provided by the boat operator; you may bring your own in you prefer)*
- Tour guiding from Jason, who has led trips to Niue since 1998
- Guided excursions around the island, swimming holes and chasms, caves and 'lunar landscape'
- All island transportation, including regular shuttles to the commercial area (bank, etc).

NOT INCLUDED - Please note that the tour price *does not* include the following items:

- International flights to Niue (you will be supplied with full details about booking your flights, how and where to find the best deals etc. when you pay your deposit)
- Wetsuit rental if you need a little extra insulation (some people do, many are quite comfortable without)
- Optional activities (eg. kayaks, canoes, scuba diving)
- Travel Insurance and any local airport or marine entry/departure taxes
- Any gratuities

ACCOMMODATION POLICY

1. If you are booking this tour with another person, you will automatically be placed together in twin-share accommodation (a room with two single beds – that can be made into a King Bed on request – and private bathroom) unless you request otherwise – see note 3, below.
2. If you are a solo traveller, you will be placed with a person of the same sex in a twin-share room.
3. If you request a room to yourself, a **single surcharge** is payable as the hotel only offers (and charges for) rooms based on two people sharing, not per person. The single surcharge for 1 week is US\$700. If you wish to reserve a single room and pay this supplement, please make this clear at the time of booking.

A NOTE ABOUT WILDLIFE

The emphasis of this tour will be the whales and dolphins around Niue. As these are wild animals, no guarantees can be given about the numbers, whereabouts or behaviour of the whales and dolphins at any given time during the tour. The boat operator is very experienced in finding the whales and dolphins, and has a long established history of overseeing interactions that are respectful, non-invasive and safe for all parties. However, Mother Nature can very occasionally present inclement weather, elusive whales or disinterested dolphins – something participants on eco-tours of this nature should recognise. If you approach the experience on Niue with the attitude that all experiences with wild dolphins and whales are a *privilege* – and not a *right* – this helps to create an open, receptive and appreciative mood that's healthy, positive and beneficial for everyone (including the whales and dolphins!).

NIUE 2016 BOOKING FORM

One booking form should be completed by each person travelling. Please make copies of this form as required.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Street Address: _____

Town/City: _____ Province/State/County: _____

Postal/Zip Code: _____ Country: _____

Age Range: Under 18 18-60 60+ Sex: Male Female

Phone Number (with dialling prefix): _____ Mobile #: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Special Dietary Requirements? No Yes If 'yes', please give full details: _____

Please explain any other requests or special needs you may have (eg. single room supplement, etc): _____

How did you first hear about the trip? POD Website Talk/Course Brochure Friend Other

I enclose a non-refundable deposit for \$_____ for ___ places on the Niue 2016 tour, according to the deposit requirements listed. I understand that this deposit must be received by the date indicated, and is payable by personal cheque made payable to '**Dr Jason Cressey - The POD**' (in Canadian Dollars, American Dollars or a variety of other currencies – please ask for further details and exact conversion amounts), US\$/CAN\$ money order or Interac E-Mail Money Transfer (in Canada). Credit card payments can be made using your Paypal account, though please note that surcharges apply – full details available on request.

I understand that the full balance must be received at the address below by July 1, 2016 or I may lose my deposit and my place on the trip. I understand that I (and each member of my party) is responsible for taking out personal travel insurance, for arranging transportation to and from the tour departure point, and for all items listed in the '*Not included*' section of this booking form. I am aware that I must sign a waiver form and a tour agreement form prior to the tour, which will be sent to me upon receipt of my deposit.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Once completed, this booking form can be scanned and emailed to: canadaorca@hotmail.com. Deposit payment arrangements can be made separately. Alternatively, you can mail this completed booking form together with your deposit cheque to this address (a receipt will be emailed to you):



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