
Niue

The tiny island nation



*Way out in The Pacific Ocean between Cook Islands and Tonga at
S Latitude 19° 01'. and W Longitude 169° 51' lies Niue.*

*Niue is a gigantic piece of coral that has been thrust up above sea level and although being one of
the smallest nations, it happens to be one of the largest pieces of dry coral in the world.
Just 13 nautical miles from north to south and 9.6 nautical miles at its widest point its tiny
But this is one very special piece of land.*

Arriving from the Cook Islands we sailed around the impressive cliffs along the south side of the island and proceeded up to the main settlement a little further north.

At about 5 miles out we radio'd Niue Radio and were instructed to come into the harbor and pick up a mooring belonging to the Niue Yacht Club of which I am now a proud member.

There was only one mooring left so we were quite lucky and we snuck in and tied up in 100 feet of water.

As soon as we were moored customs and immigration came down to the port in a van and picked me up transporting me to the Yacht Club where we did our check in. Real easy.

After all the formalities were behind us I immediately decided to jump in the water and see what all the fuss was about. Apparently Niue was famed for having very good visibility. From the surface I could see our mooring block 100 feet below although at that depth color and detail were lacking. I ascended the line to the huge cement block that was holding the O2 in place. All looked good on the mooring so I looked around my underwater world. In front of me I could see a huge coral mountain



Kenny "our crew and an active Ocean Soldier" swimming around the coral head.

The water visibility was amazing at about 150 feet. The coral was in great shape as the water was still relatively cold and the warm currents that had effected much of French Polynesia had not passed Niue.

I decided to use a local dive company for a couple of dives to find out where the good spots were and so the next morning at 7 am a big orange inflatable pulled up to the rear of the O2. I threw my gear onboard and we headed off to the first spot.

Well to my surprise the first dive was right next to the mooring field. After a quick briefing by the dive master we enter the water. Following his lead we descended to the reef top at about 20 feet. A small hole became apparent and after turning completely vertical we descended yet again down to about 45 feet where the cave leveled to a coral sand floor.

Over in the corner of this cave I could see a grouping of about 1/2 a dozen sea snakes and I thought to myself OOOOOH MYYYYYY !!! Being one of the most dangerous venoms known to man the snakes however have such tiny fangs they can't inject much when they bite and as it was they paid us no attention what so ever and went about their creepy business without so much as a sideways glance at all the bubble blowing monsters that had appeared.





Coming out of the cave and onto the reef again I saw beautiful healthy corals which always give my spirit a little lift. I took a couple of shots from underneath some beauties looking up at our dive boat and later under the O2.





A busy corner of the reef as a school of tangs zoom about in apparently aimless circles



Shooting straight up towards the surface gives this coral a beautiful blue halo.

In the Cook Islands I had made friends with Andy and Shirley on the sloop Pemva and they had also arrived in Niue so we agreed to go rent a couple of motorbikes and tour the island. The next day saw us roaring down the road at 20mph our little 125 cc Yamahas screaming with delight.. The sights are well marked and we came across the first important one not 2 mile down the road. A short walk down a track bought us to this amazing cave overlooking the reef.



Avalki Cave looking out over the reef to the west



Looking in towards Andy gives you scale

This place was so cool we decided to return that night for some sunset shots and so at 5pm we found ourselves back in this cave setting up lights on remote triggers. The shot below is the result of that little mission. Thanks to Andy S/Y Pemva for being a patient model for me.



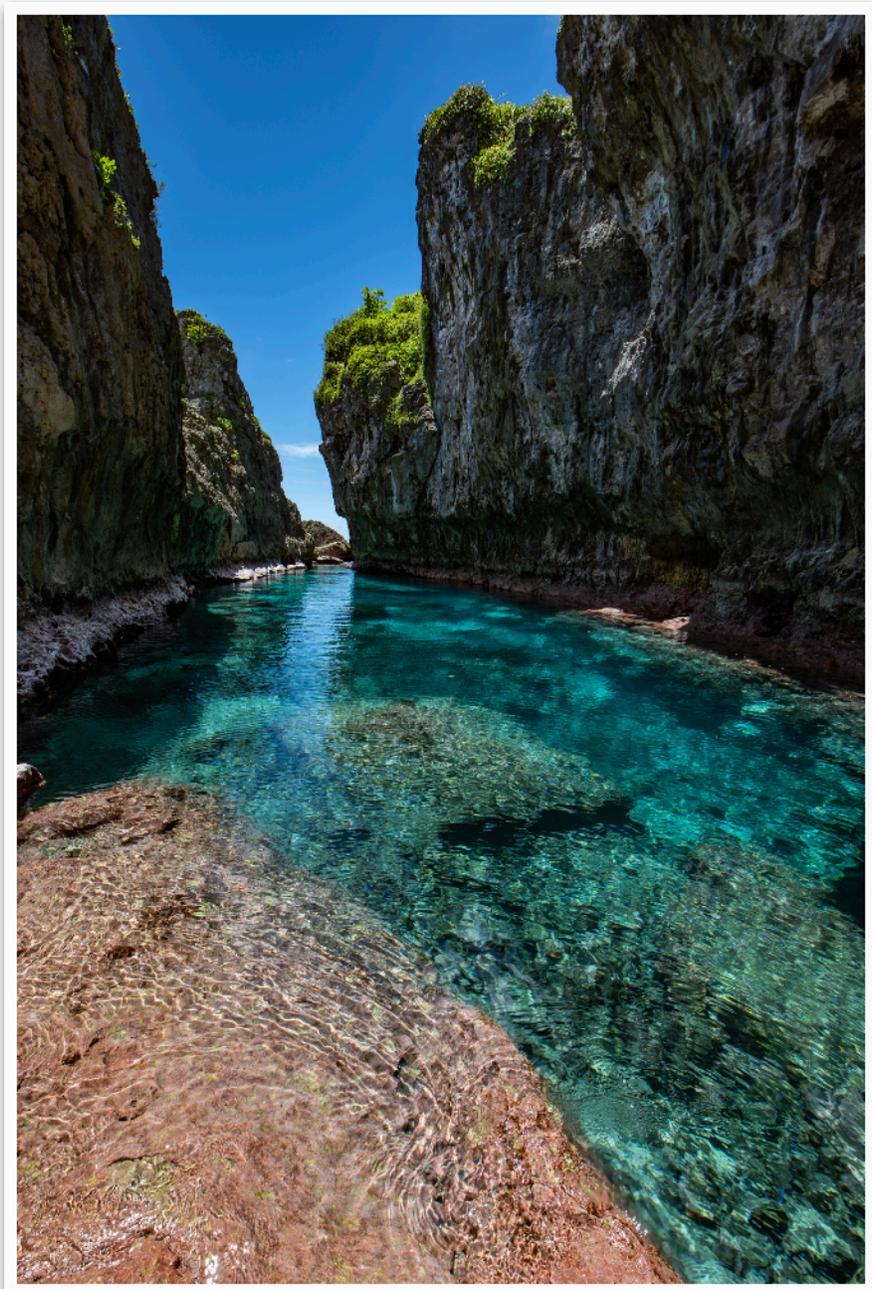
A night shot I did with several flashes placed around the cave

The next day the island tour continued and we found ourself in Limu Pools an amazing natural swimming hole with Chrystal clear turquoise water. We also saw on this day one of the gigantic Coconut crabs that escaped into the underbrush before I could get my bike stopped and camera out of my bag. Bummer the thing was huge.



And so on we went and came across another delight for the traveling photographer and I'm having a good day. Down another track we came out of the thick brush after stumbling over chunks of coral for 10 minutes to find a beautiful fiord like opening that was the perfect hide away for a day swimming. Crystal clear ocean water washed into the chasm creating blue gem like pools. We were lucky to arrive here around midday so the lighting was superb.

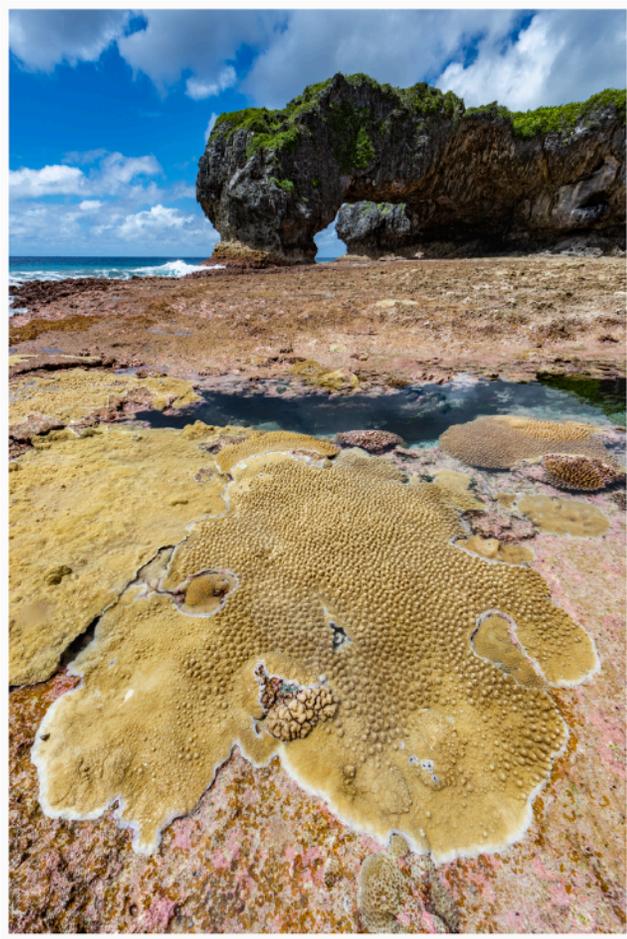
Matapa Chasm



This is just way to much fun and it's amazing that all of these gorgeous sights can be visited not only on one tiny island but within just a few mile of one and other.

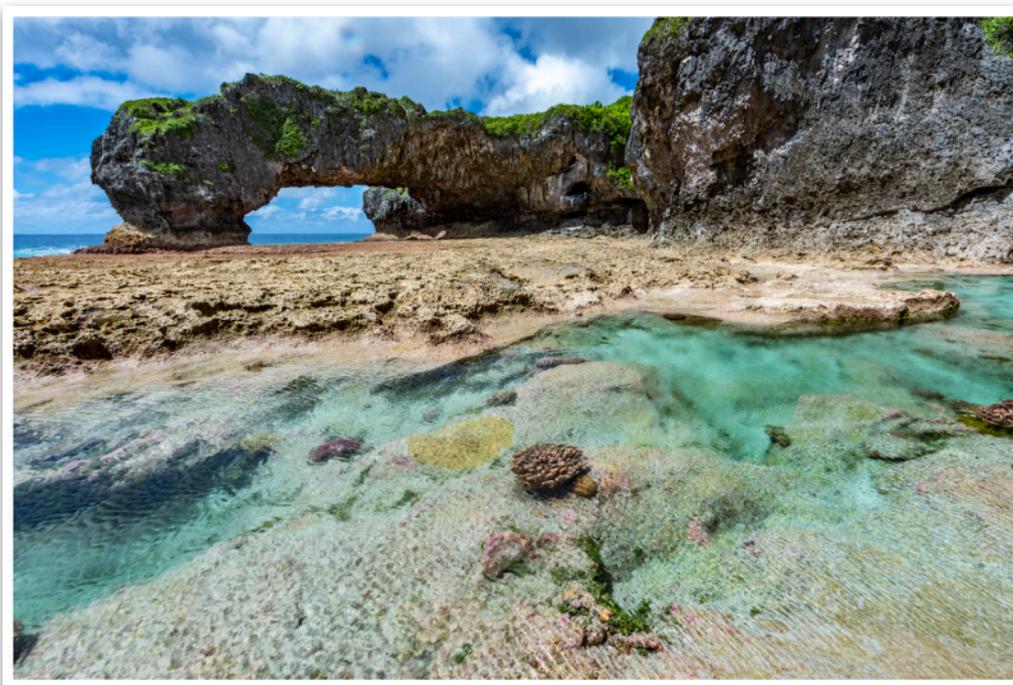
So after a few precious moments in Matapa Chasm we set out again as we had heard about Talava Arches which was a little more of a hike than the previous sights.

Boy was it worth it, the 1/2 hour slugging down this track paid off in spades and what better description of this sight than to add the resulting photo's.





Talava Arches



1/2 hour walk from trail head to Tavalava Arches But definitely worth it. When the tide is low you can walk all the way out to the arch.



So it is my recommendation if you ever have a chance to visit Niue then take it. It is equally as fascinating above and below water. My only disappointment was that I saw no whales as 2019 there were warmer currents which apparently kept the feed grill away so fewer whales showed. Also I arrived late in the season.

Safe travels and watch for my blog on Beverage Reef which while being part of Niue deserves its own little story.

