

*Nine of Cups* – Liberty 458 Cutter – 7' draft  
Subject Area: Niue – September 2009

Of all the places in the South Pacific that were on our “must-see” list, Niue (pronounced new-ay), affectionately known as “the Rock of Polynesia”, was right at the top. We had correspondence with Keith Vial, the Cruising Station Host there for nearly two years and we were keen on meeting him in person and exploring the island he raved about. We were in contact with Keith as soon as we left Suvarrow Atoll and he was expecting us. We, however, were certainly not expecting the royal welcome we received.

We arrived mid-morning on a blustery day with winds from the north, not the best for this open roadstead island whose only port of Alofi was on the northwest side. We hailed Niue Radio advising them of our arrival and then called the Niue Yacht Club to request a mooring. We were advised to pick up a sturdy fishing boat mooring to the north of the wharf since the south side mooring field was full. As we aimed for the mooring, a huge humpback breached a couple of hundred yards in front of our bow as our first greeting to the island. Keith later commented that this was a common courtesy provided by Niue's whales when newcomers arrived.

Getting onto the wharf at Niue is not an easy feat when the swell and surge are up. The process entails dropping off passengers who hurry up a ladder to slippery, wet stairs to a crane suspended over the side of the wharf. The crane is hooked onto the dinghy hoisting bridle and the driver must quickly step out of the dinghy onto stairs which are awash. The crane begins lifting the dinghy out of the water and onto the wharf where it is deposited on a dolly and wheeled out of the way to make room for the next dinghy haul-out. In calm weather, this is really not very difficult, however with the swell and it being our first attempt, we made a less than graceful and very wet entrance to Niue. We almost lost David in the process as a huge swell managed to unhook the dinghy bridle at the last minute and hook onto a dinghy handle instead, lifting the dinghy vertically with David still inside. A quick release on the crane lift and David managed to get the hook back in place and hop out of the dinghy to safety on the wharf. Whew!

Keith was waiting on the dock, thankfully not filming our first landing. He greeted us with traditional flower leis, escorted us first to Customs for clear-in, to the Police Station for Immigration procedures and then to the Bank for some New Zealand dollars. Finally, legal and with money in our pockets, we headed to the Niue Yacht Club headquarters aka Mamata's Cafe, just down the street. We were thrilled to see the SSCA burgee flying at the entrance. Thus began a whirlwind of social activities on the island of Niue.

We arrived on a Friday and Saturday was a Show Day...a semi-monthly fair that changes location rotating between the island's 14 villages who sequentially serve as hosts. We watched as dancers and singers entertained. We sampled the food and generally enjoyed our first introduction to Niue's friendly people.

It seemed that every day there was something going on. One night was a “sausage sizzler” at the yacht club and another was a BBQ jointly hosted by NYC/SSCA with lots of potential new members in attendance. Keith gave us an orientation tour of the island one afternoon which included a visit to a noni plantation/juice factory and a visit with Mark Cross, renowned South Pacific painter, at his studio. Keith and his wife, Sue, took us to the well-known Washaway Cafe on Sunday (the only day it's open) for a burger and a beer. From the vantage point at our table, we could see whales spouting and breaching, accompanied by a pod of spinner dolphins.

We had arrived at the same time as SSCA Commodores Rob and Teresa Sicade on “Yohelah” whom we'd first met in Ecuador and hadn't seen since Tahiti. We shared a car rental with them and toured the island one day in earnest. “Caves, caverns and chasms” is how we characterized our trip at day's end.

### **If you go...**

Our Navionics electronic charting software was spot on. We primarily used *Charlie's Charts of Polynesia* and *Lonely Planet South Pacific* as our guides. Check out the Niue Yacht Club website in advance for yacht arrival, mooring and island information. [www.niueyachtclub.com.nu](http://www.niueyachtclub.com.nu).

#### ◆ **General Information**

\*UTC -12 hrs

\*Currency: NZ \$

\*Language: English / Niuean

#### ◆ **Arrival/Check-in/Check-out**

**IMPORTANT:** All yachts must contact Niue Radio (24x7) in advance of arrival on Channel 16/12. They are very strict about this.

They will inform authorities and set up the arrival procedure for you. Contact Niue Yacht Club on arrival via Channel 16/10. They will provide mooring information and instructions.

Check-in procedure: Once notified by Niue Radio, Health & Quarantine will meet you on the wharf; then proceed to Customs, then Immigration (Police Station) – no fees

Check-out procedure: Immigration, then Customs (\$34NZ/pp departure fee)

#### ◆ **Services:** All services are pretty much spread out on the same strip of road up hill and perpendicular to the dinghy dock.

\***Niue Yacht Club** aka Mamata's Cafe is extremely helpful and can answer most questions for you. You can join the NYC (\$20/yr), buy NYC logo wear and pay your moorings fees (\$15NZ/day) here plus purchase light lunches, drinks, ice cream.

\*Dinghy dock: Haul dinghy out with crane (be sure to have a bridle rigged prior to arrival at the wharf); use dolly to move your dinghy out of the way for the next haul-out.

- \*Duty free: Located next door to Customs office, is available the day you arrive and the day you leave.
- \*Fuel: Diesel and gasoline are available via jerry can at the local gas station, opposite the Alofi Car Rental.
- \*Post office: in the Commercial Centre; several collectible stamp issues
- \* Wifi in the anchorage with an antenna. Pay a \$25 one-time fee at the internet shop located opposite the Bank.
- \*Laundry: Next to the Swan-Son Supermarket
- \*Water: Potable water from the spigot opposite the haul-out area at the wharf
- \*Showers: Solar-heated shower; get key (\$20 refundable deposit) at the NYC
- \*Tourism office: at the Commercial Centre; has limited information/brochures
- \*Rental cars, bikes, motorcycles: Alofi Rentals; our car rental was \$52NZ/day. There is no insurance in Niue, so you're on your own if you have a fender bender. A Niue driver's license (\$11.20NZ) is available on request at the Niue Police Station when a current valid driver's license from your home country is produced. British driving system...stay left.
- \*Supermarket/provisioning: Don't count on Niue for provisioning. Prices are quite expensive. Swan-Son is the only supermarket and depending on the when the last supply ship arrived, may be stocked. They have limited hours Mon-Friday. Several other smaller shops are located in the Commercial Centre and are open longer hours and on Saturday. Everything (except a few restaurants) is closed on Sundays. Fresh market is early morning twice a week. Check days with NYC.
- \*Bank: No ATM; Bank of the Pacific is located in the Commercial Centre. They will exchange foreign currencies for NZ\$; they will provide NZ\$ on your debit/ATM/credit card with a \$12NZ + 3 ½ % surcharge (ouch!).
- \*Restaurants/cafes- Several
  - NYC has good coffee/latte/espresso in the mornings, light lunches, drinks and good company
  - Umu Cafe has morning coffee and light lunches
  - Washaway Cafe (open Sundays only) requires transportation. Great burgers, fish sandwiches and an “honors” bar.
  - Matavai Resort – upscale, nice atmosphere, pricey
  - There's an Indian restaurant and several other smaller restaurants to try; a good fish & chip place in the Commercial Centre.
- \*Medical- Niue has a small hospital/medical center
- \*Airport – small international airport with regular weekly flights to NZ
- \*Trash Disposal - The Department of Agriculture has placed bins on the wharf at the landing site.

### ◆ What to See & Do

- Niue Yacht Club – There's always something going on here; a good place for yachties to meet and hang out. Free internet here. Join the Yacht Club!
- Island tour...Caves, caverns and chasms. You can hire a car and go yourself or arrange for an island tour through the Commercial Centre or Keith Vial. Good paths through the forest, then spectacular limestone caves and caverns complete with stalactites and stalagmite.

-Diving: Niue Diving gives yachties special rates. Dive with the humpback whales in season; great coral; sea kraits; spinner dolphins.

- Souvenirs - Limited, but baskets and woven pandanus items are nice; some carvings and jewelry. A couple of nice shops and a t-shirt shop in the Commercial Centre. Mark Cross sells prints, postcards from his studio at a shop in the Commercial Centre.

This was a terrific port of call. Keith Vial, the Cruising Station Host, has been working to make Niue a must-stop place for yachties and he's doing a great job. We highly recommend a stop here.

For more photos and information about Niue, visit our website at [www.nineofcups.com](http://www.nineofcups.com).

Commodores Marcie (AA1ZM) and David Lynn (AA1ZL)