

Asia-Pacific

Tropical HOMES

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Ideal for a private retreat or boutique eco-resort, Royal Island is not lacking in natural splendor. Scenic beauty is just the beginning, given the migrating humpback whales that swim past singing their songs and the seasonal, royalty-worthy surfing that used to have the former King “hanging ten” on this unspoiled island.

This tropical gem is the most picturesque island for sale in the Kingdom of Tonga. Surrounded by a tropical lagoon, lofty palm trees swaying in the breeze, and sculptured limestone cliffs, this is the epitome of a tropical island paradise. The island itself is only a third of a mile long, and sits behind a nearly perfect ring of coral. The island has a small but beautiful anchorage well known to visiting yacht sailors, who universally regard it as the most beautiful island in Tonga.

The first thing one notices when approaching Royal Island is its dramatic limestone bluffs including a large sharp headland like a ship's prow at the northern end of the island. Below this rocky outcrop lies a long spit of bright sand, thinning out along its stretch to eventually disappear into the protective coral reefs that surround the island. Behind the rock, a trail leads to the top of the island where dramatic 360-degree views overwhelm the senses with tropical splendour.

The island is located in the Ha'apai Group, Tonga's best-kept secret. The 60 islands of Ha'apai, only 17 of them inhabited, dot the map like Rorschach blots with such exotic names as Nomuka, Mango iki, Ofolonaga and Teacupa. Ha'apai hasn't changed since the days of the early explorers, and it's like something out of a novel by Conrad, London or Stevenson. Easily accessible by air or ferry, and with virtually no tourism, these small islands with their traditional fishing villages, living culture and fantastic beaches are truly enchanting.

Enchanting Royal Island could be all yours (for the span of a 50-year leasehold) for just US\$6 million. **CM**

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