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### Unbelievable Travel Adventures

#### Real Travel Adventures International Magazine

##### Flag of Samoa



##### ROYAL WELCOME IN SAMOA

by  
Jack Goldfarb

Samoa, that tiny paradise island in the South Pacific, has always meant *Robert Louis Stevenson* to me.



Here the celebrated 19<sup>th</sup> Century Scottish author (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Treasure Island, Kidnapped*), after years of wandering through Europe and America with his family, settled down in a sprawling mansion house at the foot of Mt. Vaea, Samoa's highest mountain. In accordance with his oft-stated wish, when Stevenson died of a stroke in 1894, he was buried atop this peak.

But it wasn't easy to take him up there. No road existed through the thick jungled terrain. Scores of Samoan friends had to toil arduously through an entire night to hack a path to the summit where their beloved *Tusitala* ("Story Teller") was laid to rest..

My trip to Samoa was mainly a pilgrimage to visit Stevenson's gravesite. My wife, Simone, and my 11 year-old son, Adam were eager to come along. I asked the receptionist at our hotel in Apia, how much of a climb it was to the mountain top. "About forty-five *mee-tis*," she replied in a soft Polynesian accent. It sounded like "forty-five meters." Only much later did I realize she had meant "forty-five minutes."



Tom, our chatty and solicitous taxi driver, ferried us to the base of the mountain and promised to wait no matter how long it took for our expedition. (Waiting time: 15 *talas* an hour).

Simone, Adam and I began clambering up the steep slope, picking our way through dense tropical foliage. Tree ferns, giant hardwood trees, tangled vines. Scant signs of any track. Doused in sweat, I soon peeled off my sport shirt

In a slow file we struggled, then almost crawled, upward. Finally, breaching through clumps of shrubbery and bushes we came alongside the concrete plinth of Stevenson's stark white tomb. On a weathered bronze plaque read the eloquent words of his *Requiem*:



"...Here he lies where he longed to be

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