

Samoa



Found in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Samoa is a group of nine islands: two main islands (Savai'i and Upolu) and seven smaller islands. The islands are covered with tropical rain forests in the center and beaches around the edges. The weather is pleasant almost all the time. Samoa is also called Independent



An aerial view of Samoa

Samoa and is separate from American Samoa (which is a U.S. territory). Approximately one in four Samoans live in or around Apia, the capital. The rest of the population lives in villages scattered along Samoa's coasts.

Most Samoans (nearly 93%) are Polynesians, descendants of the first people to live in the region.

The first people arrived on the Samoan islands more than three thousand years ago, having journeyed there from other parts of the Pacific Ocean. The other 7% of

the people have both Polynesian and European ancestry. People in Samoa speak Samoan. It is the oldest Polynesian language still spoken today. While English uses 26 letters Samoan only uses 14. Three more letters (*h*, *k*, and *r*) have been added so Samoans can pronounce foreign words. Many Samoans also speak English.

In addition to European explorers, European and American missionaries made a big impact in Samoa. Almost all Samoans are Christian. Religion plays an important role in daily life. Most businesses are closed on Sunday and every village has at least one church. In the evenings, families sing hymns and pray.

Families and tradition are very important. Extended families often live in small clusters of homes sharing land and equipment.

Samoans love to sing and dance. At a Samoan feast, or *fiafia*, people play guitars, ukuleles, and drums. They perform skits and traditional dances in which stories are told with graceful hand motions. Samoan women also get together to make colorful *siapo* fabrics which are made with tree leaves. They can take months to complete and are given to neighbors at special events such as weddings or funerals. Traditional Samoan cooking is done in an *umu*, an outdoor oven made using rocks and dirt. In Samoa it is a man's job to do the cooking!

MCA in Samoa

When they attend school, students in Samoa usually wear simple uniforms. It consists of white shirts with skirts for girls or shorts for boys. When not in school, children often need to help their families catch fish and gather food from the garden. Because they usually live close to their extended family, such as aunts, uncles, and cousins it is easy for brothers, sisters, and cousins to play *kirkiti* (their own version of cricket) and other games together when the work is done!

The second Sunday in October is known as White Sunday. It is a day for children. People dress in their best white clothing to go to church and children are allowed to lead the church services. Afterward everyone goes home to have a large feast with family members. That feast is the only time when children are allowed to eat before the adults. Parents also give their children gifts.



On the island of Upolu, home to the capital city of Apia, Salesian missionary Sisters

run a primary school for little ones called Saint Joseph School. It is in the village of Leavuaa, which means “the boat people” in Samoan. Located on the north side of the island, the citizens of Leavuaa came from the larger island of Savaii in 1911 after their homes were decimated by lava from a volcano eruption. Upon their arrival in Laevuu they were welcomed and given land to farm.

There are four Sisters who work at the school in different roles, some as teachers others overseeing the work of the school.

The Sisters also hold meetings for a group called the Children of Mary. They teach religious education every Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. These faith formation classes are followed by sports and games for the children on school grounds.



At last report, the members of the Missionary Childhood Association worldwide sacrificed \$20,000 so that the Sisters could add new classrooms to Saint Joseph Primary School.

These little ones are very grateful for your prayerful support!



When you pray the World Mission Rosary, pray for these children of God and the missionaries who serve them in Oceania—the blue beads!

Missionary Childhood Association

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