

About Samoa

Samoa lies in the Central South Pacific, approximately 2,900km north-east of New Zealand and just over 4,000km south-west of Hawaii. The main island is Upolu, and is where the island's administrative and commercial centre of Apia is located.



Population

- 180,000 approx, of which 35,000 live in Apia. English is spoken by most of the community.

History

- Until 1997 Samoa was known as "Western Samoa".
- The islands of Samoa were settled by Polynesians around 1000BC and their customs are still evident in the indigenous culture. Following the 1899 Treaty of Berlin, (Western) Samoa became a German territory whilst the United States of America took control of Eastern Samoa (now "American Samoa").
- Under the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, New Zealand was granted a League of Nations mandate over Western Samoa. After World War II, Samoa became a United Nations Trust Territory under the administration of New Zealand. Samoa gained its independence in 1962.

Climate

- The climate is tropical with good hotels, beaches, sporting and recreational activities, and other tourist facilities.
- Matters of tourist interest include natural scenery and geological sites, traditional Samoa festivities, and stores display many fine locally produced artefacts and clothing.

Government

- Samoa has a parliamentary government which combines the traditional Samoa social structure and a democratic voting system.
- The Constitution provides for a Head of State, a Legislative Assembly and an Executive Council.
- The Prime Minister, who is elected by the Legislative Assembly, selects a Cabinet of Ministers and together they form the Executive Council.
- Parliamentary elections are held every five years.
- There are two main political parties and both parties support the Samoa International Finance Centre. The Government has reaffirmed its continuing support and encouragement for the development of the international finance centre.
- Samoa is a member of the United Nations, the British Commonwealth, the South Pacific Forum, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and is an associate member of the EEC.

Legal system

- Samoa is an independent Sovereign state with a constitution that provides for a three-tier legal system consisting of a Court of Appeal, High Court and Subordinate Courts. The legal system is based upon principles of English and Commonwealth statutory and common law.

Monetary systems and exchange controls

- The Central Bank of Samoa has responsibility for monetary policy, management of foreign exchange reserves, regulations of the commercial banks and supervision of the international finance centre.
- The local currency unit is the Samoa tala. Entities registered under the international finance centre legislation are not subject to any currency or foreign exchange controls and may conduct business in any foreign currency.

Communications

- Apia has an excellent international telecommunications system with telephone, telex, facsimile, email, internet and international direct dial facilities via satellite.
- Samoa's modern international airport can accommodate 747 type aircraft and is serviced by Air New Zealand, Pacific Blue (national carrier), and Air Pacific. These services provide direct access to New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Tonga, Niue, Hawaii and Los Angeles.

Financial services

- Banking services are provided by ANZ Bank Samoa Limited, and Westpac Bank Samoa Limited. Both banks are wholly owned subsidiaries of major Australian banks and have access to the worldwide banking networks of their parent banks. Banking services with other banks in Singapore, Hong Kong or elsewhere are available through the Asiatic Trust Group.
- Trustee services are provided by a number of trust companies operating in Apia. A full range of international fiduciary services including trust and corporate administration, investment management, custodian and secretarial services are available from Asiatic Trust Samoa Limited and its affiliates within the Asiatic Trust Group.
- Accountancy and audit services are provided by local and international firms of accountants. Legal services are provided by local firms of solicitors.

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