



- c. 800 BC:** The Samoan Islands are first settled by Polynesian voyagers as part of the Lapita culture (combined Austronesian-Melanesian migration components) expansion from Melanesia and Fiji-Tonga archipelagoes. Samoa was both a gateway to eastern Polynesia and a cradle of Polynesian culture. Samoa became a launching point for further migrations to eastern Polynesia by around 500-700AD.
- c. 800BC-300AD:** Pottery production progressively ceases, possibly due to resource scarcity or cultural shifts. Oral traditions describe the development of the *fa'asamoa* (Samoan way of life), including the *fa'amatai* chiefly system, tattooing (introduced from Fiji) and legends of deities like *Tagaloa* as a common ancestor. The Manu'a Islands (in modern American Samoa) serve as an early political center.
- c. 950AD:** Tongan warriors invade Savai'i (in modern independent Samoa) leading to conflicts and the rise of local chiefs like Malietoa Savea, who defeats the invaders and re-establishes strong Samoan identity and autonomy. Inter-marriage and cultural exchange with Tonga and Fiji strengthen regional ties.
- 1722:** Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen becomes the first European to sight the Samoan Islands, though he does not land.
- 1768:** French navigator Louis-Antoine de Bougainville visits and names the islands the "Navigator Islands" due to his observations of the Samoans' impressive seafaring skills.
- 1787:** French explorer Jean-François Comte de La Pérouse lands on Tutuila (in modern American Samoa), resulting in a violent clash that kills 12 Frenchmen and several Samoans.
- 1830:** British missionary John Williams arrives from Tahiti, establishing the London Missionary Society (later the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa). With the support of chief Malietoa Vainu'upo, Christianity spreads rapidly across the islands.
- 1839:** The U.S. Exploring Expedition, led by Charles Wilkes, visits Samoa and appoints a U.S. commercial agent, signaling growing American interest in the area.
- 1855:** German firm J.C. Godeffroy & Sohn establishes trading operations in the islands.
- 1877:** The U.S. Navy begins using Pago Pago harbor on Tutuila as a coaling station, securing a treaty with local chiefs.
- 1880s:** Rivalries intensify among Britain, Germany, and the U.S., who establish consulates and trade posts, arming local factions and exacerbating internal conflicts.

1886–94: The First Samoan Civil War erupts between rival Samoan chiefs, with foreign powers taking sides for their own strategic aims and providing arms and support.

1889: A massive hurricane destroys warships from all three European powers in Apia harbor, allowing for a period of calm rather than escalation. Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson settles in Samoa, building his famous home at Vailima and documenting local life and politics.

1898–99: The Second Samoan Civil War involves battles like the Siege of Apia and shelling by U.S. and British forces, amid local disputes over chiefly succession.

1899: The Tripartite Convention divides the islands: Germany annexes the western islands (Upolu, Savai'i, etc., as German Samoa), the U.S. takes the eastern islands (Tutuila and Manu'a, as American Samoa), and Britain withdraws completely - in exchange for other Pacific territories (Tonga, Niue, and the northern Solomons). The Samoan monarchy is abolished.

1900: The U.S. flag is raised over Tutuila in American Samoa on April 17, with the Navy assuming full administrative control. Pago Pago is developed as a naval base.

1904: The Manu'a Islands are formally ceded to the U.S., completing American Samoa's territory.

1908–10: In German Samoa, the Mau a Pule resistance movement emerges on Savai'i against colonial rule; leader Lauaki Namulauulu Mamoe and others are exiled to Saipan in the Marianas.

1914: At the start of World War I, New Zealand occupies German Samoa without resistance.

1918–19: The 'Spanish flu' (which began on a hog farm in Kansas) devastates Western Samoa, killing over 20% of the population (over 7,500); American Samoa avoids major outbreaks through strict quarantine measures by Governor John Martin Poyer.

1919: Under the Treaty of Versailles, New Zealand gains a League of Nations mandate over Western Samoa (renamed Western Samoa Trust Territory).

1929: On December 28 - aka Black Saturday - New Zealand police shoot into a peaceful Mau demonstration in Apia, killing 11, including leader Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III; this galvanizes the independence movement.

1930s–40s: Mau leaders like Olaf Frederick Nelson are exiled as New Zealand administration continues under UN trusteeship. In American Samoa, U.S. Navy rule persists until 1951, when administration transfers to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

1942-45: During World War II, U.S. forces use American Samoa as a training base; over 40,000 U.S. troops are stationed there, boosting the local economy but introducing cultural changes.

1951: Administration of American Samoa is transferred from the Navy to the Department of the Interior.

1962: Western Samoa achieves independence from New Zealand on January 1, becoming the first Polynesian nation to do achieve independence from European colonizers. Fiamē Mata'afa Faumuina Mulinu'u II serves as the first Prime Minister. A treaty of friendship with New Zealand is signed.

1967: American Samoa adopts its own constitution, establishing a locally elected legislature (Fono) while remaining an unincorporated U.S. territory.

1970: Western Samoa joins the Commonwealth of Nations.

1977: Queen Elizabeth II visits independent Samoa during her Silver Jubilee tour. The first elected governor takes office in American Samoa, marking increased self-governance.

1990: Universal suffrage is (narrowly) approved by voters in Western Samoa.

1997: Western Samoa drops Western from its name, becoming the Independent State of Samoa - which sparks some tensions with American Samoa over nomenclature.

2002: New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark formally apologizes for colonial injustices, including the 1918 flu epidemic (due to lack of public health and quarantine policies) and 1929 Mau shootings.

2007: Independent Samoa's Head of State Malietoa Tanumafili II dies and the role becomes elective by the legislature thereon.

2011 Independent Samoa skips December 30 and shifts to the west side of the International Date Line, aligning with Australia and New Zealand for economic and practical reasons.

2021: Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa becomes independent Samoa's first female Prime Minister after a constitutional crisis resolved by the courts.

The *Fono* (American Samoa's bicameral legislature) passes a unanimous resolution opposing birthright citizenship for those born in the territory, in favor of U.S. national status without full citizenship. The resolution symbolizes American Samoa's strategic choice to prioritize cultural sovereignty over full integration and protect *fa'a Samoa* (the Samoan way of life), including communal land ownership systems where land is held collectively by extended families ('*aiga*) and the *matai* system of hereditary chieftains' oversight of social and political structures. The resolution highlights the need for trade-offs between self-governance, equality, and federal oversight.

2023: American Samoa's population estimates decline to around 44,620 due to out-migration, with the economy reliant on tuna canning (e.g., StarKist) and U.S. federal aid.

2025: La'auli Leuatea Schmidt becomes independent Samoa's 8th Prime Minister (and 2nd female) after a snap election precipitated by political turmoil and failure to ratify the 2026 budget. The government continues as a parliamentary democracy, emphasizing Christian principles including 'God-centered leadership' and women's representation in Parliament.

2026: American Samoa maintains its unique status as a non-self-governing entity under UN listing, though local officials dispute this classification. The territory sends a non-voting delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives. It is an 'unincorporated' (not part of the Union of 50 states) territory of the USA like Guam and Puerto Rico but it differs in that the USA has not passed an Organic Act establishing a fixed government structure as it has for Guam and Puerto Rico. The USA handles defense while the territory controls its own immigration and borders. American Samoa is the only U.S. territory where birthright citizenship does not apply (by choice - see 2021 resolution).