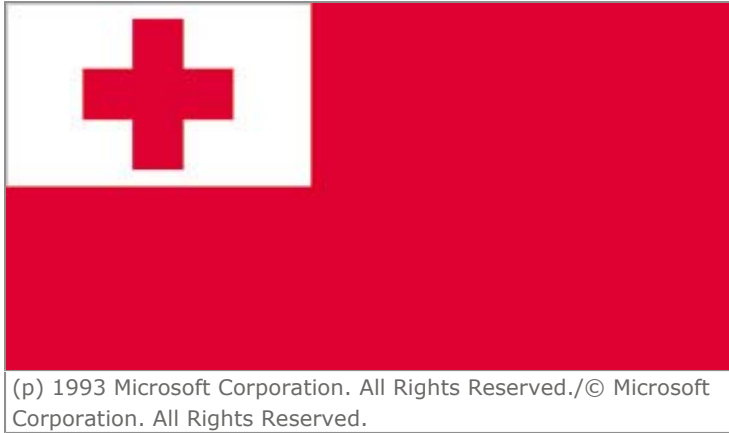


Tonga (country)

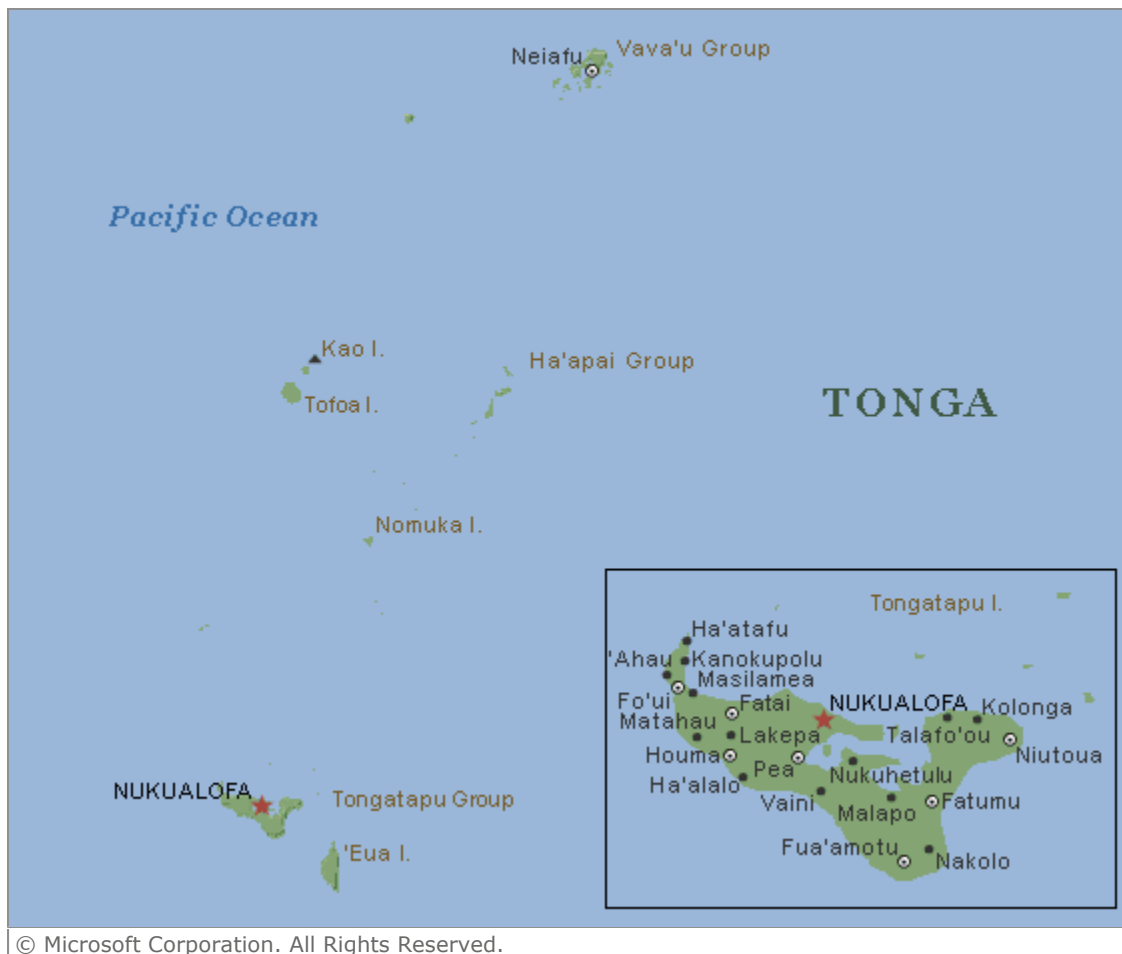
I INTRODUCTION

Tonga (country), independent island nation in the southern Pacific Ocean, located approximately 650 km (approximately 400 mi) southeast of Fiji and approximately 1,850 km (approximately 1,150 mi) northeast of New Zealand. Tonga is the only remaining Polynesian monarchy. Nukualofa is the country's capital, chief port, and largest town.



Tongan Flag and Anthem

II LAND AND RESOURCES



Detailed Map of Tonga

Tonga consists of more than 150 islands spread over approximately 360,000 sq km (approximately 140,000 sq mi) of the Pacific Ocean. They are divided into three main groups—Tongatapu, Ha'apai, and Vava'u. About 40 of the islands are inhabited. With inland waters and several outlying islands, the country has a total land area of 750 sq km (290 sq mi). Tongatapu, with a total area of about 260 sq km (100 sq mi), is the largest island. The eastern islands, including Tongatapu, are coral formations, while islands of volcanic origin lie in the west. The highest point in Tonga is Mount Kao (1,030 m/3,379 ft), a volcano forming Kao Island in the Ha'apai group. Several islands have active volcanoes. Volcanic ash creates fertile soil, and the islands are well-vegetated. However, deforestation, caused by land being cleared for agriculture and settlement, is an increasing problem.

The natural plant and animal life are limited, but include hibiscus plants and giant flying foxes, a species of bat. Domestic animals include horses, cattle, pigs, and chickens. Marine life is abundant and provides an important source of food.

The climate is tropical with high humidity and an average daily temperature range of 16° to 29° C (61° to 84° F). Precipitation averages 1,610 mm (63 in) a year. The rainiest months are from December to April, which roughly coincides with the cyclone season. Cyclones occur every few years and are quite destructive.

III THE PEOPLE OF TONGA



James Strachan/Tony Stone Images

Traditional Bark Cloth of Tonga

Ngatu is a ceremonial cloth of Tonga. It is handmade by stripping the inner bark of a mulberry tree, soaking the bark, and pounding it into a thin sheet. Female artisans such as this one then apply pigment in a geometric design.

The population of Tonga (2001 estimate) is 104,227, giving the country an overall population density of 139 persons per sq km (360 per sq mi). The population is unevenly distributed, however, and about two-thirds of the people live on Tongatapu, including one-fifth of the population that reside in Nukualofa (population, 1995 estimate, 40,000), the capital town. Neiafu, a smaller urban area, is located on Vava'u. The remainder of the population is scattered over 35 other permanently inhabited islands. Most of Tonga's people are Polynesians; only 2 percent consists of members of other ethnic groups. English and Tongan, a Polynesian language, are the official languages. Tongan is preferred for everyday communications. English, which is taught as a second language in schools, is used mainly for business.

Tonga's population has been almost entirely Christian for more than 100 years. The vast majority are Protestants, belonging to one of four branches of Methodism. The Free Wesleyan Church, the largest, is headed by Tonga's monarch. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Catholicism, and other Christian denominations are minority religions.

Education is free and compulsory for children from the ages of 6 to 14. Most primary schools are operated by the government, while most secondary schools are sponsored by churches. At 99.6 percent, Tonga's literacy rate is among the highest in the Pacific. The University of the South Pacific Extension Center and 'Atenisi Institute (1971), a private Tongan institution that offers several degree programs, are located in Nukualofa.

Tonga has retained much of its Polynesian culture. There is respect for traditional authority and customs, and the lifestyle is conservative. Christianity has been thoroughly integrated into Tongan society. All commerce and recreation are prohibited on Sundays, the Christian day of rest, and much of Tongan social life is structured around the church. Western-style houses, usually constructed from wood and topped with corrugated tin roofs, are common in urban areas. Housing in rural areas is a combination of Western-style dwellings and *fales*, traditional Tongan homes constructed of woven coconut leaves. Western-style clothing is common for everyday use. Women typically wear dresses and men are required by law to wear shirts in public places. Urban Tongans rely on imported foods. People in rural areas are largely self-sufficient, relying on foods from their gardens and fish caught from the ocean. Everyone is expected to contribute to the well-being of the extended family, which typically includes parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Men head the extended family, while women typically play supportive roles.

Competitive sports such as soccer and rugby are popular. The Tongan National Center, located in Nukualofa, displays and promotes Tongan culture and art, including *Ngatu*, a decorative bark cloth made by Tongan women. Tongan artisans also create weavings and wood carvings.

IV ECONOMY

Agriculture and fishing are the chief economic activities in Tonga, employing about 70 percent of the people. About 50 percent of the population works predominantly at a subsistence level. The principal cash crops are pumpkins, coconuts, bananas, and vanilla, which account for one-third of Tonga's exports. Still, much food needs to be imported. A shortage of land is a problem, and many Tongans seek employment overseas. Industry, including construction, manufacturing, and mining, employs the second largest number of people. Nukualofa has a small industrial park. Manufactured goods include concrete blocks, small excavators, clothing, and furniture. New Zealand, Australia, and Japan are Tonga's principal trading partners.

The national currency is the *pa'anga*, which is equal to 100 seniti (1.60 *pa'anga* equal U.S. \$1; 1999 average). Increased imports in recent years have created a trade deficit. However, tourism, money sent home by Tongans working abroad, and external aid help offset the negative balance of payments, allowing Tonga to maintain a reasonably well-balanced budget. the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia are the principal aid donors.

Tongatapu Island and the area around Neiafu on Vava'u have a network of paved roads. Elsewhere, roads are of crushed coral or dirt, making them difficult to use by automobiles during periods of heavy rainfall. An international airport is located at Fua'amotu, 21 km (13 mi) from Nukualofa. Domestic air travel from Tongatapu to 'Eua, Ha'apai, Vava'u, Niuaotuputu, and Niuafo'ou islands is provided by government-owned Royal Tongan Airlines. With the exception of Tongatapu and Vava'u, the islands have unpaved runways that can only accommodate small craft. Several airlines, including Royal Tongan Airlines, provide frequent international flights to Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. Radio broadcasting and a weekly newspaper are controlled by the government. Several privately owned publications are distributed bimonthly or monthly, and there is a privately owned television station.

V GOVERNMENT



Jack Fields/Corbis

Taufa'ahau Tupou IV

Taufa'ahau Tupou IV became king of Tonga upon the death of his mother, Queen Salote Tupou II, in 1965. He was the first Tongan to obtain a college degree and served as prime minister during much of his mother's reign. Under his leadership, Tonga ended its status as a protectorate of the United Kingdom in 1970.

Tonga is a hereditary constitutional monarchy governed under a constitution promulgated in 1875 and revised in 1967. King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV is the head of state. The Privy Council, which includes the king and the cabinet, is the highest executive body. Cabinet members, who are appointed by the king, hold their positions until they reach retirement age; in the mid-1990s the cabinet was composed of 11 members. The prime minister serves as the head of government. The parliament, known as the Fale Alea, or Legislative Assembly, consists of the cabinet, nine representatives elected by Tonga's 33 nobles, and nine representatives elected by the people. Elections are held every three years; all citizens aged 21 and over are eligible to vote. The Privy Council acts as the Court of Appeal, except for criminal cases, and appoints the Supreme Court judge. The country has a small defense force of about 200 and a separate police force. Tonga is a member of the United Nations (UN), the Commonwealth of Nations, and the South Pacific Forum, a regional organization that addresses the foreign affairs and international trade of its member countries. The country also belongs to several UN agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

VI HISTORY

The Tongan Islands were probably settled from Fiji about 3,500 years ago. Tonga developed as a highly stratified society with social classes and paramount chiefs. Warfare was common as chiefs competed to expand their respective domains.

In 1616 Dutch explorers became the first Europeans to visit Tonga. They were followed by the British explorer Captain James Cook, who made three visits between 1773 and 1777; Cook named Tonga the Friendly Islands, due to the welcome he received. Wesleyan Methodist missionaries arrived from England in the 1820s and began a successful conversion of the islanders. The missionaries converted paramount chief Taufa'ahau Tupou in the 1830s and he persuaded others to follow. Tupou, who became known as George Tupou I, consolidated three chiefly lines and founded the monarchy in 1875.

Upon his death, he was succeeded by his grandson, George Tupou II. Owing to internal strife on the islands, Tonga and the United Kingdom negotiated a Treaty of Friendship and Protection in 1900, establishing Tonga as a British Protected State. Great Britain had great influence over the kingdom for the next seven decades, but the country was never formally colonized. When Tupou II died in 1918, his daughter Queen Salote Tupou III succeeded to the throne. She in turn was succeeded by her son, the current monarch, King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. On June 4, 1970, Tonga became completely independent of the United Kingdom.

VII RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Tonga's relatively high level of education has made some Tongans dissatisfied with the current political structure. Insisting that the monarchy in its present form has outlived its time, these Tongans organized a political organization, the Pro-Democracy Movement, in November 1992 and held a prodemocracy convention that same month. It was boycotted by the monarchy and the government refused to allow publicity of the event or grant visas to foreign speakers. The Pro-Democracy Movement formed the People's Party in 1994, Tonga's first political party.

Contributed By:

[Robert C. Kiste](#)

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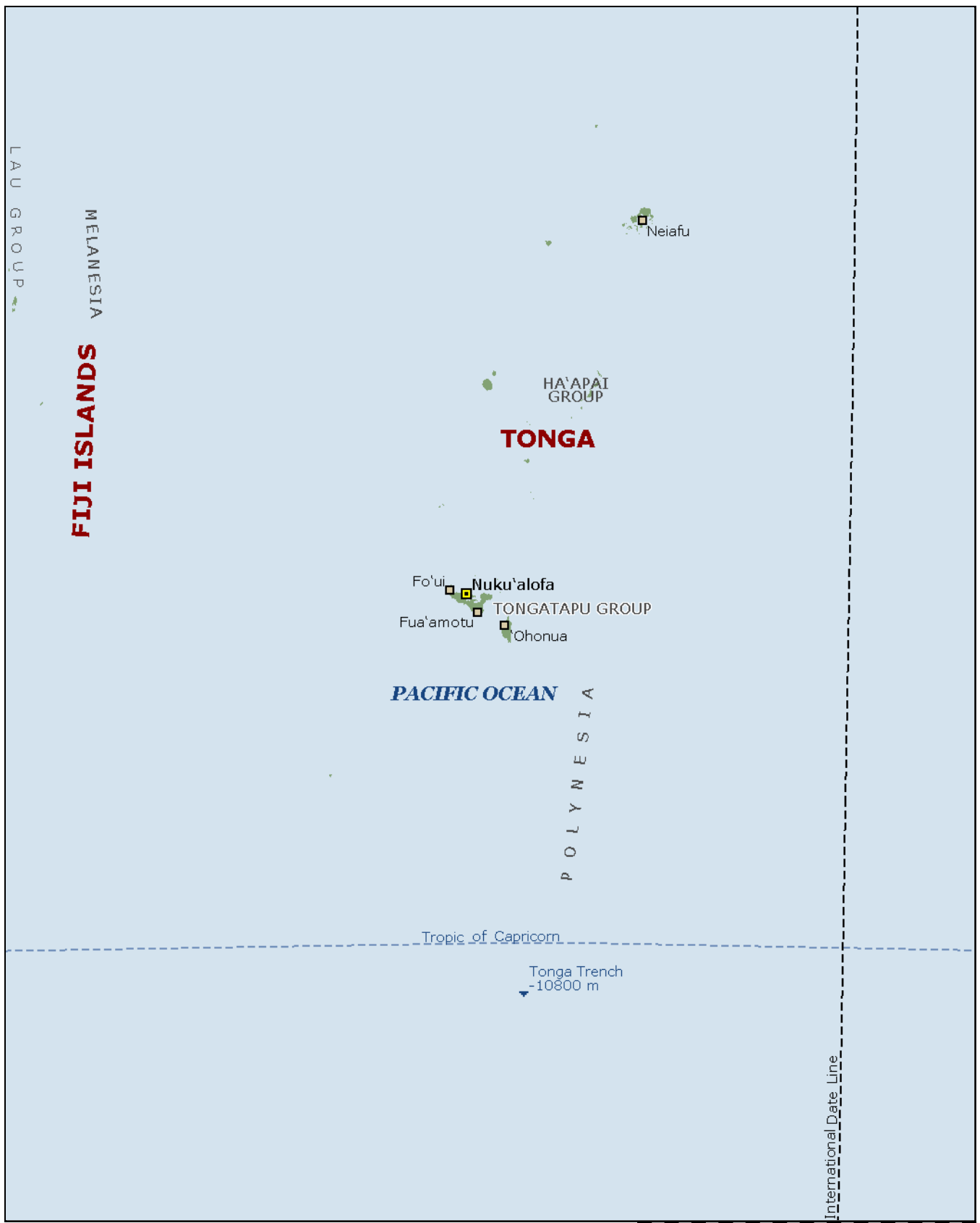
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21°09'32.54" S 175°12'59.50" W

elev 12 ft

2005

Eye alt 22.38 mi



Tongatapu Group
Tonga



Wolfgang Kaehler/Liaison Agency

Neiafu, Vava'u Island, Tonga

Neiafu, the administrative capital of the Vava'u Island Group, is one of Tonga's principal ports. Rich, volcanic soils help make agriculture the primary economic activity in the islands, and products include copra, vanilla, and pumpkins. The country's constitution guarantees each male Tongan a plot of ground for farming, although a shortage of land has kept the country from fulfilling this obligation.

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United States

Alaska
Great Plains
Hawaii
Mid-Atlantic
Midwest
Northeast
Rocky Mountains
South
Southwest
West

World Map

Continents

Africa
Asia
Australia
Europe
Middle East
North America
Oceania
South America

Countries A-Z

A B C D E F G
H I J K L M N
P R S T U V W
Y Z

Weather Books

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Tonga

Average temperature, rainfall and snowfall information is available for the following climate stations in Tonga

- [NUKA`ALOFA](#)
- [HA`APAI](#)
- [NIUAFOOU ISLAND](#)

Official name:	Kingdom of Tonga
Capital:	Nuku'alofa
Area:	total: 748 sq km water: 30 sq km land: 718 sq km
Climate:	tropical; modified by trade winds; warm season (December to May), cool season (May to December)
Location:	Oceania, archipelago in the South Pacific Ocean, about two-thirds of the way from Hawaii to New Zealand
Geographic coordinates:	20 00 S, 175 00 W
Comparative Area:	four times the size of Washington, DC
Land boundaries:	0 km
Coastline:	419 km
Terrain:	most islands have limestone base formed from uplifted coral formation; others have limestone overlying volcanic base
Elevation extremes:	lowest point: Pacific Ocean 0 m highest point: unnamed location on Kao Island 1,033 m

Map of Tonga

Ads by Google

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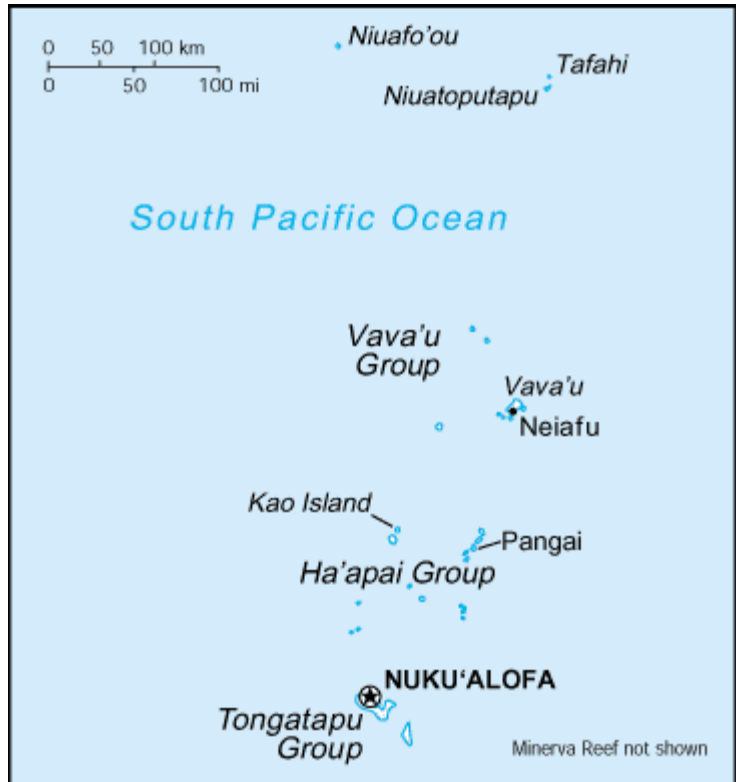
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General info

Entity:
Tonga
Capital:
Nuku'alofa
Population (2008-07-01):
119,009 (CIA)
Area:
748 sq.km.
Country code:
TO
Region:
Polynesia

Tonga

Administrative units

division island	capital	area (sq.km.)	population 1996-11-30 census	population 2006-11-30 census
'Eua <i>division</i>	Ohonua	87.44	4,934	5,165
'Eua		87.44	4,934	5,165
Ha'apai <i>division</i>	Pangai	109.98	8,138	7,572
Foa		13.39	1,434	1,485
Fonoifua		0.39	104	88
Fotuha'a		1.14	138	132
Ha'afeva		1.81	313	262
Ha'aneva		6.58	588	477
Kotu		0.34	222	185
Lifuka (Pangai)		11.42	2,966	2,968
Lofanga		1.45	186	163
Mango		0.65	81	70
Matuku		0.34	149	112
Mo'unga'one		1.17	185	136
Numuka		7.12	550	474
Nomukeiki		0.68	0	0
'O'ua		0.98	178	149
Tofua		55.63	5	0
Tungua		1.53	282	233
Uiha		5.36	757	638
Niuas <i>division</i>	Hihifo	71.69	2,018	1,652
Niuafou		50.27	735	650
Niuatoputapu		18.00	1,161	934
Tafahi		3.42	122	68
Tongatapu <i>division</i>	Nuku'alofa	260.48	66,979	71,260
Ataa		0.22	2	0
Atataa		0.52	234	251
Eueiki		1.06	56	70,877
Fafaa		0.09	10	32
Nukunukumotu		1.32	24	20
Oneata		0.06	3	0
Onevai		0.03	8	0
Pangaimotu		0.13	29	14
Tongatapu		257.03	66,586	55
Velitua Hahake		0.01	10	0
Velitua Hihifo		0.01	17	11
Vava'u <i>division</i>	Neiafu	121.00	15,715	15,485
Foeata		0.10	5	5
Fofoa				21
Hunga		4.69	347	235
Kapa		5.96	410	252
Kenutu		0.43	1	1
Koloa		2.25	321	293
Lape		0.39	21	27
Nuapapu		2.67	381	234
Ofu		1.24	171	129
Okoa		0.34	228	305
Olo'ua		0.49	110	89
Ovaka		1.29	103	70
Pangaimotu		8.86	835	857
Tapana		0.36	6	5
Taunga		0.36	77	34
Utungake		0.93	457	540
Vaka'eitu		0.90	4	0
Vava'u (Mainland)		89.74	12,238	12,389
total		650.59	97,784	101,134

source: Statistics Department, Tonga.
note: 2006 numbers are preliminary results.
note: The Tongan divisions are actually also divided into districts.