

Sao Tome and Principe

Country name	Sao Tome and Principe
State title	Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe
Name of citizen	Sao Tomean ¹
Official language	Portuguese (por) ²
Country name in official language	São Tomé e Príncipe
State title in official language	República Democrática de São Tomé e Príncipe ³
Script	Roman
Romanization System	N/A
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	ST/STP ⁴
Capital (Conventional name)	Sao Tome
Capital in official language	São Tomé (0°20'10" N 06°43'50" E)
Area / Population	1,001km ² / 197,700 (2017 data) ⁵

Introduction

Sao Tome and Principe is an African country located in the Gulf of Guinea (Portuguese: Golfo de Guiné). It is located on the Equator. Part of the Cameroon volcanic mountain line, the country consists of two archipelagos around the two main islands of Sao Tome (Portuguese: Ilha de São Tomé) and Principe (Ilha do Príncipe). Other islets (*por: ilheu*) include Rolas, Cabras, Bombom, and Pedras Tinhosas. The islands were uninhabited until they were discovered by Portuguese explorers in 1470. Sao Tome and Principe gained independence from Portugal in 1975.

Geographical names policy and sources

Geographical names are written in Roman script according to Portuguese orthography. Toponyms have their origins in Portuguese or the islands' various Creoles. Names should be taken from official Sao Tomean sources where possible. All hyphens and diacritical marks should be retained.

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fd8475f1d3a0001132adf4/FCDO_Geographical_Names_Index_March_2024.csv/preview

² ISO 639 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

³ Sometimes abbreviated to RDSTP.

⁴ <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui#home>

⁵ <https://ine.st/>

The country name as used in HMG English-language contexts does not require diacritics, but names for features within the country should retain diacritics, e.g. for the names of the two main islands, São Tomé and Príncipe.

An interactive map of Sao Tome and Principe can be found at: <https://discoversaotomeeprincipe.com/mapa-interativo/>.

The [Africa Portal](#) and NGA’s [Geographic Names Server \(GNS\)](#) can also be used as a names source.

Languages

Portuguese is the official language. São Tomean Portuguese (por: *português santomense*) is the form of Portuguese spoken in Sao Tome and Principe by the majority of Sao Tomeans.

The Portuguese alphabet includes the 26 letters of the standard Roman alphabet. In addition, Portuguese employs 12 vowel-diacritic combinations (see below) and seven digraphs (*ch, lh, nh, rr, ss, qu* and *gu*).

The definite article (English: the) commonly occurs in Sao Tomean place names. It has four forms in Portuguese: *o* (masculine singular), *a* (feminine singular), *os* (masculine plural), and *as* (feminine plural). The preposition *de* (English: of) also occurs in many place names, often in combination with the definite article, as follows:

- de + o = do
- de + a = da
- de + os = dos
- de + as = das

Several Portuguese creoles are also spoken in Sao Tome and Principe. These are largely oral languages and have no standard orthography:

- Forro (*cri*) – also known as Sãotomense or *santomense*. Spoken by 36.2% of the population.
- Cape Verdean Creole (*kea*) – spoken by 8.5%.
- Angolar Creole (*aoa*) – also known as Ngola or n’golá. A Portuguese creole, with a substrate from Kimbundu, a Bantu language spoken in Angola. Spoken by 6.6% of the population.
- Principense Creole (*pre*) – spoken on the island of Príncipe.

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings⁶):

Portuguese contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
À	00C0	à	00E0
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Â	00C2	â	00E2

⁶ See www.unicode.org

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Ã	00C3	ã	00E3
Ç	00C7	ç	00E7
É	00C9	é	00E9
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA
Í	00CD	í	00ED
Ó	00D3	ó	00F3
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Õ	00D5	õ	00F5
Ú	00DA	ú	00FA

Generic Terms

Portuguese generic terms commonly found in Sao Tomean toponyms include:

- Baía = Bay
- Ilha = Island
- Ilheu = islet
- Pico = Peak
- Ponta = Point/Headland
- Praia = Beach
- Rio = River

Administrative structure

At first-order administrative level Sao Tome and Principe is subdivided into one autonomous region (*por: região autónoma*) and six districts (*por: distrito*). The island of Príncipe is an autonomous region, while the island of São Tomé is divided into six districts. The districts are subdivided into agglomerations (*por: aglomerações*), which are cities and towns. These are further subdivided into localities (*por: localidades*).⁷

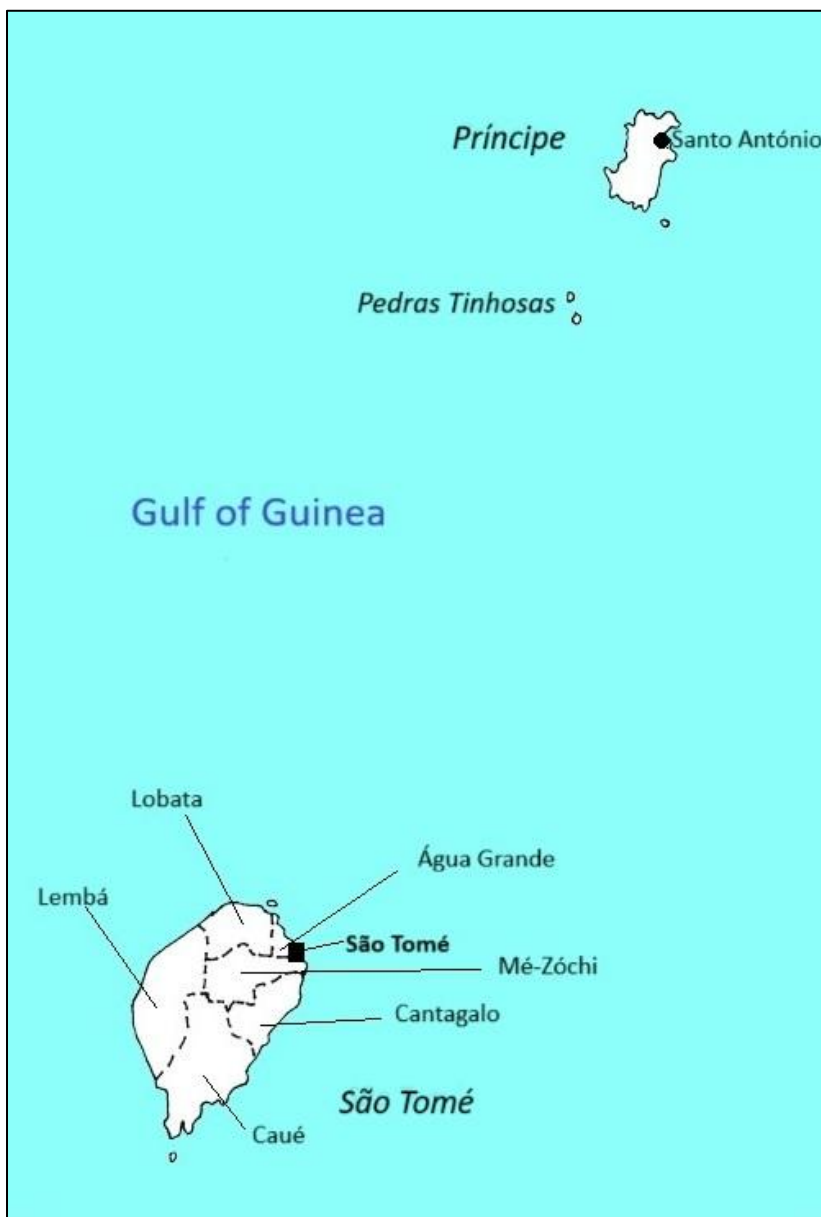
Administrative Divisions of Sao Tome and Principe

Subdivision type	ADM1 Name	ISO 3166-2 Code	Administrative Centre (PPLA)	Location of Centre
Autonomous region	Príncipe	ST-P	Santo António	01°38'19" N 07°25'14" E
District	Água Grande	ST-01	São Tomé	0°20'10" N 06°43'50" E
District	Cantagalo	ST-02	Santana	0°15'36" N 06°44'29" E
District	Caué	ST-03	São João dos Angolares	0°08'03" N 06°38'58" E
District	Lembá	ST-04	Neves	0°21'31" N 06°33'09" E

⁷ <https://www.ine.st/index.php/o-pais/sobre-o-pais>

Subdivision type	ADM1 Name	ISO 3166-2 Code	Administrative Centre (PPLA)	Location of Centre
District	Lobata	ST-05	Guadalupe	0°22'45" N 06°38'15" E
District	Mé-Zóchi	ST-06	Trinidade	0°17'48" N 06°40'53" E

Map showing Sao Tome and Principe



Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Recommended Name	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Canal das Rolas	-	00°00'42"N 06°31'14"E	marine channel
Gulf of Guinea ⁸	por: Golfo da Guiné, fra: <i>Golfe de Guinée</i> , spa: <i>Golfo de Guinea</i>	02°N 02°30'E	gulf
Ilhéu Bombom	Bom Bom, Bom-Bom	01°41'55"N 07°24'10"E	islet
Ilhéu Carço/Ilhéu Boné de Jóquei	Bone Jockey, Boné de Jóque	01°30'48"N 07°25'48"E	islet
Ilhéu das Cabras	-	00°24'28"N 06°42'53	islet
Ilhéu Gago Coutinho/Ilhéu das Rolas	Illie de Rolle	00°00'17"S 06°31'13"E	islet
Pedras Tinhosas	-	01°21'45"N 07°17'15"E	islands
Pico de Príncipe	-	01°34'49"N 07°23'02"E	mountain
Pico de São Tomé	-	00°16'08"N 06°32'29"E	mountain
Tinhosa Grande	Pedra Tinhosa Grande	01°20'31"N 07°17'31"E	island
Tinhosa Pequena	Pedra Tinhosa Pequena	01°22'59"N 07°16'59"E	island

Useful references

- Africa Geoportal: <https://www.africageoportal.com/>
- Atlas de São Tomé e Príncipe: http://atlas.saotomeprincipe.eu/1_atlasstp_situacao.htm
- BBC country profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14093493>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sao-tome-and-principe/>
- Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa: <https://www.cplp.org/>
- Constitution of Sao Tome and Principe: [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Sao Tome and Principe 1990](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Sao_Tome_and_Principe_1990)
- Discover São Tome e Príncipe (Discover STP): <https://discoversaotomeeprincipe.com/>
- Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com (for information on languages)
- FCDO Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/sao-tome-and-principe>
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística: <https://www.ine.st/>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org

⁸ For international features, outside the sovereignty of a single country, PCGN recommends using the conventional English name for the feature.

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui#home>
 - Omniglot: www.omniglot.com (for information on languages and scripts)
 - PCGN Country Names list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names>
 - Unicode: www.unicode.org
 - US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server:
<https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GNSHome/welcome.html>
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