[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country)

**Palau** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en), historically **Belau** or **Pelew**), officially the **Republic of Palau** ([Template:Lang-pau](/wiki/Template:Lang-pau)),[[1]](#cite_note-1) is an [island country](/wiki/Island_country) with a population of 17,948 on 465 km2, located in the western [Pacific Ocean](/wiki/Pacific_Ocean). It contains approximately 250 islands, which form the western chain of the [Caroline Islands](/wiki/Caroline_Islands) in [Micronesia](/wiki/Micronesia). The most populous of these is [Koror](/wiki/Koror). The capital [Ngerulmud](/wiki/Ngerulmud) is located on the nearby island of [Babeldaob](/wiki/Babeldaob), in [Melekeok State](/wiki/Melekeok). Palau shares [maritime boundaries](/wiki/Maritime_boundary) with [Indonesia](/wiki/Indonesia), the [Philippines](/wiki/Philippines), and the [Federated States of Micronesia](/wiki/Federated_States_of_Micronesia).

The country was originally settled approximately 3,000 years ago by migrants from the Philippines and sustained a [Negrito](/wiki/Negrito) population until around 900 years ago. The islands were first explored by Europeans in the 16th century, and were made part of the [Spanish East Indies](/wiki/Spanish_East_Indies) in 1574. Following Spain's defeat in the [Spanish–American War](/wiki/Spanish–American_War) in 1898, the islands were sold to [Imperial Germany](/wiki/Imperial_Germany) in 1899 under the terms of the [German–Spanish Treaty](/wiki/German–Spanish_Treaty_(1899)), where they were administered as part of [German New Guinea](/wiki/German_New_Guinea). The [Imperial Japanese Navy](/wiki/Imperial_Japanese_Navy) conquered Palau during [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I), and the islands were later made a part of the Japanese-ruled [South Pacific Mandate](/wiki/South_Pacific_Mandate) by the [League of Nations](/wiki/League_of_Nations). During [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), skirmishes, including the major [Battle of Peleliu](/wiki/Battle_of_Peleliu), were fought between American and Japanese troops as part of the [Mariana and Palau Islands campaign](/wiki/Mariana_and_Palau_Islands_campaign). Along with other [Pacific Islands](/wiki/Pacific_Islands), Palau was made a part of the [United States](/wiki/United_States)-governed [Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands](/wiki/Trust_Territory_of_the_Pacific_Islands) in 1947. Having voted against joining the Federated States of Micronesia in 1979, the islands gained full sovereignty in 1994 under a [Compact of Free Association](/wiki/Compact_of_Free_Association) with the United States.

Politically, Palau is a [presidential](/wiki/Presidential_system) [republic](/wiki/Republic) in [free association](/wiki/Associated_state) with the United States, which provides defense, funding, and access to social services. Legislative power is concentrated in the [bicameral](/wiki/Bicameral) [Palau National Congress](/wiki/Palau_National_Congress). [Palau's economy](/wiki/Economy_of_Palau) is based mainly on [tourism](/wiki/Tourism), [subsistence agriculture](/wiki/Subsistence_agriculture) and [fishing](/wiki/Fishing), with a significant portion of [gross national product](/wiki/Gross_national_product) (GNP) derived from foreign aid. The country uses the [United States dollar](/wiki/United_States_dollar) as its currency. The islands' culture mixes Japanese, Micronesian and [Melanesian](/wiki/Melanesia) elements. The majority of citizens are of mixed Micronesian, Melanesian, and [Austronesian](/wiki/Austronesia) descent, with significant groups descended from [Japanese](/wiki/Japanese_people) and [Filipino](/wiki/Filipino_people) settlers. The country's two [official languages](/wiki/Official_language) are [Palauan](/wiki/Palauan_language) (member of the wider [Sunda–Sulawesi language group](/wiki/Sunda–Sulawesi_languages)) and [English](/wiki/English_language), with [Japanese](/wiki/Japanese_language), [Sonsorolese](/wiki/Sonsorolese_language), and [Tobian](/wiki/Tobian_language) recognised as [regional languages](/wiki/Regional_language).

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

The name for the islands in the [Palauan language](/wiki/Palauan_language), *Belau*, likely derives from either the Palauan word for "village", *beluu*,[[2]](#cite_note-2) or from *aibebelau* ("indirect replies"), relating to a creation myth.[[3]](#cite_note-3) The name "Palau" entered the [English language](/wiki/English_language) from the [Spanish](/wiki/Spanish_language) *Los Palaos*, via the [German](/wiki/German_language) *Palau*. An archaic name for the islands in English was the "Pelew Islands".[[4]](#cite_note-4) It should not be confused with [*Pulau*](/wiki/Special:Search/intitle:Pulau), which is an [Indonesian](/wiki/Indonesian_language) word meaning "island".

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

### Early history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

Palau was originally settled between the [3rd](/wiki/3rd_millennium_BC) and [2nd millennia BC](/wiki/2nd_millennium_BC), most likely from the [Philippines](/wiki/Philippines) or [Indonesia](/wiki/Indonesia).[[5]](#cite_note-5) The islands sustained a population of short-statured [Negrito](/wiki/Negrito) or [Pygmy people](/wiki/Pygmy_people) until the 12th century, when they were replaced.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) The modern population, judging by its language, may have come from the [Sunda Islands](/wiki/Sunda_Islands).

[Sonsorol](/wiki/Sonsorol), part of the [Southwest Islands](/wiki/Southwest_Islands_(Palau)), an island chain approximately [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) from the main island chain of Palau, was sighted by Europeans as early as 1522, when the Spanish mission of the [*Trinidad*](/wiki/Trinidad_(ship)), the flagship of [Ferdinand Magellan's](/wiki/Ferdinand_Magellan) voyage of circumnavigation, sighted two small islands around the [5th parallel north](/wiki/5th_parallel_north), naming them "San Juan".[[6]](#cite_note-6) [left|thumb|Map of 1888 showing the Spanish East Indies, being part of it Palau Islands (map without Philippines)](/wiki/File:Islas_Marianas_Palaos_y_Carolinas.JPG) After the conquest of the Philippines in 1565 by the [Spanish Empire](/wiki/Spanish_Empire), the archipelago of Palau became part of the territory of the [Captaincy General of the Philippines](/wiki/Captaincy_General_of_the_Philippines), established in 1574 as part of the [Spanish East Indies](/wiki/Spanish_East_Indies) with the capital based in the colonial centre in [Manila](/wiki/Manila). However, the Spanish presence only began to express with [evangelization](/wiki/Evangelization), began at the end of 17th century, and its dominance began to take shape in the 18th century.

### After 16th century[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

The conscious discovery of Palau came a century later on 1697, when a group of Palauans were shipwrecked on the Philippine island of [Samar](/wiki/Samar_Island) to the northwest. They were interviewed by the [Czech](/wiki/Czechs) missionary [Paul Klein](/wiki/Paul_Klein_(missionary)) on 28 December 1696. Klein was able to draw the first map of Palau based on the Palauans' representation of their home islands that they made with an arrangement of 87 pebbles on the beach. Klein reported his findings to the [Jesuit](/wiki/Society_of_Jesus) Superior General in a letter sent in June 1697.[[7]](#cite_note-7)

### Spanish era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[thumb|Koror chiefs in 1915](/wiki/File:Koror_chiefs_in_1915.jpg) This map and the letter caused a vast interest in the new islands. Another letter written by Fr. Andrew Serrano was sent to Europe in 1705, essentially copying the information given by Klein. The letters resulted in three unsuccessful Jesuit attempts to travel to Palau from [Spanish Philippines](/wiki/Spanish_Philippines) in 1700, 1708 and 1709. The islands were first visited by the Jesuit expedition led by Francisco Padilla on 30 November 1710. The expedition ended with the stranding of the two priests, Jacques Du Beron and Joseph Cortyl, on the coast of Sonsorol, because the mother ship *Santísima Trinidad* was driven to [Mindanao](/wiki/Mindanao) by a storm. Another ship was sent from [Guam](/wiki/Guam) in 1711 to save them only to capsize, causing the death of three more Jesuit priests. The failure of these missions gave Palau the original Spanish name *Islas Encantadas* (Enchanted Islands).[[8]](#cite_note-8) Despite these early misfortunes, the [Spanish Empire](/wiki/Spanish_Empire) later came to dominate the islands.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Colonial era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

British traders became prominent visitors to Palau in the 18th century, followed by expanding Spanish influence in the 19th century. Following its defeat in the [Spanish–American War](/wiki/Spanish–American_War), Spain sold Palau and most of the rest of the Caroline Islands to the [German Empire](/wiki/German_Empire) in 1899 pursuant to the [German–Spanish Treaty (1899)](/wiki/German–Spanish_Treaty_(1899)). During [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I), the [Japanese Empire](/wiki/Empire_of_Japan) annexed the islands after seizing them from Germany in 1914. Following World War I, the [League of Nations](/wiki/League_of_Nations) formally placed the islands under Japanese administration as part of the [South Pacific Mandate](/wiki/Nanyo_(Japanese_mandated_territory)).

### American era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

During [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), the [United States](/wiki/United_States) captured Palau from Japan in 1944 after the costly [Battle of Peleliu](/wiki/Battle_of_Peleliu), when more than 2,000 Americans and 10,000 Japanese were killed. The islands passed formally to the United States under [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations) auspices in 1947 as part of the [Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands](/wiki/Trust_Territory_of_the_Pacific_Islands) established pursuant to [Security Council Resolution 21](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_21).

### Independence[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[thumb|TTPI High Commissioner and staff, 1960s](/wiki/File:TTPI_High_Commissioner_and_staff.jpg) Four of the Trust Territory districts joined together and formed the [Federated States of Micronesia](/wiki/Federated_States_of_Micronesia) in 1979, but the districts of Palau and the [Marshall Islands](/wiki/Marshall_Islands) declined to participate. Palau, the westernmost cluster of the [Carolines](/wiki/Caroline_Islands), instead opted for independent status in 1978. It approved a new constitution and became the Republic of Palau in 1981.[[9]](#cite_note-9) It signed a [Compact of Free Association](/wiki/Compact_of_Free_Association) with the [United States](/wiki/United_States) in 1982. After eight referenda and an amendment to the Palauan constitution, the Compact was ratified in 1993. The Compact went into effect on 1 October 1994,[[10]](#cite_note-10) marking Palau [*de jure*](/wiki/De_jure) independent, although it had been [*de facto*](/wiki/De_facto) independent since 25 May 1994, when the trusteeship ended.

Legislation making Palau an "offshore" financial center was passed by the Senate in 1998. In 2001, Palau passed its first [bank regulation](/wiki/Bank_regulation) and anti-[money laundering](/wiki/Money_laundering) laws.

## Politics and government[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Capitol of Palau, the seat of government.](/wiki/File:Capitol,_Melekeok,_Palau.jpg)

Palau is a [multi-party](/wiki/Multi-party_system) [democratic](/wiki/Representative_democracy) [republic](/wiki/Republic). The [President of Palau](/wiki/President_of_Palau) is both [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state) and [head of government](/wiki/Head_of_government). [Executive power](/wiki/Executive_power) is exercised by the government, while [legislative power](/wiki/Legislative_power) is vested in both the government and the [Palau National Congress](/wiki/Palau_National_Congress). The [judiciary](/wiki/Judiciary) is independent of the executive and the legislature. Palau adopted a constitution in 1981.

The governments of the United States and Palau concluded a [Compact of Free Association](/wiki/Compact_of_Free_Association) in 1986, similar to compacts that the United States had entered into with the [Federated States of Micronesia](/wiki/Federated_States_of_Micronesia) and the [Republic of the Marshall Islands](/wiki/Republic_of_the_Marshall_Islands).[[11]](#cite_note-11) The compact entered into force on 1 October 1994, concluding Palau's transition from trusteeship to independence[[11]](#cite_note-11) as the last portion of the [Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands](/wiki/Trust_Territory_of_the_Pacific_Islands) to secure its independence pursuant to [Security Council Resolution 956](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_956).

The [Compact of Free Association](/wiki/Compact_of_Free_Association) between the United States and Palau[[12]](#cite_note-12) sets forth the free and voluntary association of their governments. It primarily focuses on the issues of government, economic, security and defense relations.[[13]](#cite_note-13) Palau has no independent military, relying on the United States for its defense. Under the compact, the [American military](/wiki/American_military) was granted access to the islands for 50 years. The [U.S. Navy](/wiki/United_States_Navy) role is minimal, limited to a handful of Navy [Seabees](/wiki/Seabee_(US_Navy)) (construction engineers). The [U.S. Coast Guard](/wiki/United_States_Coast_Guard) patrols in national waters.

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) As a sovereign nation, Palau conducts its own foreign relations.[[11]](#cite_note-11) Since independence, Palau has established diplomatic relations with a number of nations, including many of its Pacific neighbors. On 29 November 1994, the [United Nations Security Council](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council) passed [Resolution 963](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_963) recommending Palau's admission to the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations). The [United Nations General Assembly](/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly) approved admission for Palau pursuant to Resolution 49/63 on 15 December 1994.[[14]](#cite_note-14) Palau has since joined several other international organizations. In September 2006, Palau hosted the first Taiwan-Pacific Allies Summit. Its President has made official visits to other Pacific countries, including [Taiwan](/wiki/Republic_of_China).

The United States maintains a diplomatic delegation and an embassy in Palau, but most aspects of the countries' relationship have to do with Compact-funded projects, which are the responsibility of the U.S. [Department of the Interior's](/wiki/Department_of_the_Interior) [Office of Insular Affairs](/wiki/Office_of_Insular_Affairs).[[15]](#cite_note-15) In international politics, Palau often votes with the United States with respect to [United Nations General Assembly](/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly) resolutions.[[16]](#cite_note-16) Palau is a member of the [Nauru Agreement](/wiki/Nauru_Agreement).<ref name=radioaustralia>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

In 1981, Palau voted for the world's first nuclear-free constitution. This constitution banned the use, storage and disposal of [nuclear](/wiki/Nuclear_weapon), [toxic chemical](/wiki/Chemical_weapon), gas and [biological weapons](/wiki/Biological_weapon) without first being approved by a ¾ majority in a referendum.[[17]](#cite_note-17) This ban delayed Palau's transition to independence, because while negotiating the Compact, the U.S. insisted on the option to operate [nuclear propelled vessels](/wiki/Nuclear_marine_propulsion) and store nuclear weapons within the territory,[[18]](#cite_note-18) prompting campaigns for independence and denuclearisation.[[19]](#cite_note-19) After several referendums that failed to achieve a ¾ majority, the people of Palau finally approved the Compact in 1994.[[20]](#cite_note-20)[[21]](#cite_note-21) In June 2009, Palau announced that it would [accept up to seventeen](/wiki/Uyghur_captives_in_Guantanamo) [Uyghurs](/wiki/Uyghurs) that had previously been detained by the American military at [Guantanamo Bay](/wiki/Guantanamo_Bay_detention_camp),<ref name=Ctv2009-06-10> [Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> with some American compensation for the cost of their upkeep.<ref name=Abc2009-06-10> [Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

Only one of the Uyghurs initially agreed to resettlement,<ref name=Rnzi2009-06-30> [Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> but by the end of October, six of the seventeen had been transferred to Palau.<ref name=Afp2009-10-31> [Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> An aid agreement with the United States, finalized in January 2010, was reported to be unrelated to the Uyghur agreement.[[22]](#cite_note-22)

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[thumb|375px|The sixteen states of Palau.](/wiki/File:States_of_Palau.jpg) [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

Palau is divided into sixteen [states](/wiki/Constituent_state) (until 1984 called municipalities). These are listed below with their areas (in square kilometers) and 2005 Census populations:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Area (km2)** | **Census 2012** |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Aimeliik.svg) [Aimeliik](/wiki/Aimeliik) | 44 | 281 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Airai_State.png) [Airai](/wiki/Airai) | 59 | 2537 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Angaur_State.png) [Angaur](/wiki/Angaur) | 8.06 | 130 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Hatohobei.svg) [Hatohobei](/wiki/Hatohobei) | 0.9 | 10 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Kayangel_State.png) [Kayangel](/wiki/Kayangel) | 1.7 | 76 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Koror_State.png) [Koror](/wiki/Koror) | 60.52 | 11670 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Melekeok.png) [Melekeok](/wiki/Melekeok) | 26 | 300 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Ngaraard_State.svg) [Ngaraard](/wiki/Ngaraard) | 34 | 453 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Ngarchelong.svg) [Ngarchelong](/wiki/Ngarchelong) | 11.2 | 281 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Ngardmau_State.png) [Ngardmau](/wiki/Ngardmau) | 34 | 195 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Ngeremlengui_State.png) [Ngaremlengui](/wiki/Ngaremlengui) | 68 | 310 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Ngatpang_State.png) [Ngatpang](/wiki/Ngatpang) | 33 | 257 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Ngchesar_State.png) [Ngchesar](/wiki/Ngchesar) | 43 | 287 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Ngiwal_State.png) [Ngiwal](/wiki/Ngiwal) | 17 | 226 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Peleliu_State.png) [Peleliu](/wiki/Peleliu) | 22.3 | 510 |
| [27px](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Sonsorol.svg) [Sonsorol](/wiki/Sonsorol) | 3.1 | 42 |

Historically, Palau's [Rock Islands](/wiki/Rock_Islands_(Palau)) have been part of the State of Koror.

[thumb|right|Republic of Palau.](/wiki/File:Palau-CIA_WFB_Map.png)

### Maritime Law Enforcement[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

Palau employs 18 marine police officers to patrol the nation's 230,000 square mile [exclusive economic zone](/wiki/Exclusive_economic_zone). They employ a donated Australian patrol boat, the *Remeliik*, to hunt for poachers and unlicensed fishermen. Two small fiberglass boats are used for littoral operations. They are based on [Koror](/wiki/Koror).[[23]](#cite_note-23)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

Palau's territory consists of an [archipelago](/wiki/Archipelago) located in the [Pacific Ocean](/wiki/Pacific_Ocean). Its most populous [islands](/wiki/Island) are [Angaur](/wiki/Angaur), [Babeldaob](/wiki/Babeldaob), [Koror](/wiki/Koror) and [Peleliu](/wiki/Peleliu). The latter three lie together within the same [barrier reef](/wiki/Coral_reef), while Angaur is an oceanic island several miles to the south. About two-thirds of the [population](/wiki/Population) live on Koror.

The [coral](/wiki/Coral) [atoll](/wiki/Atoll) of [Kayangel](/wiki/Kayangel) is north of these islands, while the uninhabited [Rock Islands](/wiki/Rock_Islands_(Palau)) (about 200) are west of the main island group. A remote group of six islands, known as the [Southwest Islands](/wiki/Southwest_Islands_(Palau)), some [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) from the main islands, make up the states of Hatohobei and Sonsorol.

### Climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

Palau has a [tropical climate](/wiki/Tropical_climate) with an annual [mean](/wiki/Arithmetic_mean) [temperature](/wiki/Temperature) of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). [Rainfall](/wiki/Rainfall) is heavy throughout the [year](/wiki/Year), averaging [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). The average [humidity](/wiki/Humidity) is 82% and, although rain falls more frequently between July and October, there is still much [sunshine](/wiki/Sunlight).

[Typhoons](/wiki/Tropical_cyclone) are rare, as Palau lies outside the main typhoon zone. The strongest typhoon that struck Palau since reliable records was [Typhoon Haiyan](/wiki/Typhoon_Haiyan) in [2013](/wiki/2013_Pacific_typhoon_season).[[24]](#cite_note-24) A mandatory [emergency evacuation](/wiki/Emergency_evacuation) was issued for [Kayangel](/wiki/Kayangel). A [storm surge](/wiki/Storm_surge) damaged several houses. Despite residents' refusal to evacuate safely, no fatalities or major injuries were reported.

[Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear) [Template:Weather box](/wiki/Template:Weather_box)

### Environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[thumb|300px|](/wiki/File:Palau-rock-islands20071222.jpg)[Rock Islands](/wiki/Rock_Islands_(Palau)) in Palau. [thumb|300px|An aerial view of limestone islands.](/wiki/File:Palau_2008030818_4709_(2347767520).jpg)

While much of Palau remains free of environmental degradation, areas of concern include illegal [dynamite fishing](/wiki/Blast_fishing), inadequate [solid waste disposal](/wiki/Waste_management) facilities in [Koror](/wiki/Koror) and extensive [sand](/wiki/Sand) and [coral](/wiki/Coral) [dredging](/wiki/Dredging) in the Palau [lagoon](/wiki/Lagoon). As with other Pacific island nations, [rising sea level](/wiki/Sea-level_rise) presents a major environmental threat. Inundation of low-lying areas threatens coastal [vegetation](/wiki/Vegetation), [agriculture](/wiki/Agriculture), and an already insufficient [water supply](/wiki/Water_supply). [Wastewater treatment](/wiki/Wastewater_treatment) is a problem, along with the handling of [toxic waste](/wiki/Toxic_waste) from [fertilizers](/wiki/Fertilizer) and [biocides](/wiki/Biocide).

[Saltwater crocodiles](/wiki/Saltwater_crocodile) are also indigenous to Palau and occur in varying numbers throughout the various [mangroves](/wiki/Mangrove) and even in parts of the beautiful rock islands. Although this [species](/wiki/Species) is generally considered extremely dangerous, there has only been one fatal human attack in Palau within modern history, and that was in the 1960s. In Palau, the largest crocodile measured in at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

The nation is also vulnerable to [earthquakes](/wiki/Earthquake), [volcanic activity](/wiki/Volcano), and [tropical storms](/wiki/Tropical_cyclone). Palau already has a problem with inadequate [water supply](/wiki/Water_supply) and limited [agricultural areas](/wiki/Agricultural_land) to support its [population](/wiki/Population).

On 5 November 2005, President Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr. took the lead on a regional environmental initiative called the [Micronesia challenge](/wiki/Micronesia_challenge), which would conserve 30% of near-shore coastal waters and 20% of [forest land](/wiki/Forest) by 2020. Following Palau, the initiative was joined by the [Federated States of Micronesia](/wiki/Federated_States_of_Micronesia), the [Marshall Islands](/wiki/Marshall_Islands), and the [U.S.](/wiki/United_States) [territories](/wiki/Territory_(geographic_region)) of [Guam](/wiki/Guam) and [Northern Mariana Islands](/wiki/Northern_Mariana_Islands). Together, this combined region represents nearly 5% of the marine area of the [Pacific Ocean](/wiki/Pacific_Ocean) and 7% of its [coastline](/wiki/Coastline).

### Sanctuary[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

On 25 September 2009, Palau announced that it would create the world's first [shark sanctuary](/wiki/Shark_sanctuary).[[25]](#cite_note-25) Palau banned all commercial [shark](/wiki/Shark) [fishing](/wiki/Fishing) within the waters of its [exclusive economic zone (EEZ)](/wiki/Exclusive_economic_zone). The sanctuary protects about [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of [ocean](/wiki/World_Ocean),[[26]](#cite_note-26) a similar size to [France](/wiki/France).[[27]](#cite_note-27)[[28]](#cite_note-28)[[29]](#cite_note-29) President [Johnson Toribiong](/wiki/Johnson_Toribiong) announced the sanctuary at a meeting of the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations).[[27]](#cite_note-27)[[30]](#cite_note-30)[[31]](#cite_note-31) President Toribiong proposed a worldwide ban on fishing for sharks.[[27]](#cite_note-27) In 2012, Palau received the Future Policy Award from [World Future Council](/wiki/World_Future_Council), because "Palau is a global leader in protecting marine ecosystems".[[32]](#cite_note-32)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

Palau's [economy](/wiki/Economy) consists primarily of [tourism](/wiki/Tourism), [subsistence agriculture](/wiki/Subsistence_agriculture) and [fishing](/wiki/Fishing). Tourist activity focuses on [scuba diving](/wiki/Scuba_diving) and [snorkeling](/wiki/Snorkeling) in the islands' rich marine environment, including its [barrier reefs'](/wiki/Coral_reef) walls and [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II) [wrecks](/wiki/Shipwreck). The government is the largest [employer](/wiki/Employment), relying heavily on [U.S.](/wiki/United_States) [financial assistance](/wiki/Aid). Business and tourist arrivals numbered some 50,000 in [financial year](/wiki/Fiscal_year) 2000/2001. [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Japan_Palau_Friendship_Bridge.jpg)[Koror–Babeldaob Bridge](/wiki/Koror–Babeldaob_Bridge). The [population](/wiki/Population) enjoys a [per capita income](/wiki/Per_capita_income) twice that of [Micronesia](/wiki/Micronesia) as a whole. Long-term prospects for the key tourist sector have been greatly bolstered by the expansion of [air travel](/wiki/Air_travel) in the [Pacific](/wiki/Pacific_Rim), the rising prosperity of leading [East Asian](/wiki/East_Asia) [countries](/wiki/Country) and the willingness of [foreigners](/wiki/Alien_(law)) to [finance](/wiki/Investment) [infrastructure](/wiki/Infrastructure) development.

[Air service](/wiki/Airline) has at times been spotty. [Palau Micronesia Air](/wiki/Palau_Micronesia_Air), [Asian Spirit](/wiki/Asian_Spirit) and [Pacific Flier](/wiki/Pacific_Flier) provided service to the [Philippines](/wiki/Philippines) and other destinations at various times during the 2000s, but all suspended service.[[33]](#cite_note-33) [United Airlines](/wiki/United_Airlines) now provides near-daily service to and from [Guam](/wiki/Guam), and once-weekly service to [Yap](/wiki/Yap). Also, [Delta Air Lines](/wiki/Delta_Air_Lines) provides service three times per week to [Tokyo](/wiki/Tokyo).

In November 2006, [Palau Saving Bank](/wiki/Palau_Saving_Bank) officially announced [bankruptcy](/wiki/Bankruptcy). On 13 December of the same year, the [Palau Horizon](/wiki/Palau_Horizon) reported that 641 [depositors](/wiki/Deposit_account) had been affected. Among them, 398 held less than $5,000 [USD](/wiki/United_States_Dollar), with the remainder ranging from $5,000 to $2 million USD. On 12 December 79 affected people received compensation. Mr. Toribiong said, "The fund for the payout came from the balance of Palau government's loan from [Taiwan](/wiki/Taiwan)." From a total of $1 million USD, which originally was for assisting Palau's development, $955,000 USD was left at the time of bankruptcy. Toribiong requested the Taiwanese government use the balance to repay its loans. Taiwan agreed to the request. The compensation would include those who held less than $4,000 USD in an account.[[34]](#cite_note-34) The [income tax](/wiki/Income_tax) has three [brackets](/wiki/Tax_bracket) with [progressive](/wiki/Progressive_tax) [rates](/wiki/Tax_rate) of 9.3%, 15%, and 19.6% respectively. [Corporate tax](/wiki/Corporate_tax) is 4%, and general [sales tax](/wiki/Sales_tax) is 7.5%. There are no [property taxes](/wiki/Property_taxes).

## Transportation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Palau International Airport](/wiki/Palau_International_Airport) provides scheduled [direct flights](/wiki/Direct_flight) with [Guam](/wiki/Antonio_B._Won_Pat_International_Airport), [Manila](/wiki/Ninoy_Aquino_International_Airport), [Seoul](/wiki/Incheon_International_Airport) and [Taipei](/wiki/Taoyuan_International_Airport) and since December 2010, [Tokyo-Narita](/wiki/Narita_International_Airport). In addition, the states of [Angaur](/wiki/Angaur) and [Peleliu](/wiki/Peleliu) have regular service to [international destinations](/wiki/International_flight).

Freight, military and cruise ships often call at Malakal Harbor, on [Malakal Island](/wiki/Malakal_Island) outside Koror. The country has no [railways](/wiki/Railway), and of the [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of [highways](/wiki/Highway), only [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) are [paved](/wiki/Road_surface). [Driving](/wiki/Driving) is on the right and the [speed limit](/wiki/Speed_limit) is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). [Taxis](/wiki/Taxicab) are available in Koror. They are not metered and [fares](/wiki/Fare) are negotiable. Only Koror offers [bus service](/wiki/Transit_bus). Transportation between islands mostly relies on private [boats](/wiki/Boat) and domestic [air services](/wiki/Airline). However, there are some [state run boats](http://outofyourcomfortzone.net/all-the-schedules-and-prices-for-palaus-state-boat-between-koror-peleliu-and-angaur/) between islands as a cheaper alternative.

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[Template:Historical populations](/wiki/Template:Historical_populations) The population of Palau is approximately 21,000, of whom 70% are native Palauans of mixed [Melanesian](/wiki/Melanesia), [Micronesian](/wiki/Micronesia), and [Austronesian](/wiki/Austronesian) descent. Many Palauans also have some Asian ancestry, from intermarriage between settlers and Palauans beginning in the 19th and 20th centuries. Palauans with mixed [Japanese ancestry](/wiki/Japanese_settlement_in_Palau) accounted for the largest group. Some also had some [Chinese](/wiki/Chinese_in_Palau) or [Korean](/wiki/Koreans_in_Micronesia) ancestry. [Filipinos](/wiki/Filipinos_in_Palau) form the second largest ethnic group. There are also few [Bangladeshi](/wiki/Bangladesh) migrant workers, [Europeans](/wiki/Europe), [Americans](/wiki/United_States_of_America) and [Chinese Uyghur](/wiki/Uyghur_people) former detainees on the island. [thumb|left|Tobi villagers.](/wiki/File:Tobi_AKK_Villagers.jpg)

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

The official languages of Palau are [Palauan](/wiki/Palauan_language) and [English](/wiki/English_language), except for two states ([Sonsorol](/wiki/Sonsorol) and [Hatohobei](/wiki/Hatohobei)) where the local language, [Sonsorolese](/wiki/Sonsorolese_language) and [Tobian](/wiki/Tobian_language), respectively, along with Palauan, is official. [Japanese](/wiki/Japanese_language) is spoken widely amongst older Palauans and is an official language in the State of [Angaur](/wiki/Angaur).[[35]](#cite_note-35)[[36]](#cite_note-36)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

The German and Japanese occupations of Palau both subsidized missionaries to follow the Spanish. Three quarters of the population are [Christians](/wiki/Christian) (mainly [Roman Catholics](/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church) and [Protestants](/wiki/Protestants)), while [Modekngei](/wiki/Modekngei) (a combination of Christianity, traditional Palauan religion and fortune telling) and the ancient Palauan religion are commonly observed. Japanese rule brought [Mahayana Buddhism](/wiki/Mahayana_Buddhism) and [Shinto](/wiki/Shinto) to Palau, which were the majority religions among Japanese settlers. However, following Japan's World War II defeat, the remaining Japanese largely converted to Christianity, while the remainder continued to observe Buddhism, but stopped practicing Shinto rites.[[37]](#cite_note-37) There are also approximately 400 Bengali Muslims in Palau, and recently a few Uyghurs detained in [Guantanamo Bay](/wiki/Guantanamo_Bay) were allowed to settle in the island nation.

According to the 2005 census[[38]](#cite_note-38) 49.4% of the population is [Roman Catholic](/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church), 21.3% [Protestant](/wiki/Protestantism), 8.7% [Modekngei](/wiki/Modekngei) and 5.3% [Seventh-day Adventist](/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventism). Only 1% of the population was estimated to be [Buddhist](/wiki/Buddhism) in 2010, with the Chinese community also practicing [Chinese folk religion](/wiki/Chinese_folk_religion) as well.[[39]](#cite_note-39) In 2009, the small [Jewish](/wiki/Jewish) community sent two cyclists to the 18th [Maccabiah Games](/wiki/Maccabiah_Games).[[40]](#cite_note-40)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

[thumb|A traditional Palauan hut (2012)](/wiki/File:A_traditional_Palauan_hut,_2012.jpg) Palauan society follows a very strict [matrilineal](/wiki/Matrilineal) system. Matrilineal practices are seen in nearly every aspect of Palauan traditions, especially in funeral, marriage, inheritance and the passing of traditional titles.

The cuisine includes local foods such as [cassava](/wiki/Cassava), [taro](/wiki/Taro), [yam](/wiki/Yam_(vegetable)), [potato](/wiki/Potato), [fish](/wiki/Fish) and [pork](/wiki/Pork). [Western cuisine](/wiki/Western_cuisine) is favored among young Palauans and the locals are joined by foreign tourists. The rest of Micronesia is similar with much less tourism, leading to fewer restaurants. Tourists eat mainly at their hotels on such islands. Some local foods include an alcoholic drink made from coconut on the tree; the drink made from the roots of the [kava](/wiki/Kava); and the chewing of [betel nuts](/wiki/Betel_nut).

The traditional government system still influences the nation's affairs, leading the federal government to repeatedly attempt to limit its power. Many of these attempts took the form of amendments to the constitution that were supported by the corporate sector to protect what they deemed should be free economic zones. One such example occurred in early 2010, where the Idid clan, the ruling clan of the Southern Federation, under the leadership of Bilung, the Southern Federation's queen, raised a civil suit against the Koror State Public Lands Authority (KSPLA). The Idid clan laid claim over Malakal Island, a major economic zone and Palau's most important port, citing documents from the German Era. The verdict held that the Island belonged to the KSPLA.

### Traditional government[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

The present day "traditional" government of Palau is a continuation of its ancestor, composed of practices that span thousands of years.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Traditionally, Palau was hierarchically organized. The lowest level is the village or hamlet, then the chiefdom (now politically referred to as a state) and finally alliances of chiefdoms. In ancient times, numerous federations divided power, but upon the 17th century introduction of firearms by the British, an imbalance of power occurred.

Palau became divided into northern and southern federations. The Northern Federation is headed by the high chief and chiefess of the ruling clan Uudes of Melekeok state, the Reklai and Ebilreklai. They are commonly referred to as the king and queen of the Northern Federation. This northern federation comprises the state of Kayangel, Ngerchelong, Ngardmau, Ngiwal, Ngaraard, Ngatpang, Ngeremlengui, Melekok, Aimeliik, Ngchesar and Airai. The Southern Federation is likewise represented by the high chief and chiefess of the ruling Idid of Koror state.

The Southern Federation comprises the states of Koror, Peleliu and Angaur. However, fewer and fewer Palauans have knowledge of the concept of federations, and the term is slowly dying out. Federations were established as a way of safeguarding states and hamlets who shared economic, social, and political interests, but with the advent a federal government, safeguards are less meaningful. It is interesting to note however, that in international relations, the king of Palau is synonymous with the Ibedul of Koror. This is because Koror is the industrial capital of the nation, elevating his position over the Reklai of Melekeok.

It is a misconception that the king and queen of Palau, or any chief and his female counterpart for that matter are married. Traditional leaders and their female counterparts have always been related and unmarried (marrying relatives was a traditional taboo). Usually, a chief and his female counterpart are brother and sister, or close cousins, and have their own spouses.

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

[Baseball](/wiki/Baseball) is a popular sport in Palau after its introduction by the Japanese in the 1920s. The [Palau national baseball team](/wiki/Palau_national_baseball_team) won the gold medal at the [1990](/wiki/1990_Micronesian_Games), [1998](/wiki/1998_Micronesian_Games) and [2010 Micronesian Games](/wiki/2010_Micronesian_Games), as well as at the [2007 Pacific Games](/wiki/2007_Pacific_Games).

Palau also has a [national football team](/wiki/Palau_national_football_team), organised by the [Palau Soccer Association](/wiki/Palau_Soccer_Association), but is not a member of [FIFA](/wiki/FIFA). The Association also organizes the [Palau Soccer League](/wiki/Palau_Soccer_League).

### Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

Primary education is required until age of 16. Some fields of study are available at [Palau Community College](/wiki/Palau_Community_College). For professional and graduate programs, students must travel to [San Diego State University](/wiki/San_Diego_State_University) or [University of the South Pacific](/wiki/University_of_the_South_Pacific).[[41]](#cite_note-41) [Template:Wikinews](/wiki/Template:Wikinews)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

Palau has its very own cuisine, for instance, a dessert called [tama](http://palauanrecipes.blogspot.com/2009/02/tama-recipe.html) Palauan cuisine includes local foods such as [cassava](/wiki/Cassava), [taro](/wiki/Taro), [yam](/wiki/Yam_(vegetable)), [potato](/wiki/Potato), [fish](/wiki/Fish) and [pork](/wiki/Pork). [Western cuisine](/wiki/Western_cuisine) is favored among young Palauans.

## Film and television[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

Several television programs and films have been shot in Palau. Examples include the reality show [*Survivor: Palau*](/wiki/Survivor:_Palau) and the 1968 film [*Hell in the Pacific*](/wiki/Hell_in_the_Pacific) starring [Lee Marvin](/wiki/Lee_Marvin).[[42]](#cite_note-42) A television documentary about Palau called [*Strategic Trust: The Making of Nuclear-free Palau*](/wiki/Strategic_Trust:_The_Making_of_Nuclear-free_Palau) was narrated by [Joanne Woodward](/wiki/Joanne_Woodward) and aired in the USA in 1984.[[43]](#cite_note-43)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Portal](/wiki/Template:Portal)

* [Outline of Palau](/wiki/Outline_of_Palau)
* [Index of Palau-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Palau-related_articles)
* [List of islands in Palau](/wiki/List_of_islands_in_Palau)
* [Visa policy of Palau](/wiki/Visa_policy_of_Palau)
* [Palau'amine](/wiki/Palau'amine)

[Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

* <https://www.google.com>

## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links)

* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [Palau](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/Palau.htm) from the *University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries (USA) – Government Publications*.
* [Australian library online](http://librariesaustralia.nla.gov.au/apps/kss), subscription, or membership via institutional access, is required.
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Palau profile](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15446659) from the [BBC News](/wiki/BBC_News)
* [Palau](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/439255/Palau) *Encyclopædia Britannica* entry
* [Template:Wikiatlas](/wiki/Template:Wikiatlas)
* [NOAA's National Weather Service – Palau](http://www.prh.noaa.gov/koror/)
* [The Interesting History of Prince Lee Boo, Brought to England from the Pelew Islands](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/general.09673.1) From the Collections at the Library of Congress

### Government[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

* [Republic of Palau National Government](http://palaugov.org)
* [Embassy of the Republic of Palau in Japan](http://palauembassy.or.jp/en/)
* [Chief of State and Cabinet Members](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ps.html)
* [Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Palau to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](http://www.palauconsulate.org.uk)
* [Honorary Consulate-General of Palau to Belgium](http://www.palauconsulate.be)

[Template:Palau topics](/wiki/Template:Palau_topics) [Template:Countries and territories of Oceania](/wiki/Template:Countries_and_territories_of_Oceania) [Template:United States political divisions](/wiki/Template:United_States_political_divisions) [Template:Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)](/wiki/Template:Pacific_Islands_Forum_(PIF)) [Template:Spanish Empire](/wiki/Template:Spanish_Empire) [Template:Authority control](/wiki/Template:Authority_control)

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