



Palau



Background Humans arrived in the Palauan archipelago from Southeast Asia around 1000 B.C. and developed a complex, highly organized matrilineal society where high-ranking women picked the chiefs. The islands were the westernmost part of the widely scattered Pacific islands north of New Guinea that Spanish explorers named the Caroline Islands in the 17th century. The 18th and 19th centuries saw occasional visits of whalers and traders as Spain gained some influence in the islands and administered it from the Philippines. Spain sold Palau to Germany in 1899 after losing the Philippines in the Spanish-American War.

Japan seized Palau in 1914, was granted a League of Nations mandate to administer the islands in 1920, and made Koror the capital of its South Seas Mandate in 1922. By the outbreak of World War II, there were four times as many Japanese living in Koror as Palauans. In 1944, the US invasion of the island of Peleliu was one of the bloodiest island fights of the Pacific War. After the war, Palau became part of the US-administered Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Palau voted against joining the Federated States of Micronesia in 1978 and adopted its own constitution in 1981, which stated that Palau was a nuclear-free country. In 1982, Palau signed a Compact of Free Association (COFA) with the US, which granted Palau financial assistance and access to many US domestic programs in exchange for exclusive US military access and defense responsibilities. However, many Palauans saw the COFA as incompatible with the Palauan Constitution because of the US military's nuclear arsenal, and seven referenda failed to achieve ratification. Following a constitutional amendment and eighth referendum in 1993, the COFA was ratified and entered into force in 1994 when the islands gained their independence. Its funding was renewed in 2010.

Palau has been on the frontlines of combatting climate change and protecting marine resources. In 2011, Palau banned commercial shark fishing and created the world's first shark sanctuary. In 2017, Palau began stamping the Palau Pledge into passports, reminding visitors to act in ecologically and culturally responsible ways. In 2020, Palau banned coral reef-toxic sunscreens and expanded its fishing prohibition to include 80% of its exclusive economic zone.

Capital name: Ngerulmud

Government type presidential republic in free association with the US

Area total : 459 sq km
land: 459 sq km
water: 0 sq km

Climate tropical; hot and humid; wet season May to November

Natural resources forests, minerals (especially gold), marine products, deep-seabed minerals

Population total: 21,864 (2024 est.)

Population growth rate 0.38% (2024 est.)

Ethnic groups Palauan (Micronesian with Malayan and Melanesian admixtures) 70.6%, Carolinian 1.2%, Asian 26.5%, other 1.7% (2020 est.)

Religions Roman Catholic 46.9%, Protestant 30.9% (Evangelical 24.6%, Seventh Day Adventist 5%, other Protestant 1.4%), Modekngel 5.1% (indigenous to Palau), Muslim 4.9%, other 12.3% (2020 est.)

Languages Palauan (official on most islands) 65.2%, other Micronesian 1.9%, English (official) 19.1%, Filipino 9.9%, Chinese 1.2%, other 2.8% (2015 est.)

Executive branch chief of state: President Surangel WHIPPS, Jr. (since 21 January 2021)
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Legislative branch legislature name: National Congress (Olbiil Era Kelulau)

Diplomatic representation in the US chief of mission: Ambassador Hersey KYOTA (since 12 November 1997)

Diplomatic representation from the US chief of mission: Ambassador Joel EHRENDREICH (since 29 September 2023)

Economic overview high-income Pacific island economy; environmentally fragile; subsistence agriculture and fishing industries; US aid reliance; rebounding post-pandemic tourism industry and services sector; very high living standard and low unemployment

Real GDP (purchasing power parity) \$280.025 million (2023 est.)
\$274.866 million (2022 est.)
\$278.538 million (2021 est.)

Real GDP per capita \$15,800 (2023 est.)
\$15,500 (2022 est.)
\$15,700 (2021 est.)

Exports \$24.48 million (2022 est.)
\$10.566 million (2021 est.)
\$52.897 million (2020 est.)

Exports - partners India 41%, Turkey 26%, Taiwan 10%, USA 9%, Japan 5% (2023)

Exports - commodities ships, refined petroleum (2023)

Imports	\$216.681 million (2022 est.)
	\$169.938 million (2021 est.)
	\$207.224 million (2020 est.)
Imports - partners	Italy 32%, China 25%, USA 11%, Turkey 10%, Japan 6% (2023)
Imports - commodities	ships, refined petroleum, additive manufacturing machines, cars, plastic products (2023)

Population Pyramid

