



Australia-Oceania :: Palau

Introduction :: Palau

Background:

After three decades as part of the UN Trust Territory of the Pacific under US administration, this westernmost cluster of the Caroline Islands opted for independence in 1978 rather than join the Federated States of Micronesia. A Compact of Free Association with the US was approved in 1986 but not ratified until 1993. It entered into force the following year when the islands gained independence.

Geography :: Palau

Location:

Oceania, group of islands in the North Pacific Ocean, southeast of the Philippines

Geographic coordinates:

7 30 N, 134 30 E

Map references:

Oceania

Area:

total: 459 sq km

country comparison to the world: 198

land: 459 sq km

water: 0 sq km

Area - comparative:

slightly more than 2.5 times the size of Washington, DC

Land boundaries:

0 km

Coastline:

1,519 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 3 nm

exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm

Climate:

tropical; hot and humid; wet season May to November

Terrain:

varying geologically from the high, mountainous main island of Babelthiap to low, coral islands usually fringed by large barrier reefs

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Pacific Ocean 0 m

highest point: Mount Ngerchelchuu 242 m

Natural resources:

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

Land use:

arable land: 2.17%

permanent crops: 4.35%

other: 93.48% (2011)

Irrigated land:

NA

Natural hazards:

typhoons (June to December)

Environment - current issues:

inadequate facilities for disposal of solid waste; threats to the marine ecosystem from sand and coral dredging, illegal fishing practices, and overfishing

Environment - international agreements:

party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands, Whaling

signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements

Geography - note:

westernmost archipelago in the Caroline chain, consists of six island groups totaling more than 300 islands; includes World War II battleground of Beliliou (Peleliu) and world-famous rock islands

People and Society :: Palau**Nationality:**

noun: Palauan(s)

adjective: Palauan

Ethnic groups:

Palauan (Micronesian with Malayan and Melanesian admixtures) 72.5%, Carolinian 1%, other Micronesian 2.4%, Filipino 16.3%, Chinese 1.6%, Vietnamese 1.6%, other Asian 3.4%, white 0.9%, other 0.3% (2005 est.)

Languages:

Palauan (official on most islands) 66.6%, Carolinian 0.7%, other Micronesian 0.7%, English (official) 15.5%, Filipino 10.8%, Chinese 1.8%, other Asian 2.6%, other 1.3%

note: Sonsoral (Sonsoralese and English are official), Tobi (Tobi and English are official), and Angaur (Angaur, Japanese, and English are official) (2005 est.)

Religions:

Roman Catholic 49.4%, Protestant 30.9% (includes Protestant (general) 23.1%, Seventh Day Adventist 5.3%, and other Protestant 2.5%), Modekngai 8.7% (indigenous to Palau), Jehovah's Witnesses 1.1%, other 8.8%, none or unspecified 1.1% (2005 est.)

Population:

21,186 (July 2014 est.)

country comparison to the world: 220

Age structure:

0-14 years: 20.5% (male 2,239/female 2,101)

15-24 years: 17.4% (male 1,835/female 1,855)

25-54 years: 46.4% (male 5,985/female 3,842)

55-64 years: 7.1% (male 642/female 1,188)

65 years and over: 6.8% (male 410/female 1,089) (2014 est.)

Median age:

total: 33 years

male: 32.5 years

female: 34.2 years (2014 est.)

Population growth rate:

0.37% (2014 est.)

country comparison to the world: 163

Birth rate:

10.95 births/1,000 population (2014 est.)

country comparison to the world: 177

Death rate:

7.93 deaths/1,000 population (2014 est.)

country comparison to the world: 103

Net migration rate:

0.66 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2014 est.)

country comparison to the world: 66

Urbanization:

urban population: 83% of total population (2010)

rate of urbanization: 1.4% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female

0-14 years: 1.07 male(s)/female

15-24 years: 0.99 male(s)/female

25-54 years: 1.56 male(s)/female

55-64 years: 1.1 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.4 male(s)/female

total population: 1.12 male(s)/female (2014 est.)

Infant mortality rate:

total: 11.46 deaths/1,000 live births
country comparison to the world: 130
male: 13.01 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 9.81 deaths/1,000 live births (2014 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 72.6 years
country comparison to the world: 132
male: 69.43 years
female: 75.96 years (2014 est.)

Total fertility rate:

1.71 children born/woman (2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: 170

Contraceptive prevalence rate:

32.8%
note: percent of women aged 15-44 (2003)

Health expenditures:

10.6% of GDP (2011)
country comparison to the world: 18

Physicians density:

1.38 physicians/1,000 population (2010)

Hospital bed density:

4.8 beds/1,000 population (2010)

Drinking water source:

improved:

urban: 97% of population
rural: 86% of population
total: 95.3% of population

unimproved:

urban: 3% of population
rural: 14% of population
total: 4.7% of population (2011 est.)

Sanitation facility access:

improved:

urban: 100% of population
rural: 100% of population
total: 100% of population

unimproved:

urban: 0% of population
rural: 0% of population
total: 0% of population (2011 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

NA

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:

NA

HIV/AIDS - deaths:

NA

Obesity - adult prevalence rate:

48.9% (2008)
country comparison to the world: 7

Education expenditures:

7.3% of GDP (2002)
country comparison to the world: 17

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 92%
male: 93%
female: 90% (1980 est.)

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):

total: 14 years
male: 13 years
female: 15 years (2000)

Government:: Palau

Country name:

conventional long form: Republic of Palau

conventional short form: Palau

local long form: Beluu er a Belau

local short form: Belau

former: Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Palau District

Government type:

constitutional government in free association with the US; the Compact of Free Association entered into force on 1 October 1994

Capital:

name: Melekeok

geographic coordinates: 7 29 N, 134 38 E

time difference: UTC+9 (14 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

Administrative divisions:

16 states; Aimeliik, Airai, Angaur, Hatohebei, Kayangel, Koror, Melekeok, Ngaraard, Ngarchelong, Ngardmau, Ngatpang, Ngchesar, Ngeremlengui, Ngiwal, Peleliu, Sonsorol

Independence:

1 October 1994 (from the US-administered UN trusteeship)

National holiday:

Constitution Day, 9 July (1979)

Constitution:

ratified 9 July 1980, effective 1 January 1981; amended 1992, 2004 (2011)

Legal system:

mixed legal system of civil, common, and customary law

International law organization participation:

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICCt

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:

chief of state: President Tommy REMENGESAU (since 17 January 2013); Vice President Antonio BELLS (since 17 January 2013); note - the president is both the chief of state and head of government

head of government: President Tommy REMENGESAU (since 17 January 2013); Vice President Antonio BELLS (since 17 January 2013)

cabinet: NA

(For more information visit the [World Leaders website](#).)

elections: president and vice president elected on separate tickets by popular vote for four-year terms (eligible for a second term); election last held on 6 November 2012 (next to be held in November 2016)

election results: percent of vote - Tommy REMENGESAU 58%, Johnson TORIBIONG 42%

Legislative branch:

bicameral National Congress or Olbiil Era Kelulau (OEK) consists of the Senate (9 seats; members elected by popular vote on a population basis to serve four-year terms) and the House of Delegates (16 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms)

elections: Senate - last held on 6 November 2012 (next to be held in November 2016); House of Delegates - last held on 6 November 2012 (next to be held in November 2016)

election results: Senate - percent of vote - NA; seats - independents 9; House of Delegates - percent of vote - NA; seats - independents 16

Judicial branch:

highest court(s): Supreme Court (consists of the chief justice and 3 associate justices organized into appellate trial divisions; also within the Supreme Court organization are the Common Pleas and Land Courts)

judge selection and term of office: justices nominated by a 7-member independent body consisting of judges, presidential appointees, and lawyers, and appointed by the president; judges appointed until mandatory retirement at age 65

subordinate courts: National Court and other 'inferior' courts

Political parties and leaders:

none

Political pressure groups and leaders:

NA

International organization participation:

ACP, ADB, AOSIS, FAO, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IFC, IFRCs, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, IOC, IPU, MIGA, OPCW, PIF, Sparteca, SPC, UN, UNAMID, UNCTAD, UNESCO, WHO

Diplomatic representation in the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Hersey KYOTA (since 12 November 1997)

chancery: 1701 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20006

telephone: [1] (202) 452-6814

FAX: [1] (202) 452-6281

consulate(s): Tamuning (Guam)

Diplomatic representation from the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Helen P. REED-ROWE (since 27 September 2013)

embassy: Koror (no street address)

mailing address: P. O. Box 6028, Koror, Republic of Palau 96940

telephone: [680] 587-2920

FAX: [680] 587-2911

Flag description:

light blue with a large yellow disk shifted slightly to the hoist side; the blue color represents the ocean, the disk represents the moon; Palauans consider the full moon to be the optimum time for human activity; it is also considered a symbol of peace, love, and tranquility

National anthem:

name: "Belau rekid" (Our Palau)

lyrics/music: multiple/Ymesei O. EZEKIEL

note: adopted 1980

Economy :: Palau

Economy - overview:

The economy consists of tourism and other services such as trade, subsistence agriculture, and fishing. Government is a major employer of the work force relying on financial assistance from the US under the Compact of Free Association (Compact) with the US. The Compact took effect, after the end of the UN trusteeship on 1 October 1994. The US provided Palau with roughly \$700 million in aid for the first 15 years following commencement of the Compact in 1994 in return for unrestricted access to its land and waterways for strategic purposes. Business and leisure tourist arrivals numbered over 109,000 in 2011, for a 27% increase over 2010. The population enjoys a per capita income roughly double that of the Philippines and much of Micronesia. Long-run prospects for tourism have been bolstered by the expansion of air travel in the Pacific, the rising prosperity of industrial East Asia, and the willingness of foreigners to finance infrastructure development. Proximity to Guam, the region's major destination for tourists from East Asia, and a regionally competitive tourist infrastructure enhance Palau's advantage as a destination.

GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$245.5 million (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 218

\$237.2 million (2012 est.)

\$223.2 million (2011 est.)

note: GDP estimate includes US subsidy

GDP (official exchange rate):

\$221 million (2011 est.)

GDP - real growth rate:

3.5% (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 97

6.3% (2012 est.)

6.9% (2011 est.)

GDP - per capita (PPP):

\$10,500 (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 116

\$7,600 (2005 est.)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin:

agriculture: 3.2%

industry: 20%

services: 76.8% (2012 est.)

Agriculture - products:

coconuts, copra, cassava (tapioca), sweet potatoes; fish

Industries:

tourism, craft items (from shell, wood, pearls), construction, garment making

Industrial production growth rate:

NA%

Labor force:

9,777 (2005)

country comparison to the world: 217

Labor force - by occupation:

agriculture: 20%

industry: NA%

services: NA% (1990)

Unemployment rate:

4.2% (2005 est.)

country comparison to the world: 36

Population below poverty line:

NA%

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: NA%

highest 10%: NA%

Budget:

revenues: \$89 million

expenditures: \$94.3 million (2010 est.)

Taxes and other revenues:

40.3% of GDP (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 40

Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):

-2.4% of GDP (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 99

Fiscal year:

1 October - 30 September

Inflation rate (consumer prices):

2.7% (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 100

1.6% (2010 est.)

Market value of publicly traded shares:

\$NA

Current account balance:

-\$20.8 million (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 63

\$15.09 million (FY03/04)

Exports:

\$12.3 million (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 210

\$5.882 million (2004 est.)

Exports - commodities:

shellfish, tuna, copra, garments

Imports:

\$113.4 million (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 211

\$107.3 million (2004 est.)

Imports - commodities:

machinery and equipment, fuels, metals; foodstuffs

Debt - external:

\$0 (FY99/00)

country comparison to the world: 204

Exchange rates:

the US dollar is used

Communications:: Palau**Telephones - main lines in use:**

7,300 (2012)

country comparison to the world: 205

Telephones - mobile cellular:

17,150 (2012)

country comparison to the world: 210

Telephone system:

domestic: fixed-line and mobile-cellular services available with a combined subscribership of roughly 100 per 100 persons

international: country code - 680; satellite earth station - 1 Intelsat (Pacific Ocean) (2009)

Broadcast media:

no TV stations; a cable TV network covers the major islands and provides access to rebroadcasts, on a delayed basis, of a number of US stations as well as access to a number of real-time satellite TV channels; about a half dozen radio stations with 1 government-owned (2009)

Internet country code:

.pw

Internet hosts:

4 (2012)

country comparison to the world: 231

Transportation :: Palau

Airports:

3 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 194

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 1

1,524 to 2,437 m: 1 (2013)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 2

1,524 to 2,437 m: 2 (2013)

Ports and terminals:

major seaport(s): Koror

Military :: Palau

Military branches:

no regular military forces; Palau National Police (2009)

Manpower available for military service:

males age 16-49: 6,987 (2010 est.)

Manpower fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 5,272

females age 16-49: 3,969 (2010 est.)

Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:

male: 216

female: 222 (2010 est.)

Military - note:

defense is the responsibility of the US; under a Compact of Free Association between Palau and the US, the US military is granted access to the islands for 50 years, but it has not stationed any military forces there (2008)

Transnational Issues :: Palau

Disputes - international:

maritime delineation negotiations continue with Philippines, Indonesia