

The World Factbook



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 Babelthup to low, coral islands usually fringed by large barrier reefs

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Pacific Ocean 0 m

highest point: Mount Ngerchelchuus 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) 69.9%, Filipino 15.3%, Chinese 4.9%, other Asian 2.4%, white 1.9%, Carolinian 1.4%, other Micronesian 1.1%, other or unspecified 3.2% (2000 census)

Languages:

Palauan (official on most islands) 64.7%, Filipino 13.5%, English (official) 9.4%, Chinese 5.7%, Carolinian 1.5%, Japanese 1.5%, other Asian 2.3%, other languages 1.5% (2000 census)
note: Sonsoral (Sonsoralese and English are official), Tobi (Tobi and English are official), and Angaur (Angaur, Japanese, and English are official)

Religions:

Roman Catholic 41.6%, Protestant 23.3%, Modekngei 8.8% (indigenous to Palau), Seventh-Day Adventist 5.3%, Jehovah's Witnesses 0.9%, Mormon 0.6%, other 3.1%, unspecified or none 16.4% (2000 census)

Population:

21,108 (July 2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 220

Age structure:

0-14 years: 20.7% (male 2,250/female 2,110)
15-24 years: 17.6% (male 1,849/female 1,875)
25-54 years: 46.6% (male 5,981/female 3,854)
55-64 years: 8.3% (male 615/female 1,129)
65 years and over: 6.8% (male 407/female 1,038) (2013 est.)

Median age:

total: 32.9 years
male: 32.5 years
female: 33.9 years (2013 est.)

Population growth rate:

0.37% (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 159

Birth rate:

10.9 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 176

Death rate:

7.86 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 109

Net migration rate:

0.66 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 63

Urbanization:

urban population: 83% of total population (2010)
rate of urbanization: 1.4% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.06 male(s)/female
0-14 years: 1.07 male(s)/female
15-24 years: 0.98 male(s)/female
25-54 years: 1.55 male(s)/female
55-64 years: 0.55 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.4 male(s)/female
total population: 1.12 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

Infant mortality rate:

total: 11.77 deaths/1,000 live births
country comparison to the world: 132
male: 13.35 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 10.1 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 72.33 years
country comparison to the world: 133
male: 69.17 years
female: 75.68 years (2013 est.)

Total fertility rate:
1.72 children born/woman (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 168

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

Health expenditures:
10.3% of GDP (2010)
country comparison to the world: 28

Physicians density:
1.3 physicians/1,000 population (2006)

Hospital bed density:
4.8 beds/1,000 population (2010)

Drinking water source:
improved:
urban: 83% of population
rural: 96% of population
total: 85% of population
unimproved:
urban: 17% of population
rural: 4% of population
total: 15% of population (2010 est.)

Sanitation facility access:
improved:
urban: 100% of population
rural: 100% of population
total: 100% of population
unimproved:
urban: 100% of population
rural: 100% of population
total: 100% of population (2010 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:
10.3% of GDP (2002)
country comparison to the world: 5

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: 15 years
male: 14 years
female: 15 years (2001)

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, Hatohobei, 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:
1 January 1981
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
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
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)

 [PLAY ANTHEM](#)

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):
\$221 million (2011 est.)
country comparison to the world: 218
\$208.9 million (2010 est.)
note: GDP estimate includes US subsidy
GDP (official exchange rate):
\$221 million (2011 est.)
GDP - real growth rate:
5.8% (2011 est.)
country comparison to the world: 48
5.5% (2005 est.)
GDP - per capita (PPP):
\$10,500 (2011 est.)
country comparison to the world: 115
\$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: 35
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: 43
Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):
-2.4% of GDP (2010 est.)
country comparison to the world: 94
Fiscal year:

Inflation rate (consumer prices):

2.7% (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 75

1.6% (2010 est.)

Market value of publicly traded shares:

\$NA

Current account balance:

-\$20.8 million (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 60

\$15.09 million (FY03/04)

Exports:

\$12.3 million (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 209

\$5.882 million (2004 est.)

Exports - commodities:

shellfish, tuna, copra, garments

Imports:

\$113.4 million (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 212

\$107.3 million (2004 est.)

Imports - commodities:

machinery and equipment, fuels, metals; foodstuffs

Debt - external:

\$0 (FY99/00)

country comparison to the world: 203

Exchange rates:

the US dollar is used

Communications :: Palau

Telephones - main lines in use:

6,900 (2011)

country comparison to the world: 206

Telephones - mobile cellular:

15,400 (2011)

country comparison to the world: 209

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:

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 expenditures:

NA

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