

Palau

Geography

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

Area:

total area: 458 sq km

land area: 458 sq km

Land boundaries: 0 km

Coastline: 1,519 km

Maritime claims:

continental shelf: 200-m depth or to depth of exploitation

exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 3 nm

Climate: wet season May to November; hot and humid

Terrain: about 200 islands varying geologically from the high, mountainous main island of Babelthuap to low, coral islands usually fringed by large barrier reefs

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

Environment:

current issues: inadequate facilities for disposal of solid waste; threats to the marine ecosystem from sand and coral dredging and illegal fishing practices that involve the use of dynamite

natural hazards: typhoons (June to December)

international agreements: NA

Note: includes World War II battleground of Beliliou (Peleliu) and world-famous rock islands; archipelago of six island groups totaling over 200 islands in the Caroline chain

People

Population: 16,661 (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.76% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 22.11 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 6.61 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 2.12 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 25.07 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 71.01 years

male: 69.14 years

female: 73.02 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.85 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Palauan(s)

adjective: Palauan

Ethnic divisions: Palauans are a composite of Polynesian, Malayan, and Melanesian races

Religions: Christian (Catholics, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Assembly of God, the Liebenzell Mission, and Latter-Day Saints), Modekngai religion (one-third of the population observes this religion which is indigenous to Palau)

Languages: English (official in all of Palau's 16 states), Sonsorolese (official in the state of Sonsoral), Angaur and Japanese (in the state of Anguar), Tobi (in the state of Tobi), Palauan (in the other 13 states)

Literacy:

total population: 92%

male: 93%

female: 90%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Palau

conventional short form: Palau

former: Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

Capital: Koror

note: a new capital is being built about 20 km northeast in eastern Babelthuap

Independence: 1 October 1994 (from the US-administered UN Trusteeship)

National holiday: Constitution Day, 9 July (1979)

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: light blue with a large yellow disk (representing the moon) shifted slightly to the hoist side

Economy

Overview: The economy consists primarily of subsistence agriculture and fishing. The government is the major employer of the work force, relying heavily on financial assistance from the US.

Industries: tourism, craft items (shell, wood, pearl), some commercial fishing and agriculture

Agriculture: subsistence-level production of coconut, copra, cassava, sweet potatoes

Transportation

Railroads: 0 km

Highways:
total: 61 km

Ports: Koror

Airports:
total: 3

Defence Forces

Note: defense is the responsibility of the US pursuant to Compact of Free Association which entered into force 1 October 1994