

OCEANIA · DIVING · ISLANDS · WILDLIFE · BEACHES · HISTORY

 Palau

Palau is a diver's dream made real: the mushroom-shaped limestone Rock Islands, reef walls patrolled by grey reef sharks, and Jellyfish Lake, where stingless golden jellyfish pulse through a marine lake. It was the first country to stamp an environmental pledge into visitors' passports, and the whole archipelago feels run for the reef's benefit.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Palau and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 10 December 2025.

 CAPITAL Ngerulmud	 CURRENCY US dollar (USD) £1 ≈ US\$1.34	 LANGUAGE Palauan, English	 BEST TIME Jan–Apr
 DAILY BUDGET £100–£450 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type A, B 120V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 23h via Taipei, Manila or Guam ~£1,100–£1,900 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+9 standard time

Palau's 340 or so islands lie in the western Pacific, some 800km east of the Philippines, and almost every visitor is based in Koror, the former capital and only real town. Days are spent on boats heading south into the Southern Lagoon, a UNESCO-listed maze of forested limestone islets, for diving, snorkelling and kayaking, with stops at Jellyfish Lake and the white-mud Milky Way. Babeldaob, the big island across the bridge, has the airport, the capitol building at Ngerulmud, waterfalls and ancient stone monoliths. Further south, Peleliu and Angaur still hold the wreckage of brutal 1944 battles.

Palau is expensive: rooms, meals and boat trips are priced in US dollars at island rates, and dive packages, permits and boat days add up quickly. It suits divers above all, and also snorkellers, kayakers and Second World War historians; non-divers on a tight budget may struggle to fill a week. Visitors are often surprised by the strength of the conservation rules, from the Palau Pledge stamped into passports to a ban on reef-toxic sunscreen and large no-fishing zones, and by the Japanese influence left from three decades of colonial rule before 1944, visible in food, vocabulary and family names.

Top 5 highlights

1 NATURE Rock Islands Southern Lagoon Hundreds of jungle-capped limestone islets, undercut into mushroom shapes by the sea, scatter a turquoise lagoon south of Koror. Kayak into hidden coves, snorkel coral gardens and picnic on white-sand beaches; a Rock Islands permit is required.	2 ADVENTURE Blue Corner One of the world's most celebrated dive sites: a reef plateau where divers hook into the current to watch grey reef sharks, eagle rays, barracuda and Napoleon wrasse cruise past. Strong currents make it best for experienced divers.
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WILDLIFE

Jellyfish Lake

On Eil Malk island, a marine lake cut off from the sea holds golden jellyfish with a sting too weak to feel. Numbers boom and crash with El Niño cycles, so ask operators about current conditions; snorkelling only, no scuba.

4

HISTORY

Peleliu

Scene of one of the Pacific War's bloodiest battles in 1944, this quiet island is scattered with rusting tanks, Japanese bunkers, caves and memorials. Reach it by boat from Koror and hire a local guide for Bloody Nose Ridge.

5

NATURE

Ngardmau Waterfall, Babeldaob

Palau's tallest waterfall is reached by a jungle trail through the hills of Ngardmau on Babeldaob, the country's largest island. Combine it with the Badrulchau stone monoliths in Ngarchelong and the capitol at Ngerulmud.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Koror

≈ 11,000 people

Palau's commercial hub and former capital holds most hotels, restaurants and dive shops. The Belau National Museum and the Etpison Museum fill a rainy afternoon.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Airai

≈ 2,500 people

The state across the bridge on Babeldaob is home to the international airport and Airai Bai, a traditional men's meeting house regarded as one of the oldest surviving in Palau.

Palau has only two places of any size, Koror and neighbouring Airai (figures are 2020 state populations). Every other settlement, including the purpose-built capital at Ngerulmud, is a village of a few hundred people at most.

When to go to Palau

Best time: **Jan–Apr**.

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

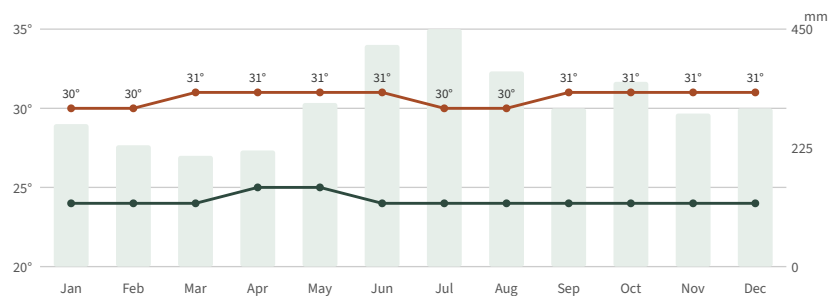
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Koror

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jul	Constitution Day On 9 July Palau marks the referendum that ratified its constitution, in force since 1981 and famous for its anti-nuclear clauses, with ceremonies, sports and food stalls in Koror.
Oct	Independence Day and Olehotel Belau Fair Independence on 1 October brings ceremonies, sports and boat races in Koror, often alongside the Olehotel Belau Fair, where Palau's sixteen states show off chants, dances, crafts and food.

How much does Palau cost?

SHOESTRING £100 per person / day ≈ US\$134 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £220 per person / day ≈ US\$294 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £450 per person / day ≈ US\$601 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

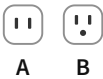
Fruit bat soup Palau's most notorious dish: a whole fruit bat simmered in coconut milk with ginger and spices. Now a special-occasion delicacy, found on only a few menus.	Taro (kukau) The staple of Palauan cooking, traditionally grown by women in wetland taro patches, served boiled, pounded with coconut or as sweet taro dishes at feasts.	Mangrove crab Large mud crabs from Palau's mangroves, steamed or cooked in coconut milk; a local favourite best ordered at Koror's seafood restaurants.
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Getting around

There is no public transport. Koror is compact enough for taxis, which are inexpensive, and hotels arrange airport transfers. To explore Babeldaob, hire a car: the paved Compact Road circles the island and traffic drives on the right, although many cars are right-hand-drive Japanese imports. The Rock Islands, Peleliu and Angaur are reached by dive or tour boat, or by the occasional state ferry.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



120V — bring a UK-to-A/B adapter

DIALLING CODE

+680

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

TIPPING

US-style tipping applies: around 10–15% in restaurants, and similar for dive guides and boat crews, usually in cash at the end of the trip.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **911** (ambulance, fire, police)

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+9 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

ETIQUETTE

Greet people with 'alii' and say 'sulang' for thank you. Ask permission before entering village land or a bai, and never take shells, coral or anything else from reefs and beaches.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Roman Tmetuchl International Airport (ROR), Airai (for Koror)

Visas & entry for Palau

Shown for a British passport.

Visa on arrival

You can visit Palau for up to 30 days without a pre-arranged visa.

Border officials will issue a 30-day tourist visa on arrival. You may need to show proof of onward or return travel.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue Hepatitis B Bat Lyssavirus Tuberculosis Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Palau

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 23 Oct 2026	United Nations Day (observed)
Sat 24 Oct 2026	United Nations Day
Thu 26 Nov 2026	Thanksgiving Day
Fri 27 Nov 2026	Family Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Mon 15 Mar 2027	Youth Day

Wed 5 May 2027	Senior Citizens Day
Tue 1 Jun 2027	President's Day
Fri 9 Jul 2027	Constitution Day
Mon 6 Sep 2027	Labour Day
Fri 1 Oct 2027	Independence Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Know before you go

On arrival you sign the Palau Pledge, stamped into your passport, promising to protect the islands. Reef-toxic sunscreens are banned, so pack a reef-safe brand before you fly.

Rock Islands trips need a Koror State permit, with a separate, pricier one for Jellyfish Lake; dive and tour operators usually arrange both, but check what your quoted price includes.

Flights from the UK connect through hubs such as Taipei or Guam and services are limited, so allow generous connection times and buy insurance that covers diving and missed connections.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.