

# Tuvalu

**Official name:** Tuvalu

**Capital:** Funafuti

**Land:** 26 sq. km

**Population:** 10,472 (2010)

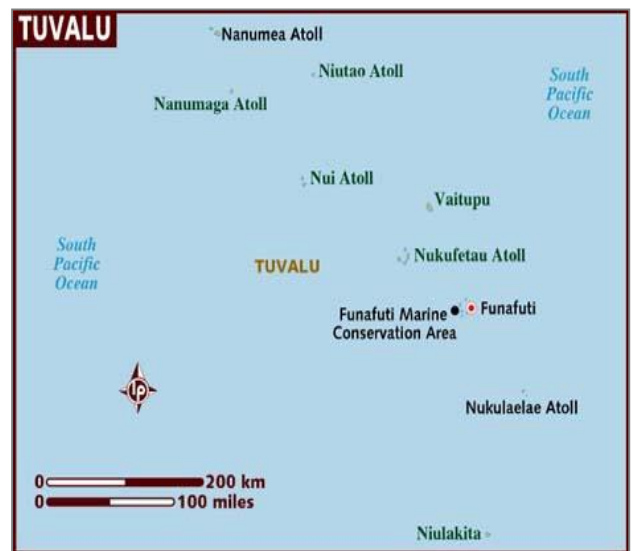
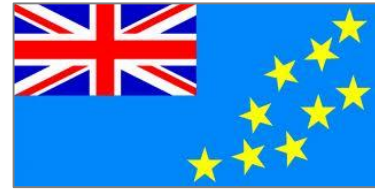
**Currency:** Australian Dollar

**EEZ:** 757,000 sq. km

**Language:** English and Tuvaluan

**Economy:** Agriculture, fisheries and philatelic sales

**Religion:** Church of Tuvalu



(Source: [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com))

## **Brief history:**

According to the evidence of linguists, who can work out how old a language is, and hence for how long people had been speaking it, the language of Tuvalu - and hence the settlement of the country - goes back about 2,000 years. The traditional stories and genealogies, however, mostly go back only about 300 years. It seems, therefore, that the story we have today came to us not from the earlier ancestors but from later arrivals in Tuvalu.

It is generally believed that the earlier ancestors came mostly from Samoa, possibly by way of Tokelau, while others came from Tonga and Uvea (Wallis Island). These settlers were all Polynesians with the exception of Nui where many people are descendants of Micronesians from Kiribati.

In 1986, off the northern shore of Nanumaga, scuba divers investigated a local legend of a "large house under the sea". They found an underwater cave (*Caves of Nanumaga*) more than 40 metres down the wall of the coral cliff. Inside the cave there was evidence of ancient human occupation more than 8,000 years ago, which is sharply at odds with the general view that the Pacific was settled just 4,000 years ago. Climatic evidence of a massive rise in the sea level that began 18,000 years ago and stopped 4,000 years ago may have drowned most of the evidence of much earlier human migration to Tuvalu and other Pacific islands.

There are three distinct linguistic areas in Tuvalu. The first area contains the islands of Nanumea, Niutao and Nanumaga. The second is the island of Nui where the inhabitants speak a language that is fundamentally derived from I-Kiribati. The third linguistic group comprises the islands of Vaitupu, Nukufetau, Funafuti and Nukulaelae. Today, Tuvaluan and English are both spoken throughout the islands.

***Political overview:***

Tuvalu is a constitutional monarchy with two spheres of government, central and local. The legal basis for Tuvalu government is the Falekaupule Act 1997 and there is only one level, which is the Kaupule (island council). The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is responsible for local government and is under the Department of Rural Development which oversees local government.

Tuvalu is a constitutional monarchy and the head of state is HM Queen Elizabeth II, who is represented in Tuvalu by the Governor General. A constitutional referendum was held on 30 April 2008, with a turnout of approximately 22% of the electorate which returned a result almost 2:1 in favour of remaining a constitutional monarchy rather than becoming a republic. Parliament is vested with law-making powers and is composed of 15 members, two from each of the eight electoral constituencies, with the exception of Nukulaelae, which returns just one. Both the Speaker who oversees the administration and management of parliamentary affairs and the Prime Minister, who heads the executive, are elected by members of Parliament from amongst themselves. There are eight cabinet ministers. All of whom are appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. The cabinet is collectively responsible to Parliament for the performance of executive functions of the state. There are no political parties, although the members who do not side with the executive are often called the opposition.

***Economic overview:***

Tuvalu's economy is one of the three most vulnerable, in the Pacific, to the global economic crisis (ADB ranking) – especially with its heavy reliance on imported food and fuel. It is critical that the government adopt a prudent fiscal stance and improve the quality of its decision making to achieve macro-economic and fiscal stability over the medium term. Tuvalu introduced a broad-based consumption tax in July 2009 to offset the reductions in import duties required under the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement.

Most Tuvaluans are involved in traditional subsistence agriculture and fisheries, which are highly susceptible to adverse weather conditions, notably climate change and rising sea levels. Around two thirds of the formal workforce is employed by the Government, leaving little room for private sector activity. Development of the economy is heavily reliant on overseas aid, traditionally from Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, and now, increasingly from Japan, the European Union and Taiwan.

Fishing license fees provide another important source of foreign exchange. While fish license revenue varies significantly from year to year, the payouts over recent years have been significant (Tuvalu budgeted for a

payout of A\$6.3m million in 2012, and received A\$9 million). Tuvalu has fishing license agreements with Taiwan, Japan, New Zealand, and is also party to the multilateral fishing agreement with the United States. Tuvalu is also one of the PNA nations (Parties to the Nauru Agreement), a regional cooperation agreement.

Tuvalu has also sold shares in an international telecommunications venture which leases Tuvalu lines and markets them internationally.

***Education overview:***

Upon gaining independence in 1978, Tuvalu adopted the British 'Education for Life' program in a bid to improve the general level of learning in Tuvaluan schools. This programme continues to the present. Tuvaluan residents who desire to undertake teacher training are sent to international institutes of higher education.

All children receive free primary education from the age of seven. The education system is loosely based on the 3-8-4 model. Attendance at both primary and secondary school is compulsory between the ages of seven and fifteen. The Tuvalu education system is divided into three stages: Early Childhood Education (ECE) for ages 3–5, Primary School for ages 6–13 and Secondary School for ages 14–17.

Secondary education is provided at Motufoua, a former church school on Vaitupu now jointly administered by the government. Tuvalu Marine School was opened in 1979 with Australian aid. In the same year, the University of the South Pacific established an extension center at Funafuti.

***Accrediting agency:***

There is no national accrediting agency in Tuvalu.

***Immigration:***

New Zealand immigration policy allows for a limited number of people from Pacific Access Countries (PAC quota countries: Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati and Tuvalu) to gain residency in New Zealand. Tuvalu has 75 places allocated annually for Tuvaluan citizens within the PAC Quota. It must be noted here that there is no link between the PAC quota and climate change. Instead, the quota reflects New Zealand's long term commitment and links to the region and is designed to assist people from these countries gain residency visas to live and work in New Zealand.

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