

UNTOUCHED PACIFIC ISLANDS

Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Tuvalu, Micronesia & Nauru

19 days

Created on: 5 Dec, 2023

Day 1 Arrival in Honolulu, Hawaii

Welcome to Hawaii!*

When it comes to tourism, there are always those countries that get most of the fame. There are those destinations that top the list of the 'most visited countries' in the world year after year. Now it is time for us to share with you the less visited -- but no less interesting -- nations of the world. This is a chance to explore some remote, far flung areas where few travellers venture. On this tour we will visit some countries where even the arrival of tourists is a newsworthy mention. Each year the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) collects the number of international tourism arrivals that each country receives, and on this tour we will visit some of the least visited countries in the world based on these statistics. With the globalization of the modern day world, only a small handful of countries have managed to truly stay 'off the radar'. This tour offers you the chance to visit some of these unique destinations that are not promoted in glossy guidebooks... places where you will not find crowds of tourists and luxury lodges.

This is an ambitious itinerary and a true adventure! This is a tour for real travellers -- those who have passion for exploration and discovery -- those who seek an adventure that is off the 'tourist trail' to places where few have been before. Do not come looking for 5-star resorts and high-speed wifi. Just be sure to come with a true sense of adventure and a great travel spirit!

Note: Some itinerary modifications may occur closer to the departure date due to flight routing and schedule changes, which can, of course, impact the final itinerary. The order of islands visited may change, and the number of nights on each island may have to be adjusted. We may lose one night on one island and gain a night on another.

* This itinerary does not include any sightseeing or touring in Hawaii. If this is something that you are interested in then you may want to consider arranging some extra nights prior to the tour. Due to the early start on Day 2 we also strongly recommend booking an extra night if your arrival on Day 1 is late in the evening.

Overnight in Honolulu (Waikiki).

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Hawaii - Pohnpei, Fed. States of Micronesia **

Early this morning we fly from Honolulu to The Federated States of Micronesia (not to be confused with 'Micronesia' - the sub-region of Oceania)*. Our flight takes us across the International Date Line, and we therefore arrive on the island of Pohnpei the following day. There are only slightly more than 100,000 inhabitants here, and less than 35,000 tourists visit the islands each year. This is one of the most remote, peaceful and beautiful places on earth... encompassing nearly a million square miles (2,600,000 km²) of the Pacific Ocean north of the equator.

This independent sovereign island nation consists of four states (Yap, Chuuk, Kosrae and Pohnpei - our destination) spread across the western Pacific Ocean. In total the states comprise around 607 islands that cover a longitudinal distance of almost 2,700 km (1,678 mi). Economic activity here consists primarily of subsistence farming and fishing. The potential for a tourism industry exists, but the remoteness of the location and a lack of adequate facilities hinder development.

Micronesian societies are made up of clan groupings, with descent traced through the mother. The head on each island can trace its lineage back to the island's original settlers. The basic subsistence economy here is based on cultivation of tree crops (breadfruit, banana, coconut and citrus) and root crops (taro and yam) supplemented by fishing. Small scale agriculture and various traditional fishing practices continue today. Sharing and communal work are fundamental to the subsistence economic system and the culture of the island societies. Each state has its own culture and traditions, but there are also common cultural and economic bonds that are centuries old.

Volcanic activity millions of years ago brought forth these islands and atolls. Some are tips of mountain peaks thrust above the surface and now surrounded by fringing reefs. Others are atolls - islands that have sunk beneath the surface, leaving a ring of coral barrier reef and tiny island islets encircling a coral and sand lagoon. Others are mixtures of atolls and high-ringed islands within a lagoon.

This afternoon we will have a look around the coastal town of Kolonia, the capital of Pohnpei State. Kolonia's history is deeply marked by

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multiple foreign occupiers. Spain first built the town in 1887 as an administrative and military capital with a fort to protect the colonial government and garrison. In 1899, as a consequence of the Spanish–American War, Germany purchased Pohnpei from Spain along with the rest of the Caroline Islands. Roads and wharf's were built and buildings erected (a church bell tower and cemetery remain), but the town stayed relatively small as few German or other foreign settlers arrived to live on the island. Japan occupied Pohnpei in the first weeks of World War I as well as other German islands north of the equator. Unlike previous occupiers, the Japanese brought thousands of settlers to Micronesia, who outnumbered the indigenous population on some islands.

* Please pack light as some flights within this tour have a strict 18kg per person weight limit for checked luggage!

** This tour is unique for us in many ways, one such way causes our automated system headaches in terms of dates and days-of-the-week. Upon booking you will receive a version of this itinerary that shows the dates of each day of your trip in the day heading. On this tour, those dates/days may not be accurate as we hop back and forth over the International Date Line. Your Tour Leader will clarify which day/date it is as the tour progresses (your final hotel list WILL be accurate). Apologies for any confusion!

Overnight in Pohnpei.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Pohnpei, Fed. States of Micronesia - Majuro, Marshall Islands

Roughly 22.5 km (14 miles) in diameter, Pohnpei Island is the peak of a 5 million-year-old extinct shield volcano. This is a place both rugged and brilliant green, with a dense rainforested interior and mountains as high as 2,600 feet. With over 300 inches of rain a year in the interior, Pohnpei ranks as one of the rainiest locations on Earth. All of that water results in scores of scenic waterfalls and some of the largest areas of intact upland rainforest in the Pacific. There are next to no beaches on Pohnpei as the coast is surrounded by mangrove swamps. Several smaller islets and atolls, many of them inhabited, lie nearby and are included in the State of Pohnpei.

Early this morning we will head to Nan Madol, the ruins of an ancient city and the first UNESCO World Heritage Site in Micronesia. In 2016 this ceremonial centre was inscribed both on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Nan Madol is a series of more than 100 islets off the south-east coast of Pohnpei that were constructed with walls of basalt and coral boulders. These islets harbour the remains of stone palaces, temples, tombs and residential domains built between 1200 and 1500 CE. These ruins represent the ceremonial centre of the Saudeleur dynasty, a vibrant period in Pacific Island culture. The huge scale of the edifices, their technical sophistication and the concentration of megalithic structures bear testimony to complex social and religious practices of the island societies of the period.

Evidence of the earliest human activity here dates back to the 1st or 2nd century BC, and the construction of artificial islets probably started around the 8th or 9th century AD. However, construction of the megalithic structures began around the 12th century. The population of Nan Madol was probably more than 1000 at a time when whole population of Pohnpei barely reached 25,000. The origins and construction of Nan Madol is, like many other ancient ruins in the world, still shrouded in mystery. Some of the basalt rocks making up the base of the structures weigh upwards of 80-90 tons, yet they have been there for over 1000 years, piled neatly on top of each other. According to UNESCO, Nan Madol represents a "globally significant masterpiece of creative genius" because it exhibits the most perfectly preserved habitation, leadership and ceremonial plan of an architectural ensemble of the Pacific region.

We later return to Kolonia for our afternoon flight from Pohnpei to the Marshall Islands. Fewer than 6,000 tourists make their way to the Marshall Islands each year, and in 2019 this island nation was still rated one of the top 5 'least visited' countries in the world! Today this is also considered to be one of the most 'endangered' countries in the world due to climate change and flooding. The Marshall Islands may actually disappear in our lifetime.

Overnight in Majuro.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Majuro, Marshall Islands - Nauru

The island of Majuro appears as a delicate necklace of land draped around a turquoise lagoon -- some of it barely wider than the airport runway! This is a nation of aquamarine atolls where we find a landscape sprinkled with coconuts, pandanus and breadfruit trees. Few other crops grow in the atoll's salty sands, so the Marshallese long ago turned to the sea for their resources, and became expert fishers and navigators.

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The Republic of the Marshall Islands is one of the world's youngest nations, independent only since 1986. With a total land area of only 70 square miles (181 km²) the atolls, islands and islets are spread across a sea area of over 750,000 square miles in the central Pacific near the equator. Just west of the International Date Line, these islands are geographically part of the larger island group of Micronesia.

For hundreds of years agricultural production has been concentrated on small farms, and small-scale industry is extremely limited. The concept of family and community are inextricably intertwined in Marshallese society. With few natural resources, the islands' wealth is based on a service economy, as well as some fishing and agriculture. Today aid from the United States represents a large percentage of the islands' gross domestic product.

Today we will visit the Alele Museum where we learn about Marshallese traditions and history. This small museum features authentic tools, artifacts, and some 19th century photographs. The Peace Park Memorial constructed by the Japanese government commemorates the soldiers who fought and died in the Pacific during WWII. At the WAM (Waan Aelon in Majol) canoe house we will learn about Marshallese canoe construction. The WAM program is a vocational training program using traditional Marshallese skills for men and women, such as canoe building, traditional and contemporary boat building, sail-races and navigation, woodworking and weaving.

Copra production (the dried meat of coconuts) remains an important source of income for locals, and at the Tobolar Copra Processing Plant we can see copra being converted into coconut oil, soaps, body oil and 'press cake' (the solid remains after pressing out the liquid).

This afternoon we fly to Nauru, the least visited country in the world! Plunked in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, this tiny island nation covers less than 21 square kilometers (8 square miles) and is home to less than 10,000 inhabitants. Only one airline serves Nauru, and flights are few and far between. Nauru sees just over 200 tourists per year, making this is the perfect destination for the true adventurous traveller. This is the smallest country in the world without a true 'capital', although Yaren - the largest village - acts like one.

This destination is by no means easy to visit, and access is subject to the whims of transport and weather. Hospitality services such as hotels and restaurants are minimal. Most visitors are diplomats, politicians, development workers and contractors. But, in spite of the present economic situation, the island still offers glimpses of its former past. For WWII buffs there are remnants of the Japanese occupation scattered around the island, and the enormous skeletal remains of mining infrastructure are truly remarkable.

Overnight in Nauru.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Nauru Touring

This morning we will commence with our touring of the island. Please note that the 'Nauru experience' is pretty much the exact opposite of all the typical South Pacific Island cliches. If you are looking for pretty much anything that is tourist-oriented then you are out of luck. The amount of time spent on Nauru is 100% dictated by airline schedules.

Nauru was annexed and claimed as a colony by the German Empire in the late 19th century. After World War I, Nauru became a League of Nations mandate administered by Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. During World War II, Nauru was occupied by Japanese troops, who were bypassed by the Allied advance across the Pacific. After the war ended, the country entered into UN trusteeship. Nauru gained its independence in 1968.

This was once the 'rich kid' of the Pacific, wealthy through phosphates, but today Nauru's future is in the balance. The economy peaked in the early 1980s when Nauru was one of the great phosphate rock islands in the Pacific Ocean. The phosphate reserves are now almost entirely depleted, and phosphate mining in the central plateau has left a barren terrain of jagged limestone pinnacles. When the phosphate reserves were exhausted, the trust that had been established to manage the island's wealth diminished in value. By 2005 Nauru was a failing state with an uncertain future, dependent on injections of cash from other countries to keep afloat. Freight deliveries are rare and employment is scarce. Today's situation is a far cry from the glory days of the 1970s and '80s.

Inland, the phosphate fields, created by years of strip mining, have left the island with an almost lunar beauty. This part of the island is also known as 'topside', and here one can also see the infamous Australian offshore detention center (Regional Processing Center). The picturesque Buada Lagoon is the only body of water on the island. This slightly brackish, freshwater lake is surrounded on all sides by dense vegetation and groves of palm trees, bananas, pineapples, pandanus trees and a few indigenous hardwoods such as the tomano tree.

This afternoon is free.

Overnight in Nauru.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Nauru Touring

This morning we will continue with our exploration of Nauru! Yaren is the largest settled area, and here we find the Parliament House and a few other government buildings as well as the remains of WWII relics. We will enjoy a stop at the small tropical white sandy beach of Anibare Bay... probably the most beautiful beach on the island.

This afternoon will be free.

Overnight in Nauru.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Nauru - Tarawa, Kiribati

Early this morning we fly to Kiribati! Welcome to another true remote island paradise, and one of the world's smallest island nations situated in the middle of the Pacific. Fewer than 6,000 visitors make it here each year (approximately 4,600 in 2016), making it the 4th least visited country in the world. This geographically isolated nation is 'untouched' thanks to how secluded and inaccessible the islands are.

The passing centuries have had little impact on Kiribati's outer islands, where people subsist on coconuts, giant prawns and fish. The country has a total land area of 800 sq km (310 sq mi) but, incredibly, it's 33 atolls and islands are spread over 3.5 million sq km (1,350,000 sq mi) of ocean. In fact, Kiribati is the only country in the world to fall into all four hemispheres, straddling the equator and extending into the eastern and western hemispheres! Today's climate change projections predict that the ocean could swallow this country whole by the end of the century. In anticipation, the Kiribati government has purchased land in Fiji, where they can relocate their people.

Kiribati has been inhabited by Micronesians speaking the same Oceanic language since perhaps as far back as 3000 BC. Throughout history arrivals from Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji have impacted the 'cultural landscape'. Intermarriage tended to blur cultural differences and resulted in a significant degree of cultural homogenization. Within these islands a Micronesian culture developed, and it was also infused with elements from Polynesian and Melanesian societies. Chance visits by European ships occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries, as these ships attempted circumnavigation of the world or sought sailing routes from the south to north Pacific Ocean. Kiribati became independent from the United Kingdom in 1979, and today Kiribati is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, the IMF and the World Bank, and became a full member of the United Nations in 1999.

The permanent population here is just over 100,000, half of whom live on Tarawa Atoll. This is one of the world's poorest and least developed countries, and has few natural resources. Commercially viable phosphate deposits were exhausted at the time of independence, and today copra and fish represent the bulk of production and exports. In one form or another, Kiribati gets a large portion of its income from abroad (fishing licenses, development assistance, worker remittances, and tourism).

1889 saw the arrival of one notable visitor -- Robert Louis Stevenson. Setting sail for the Pacific islands, after spending time in Hawaii and Tahiti, he spent time on the Kiribati atolls of Abemama and Butaritari (in the Gilbert group). This was prior to heading to Samoa in 1890, where Stevenson spent the last of his days.

Today we will enjoy a tour of the island. On the south side of the island we will see some of the WWII relics and memorials. The Battle of Tarawa was one of the bloodiest battles to take place in the Pacific during World War II, and during our visit you will hear some of the stories of the battle and visit some of the most significant sites and memorials.

Overnight in Tarawa, Kiribati.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 Tarawa Exploration

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Along the north we will learn about the unique culture of the region and experience a little slice of local life in a traditional Kiribati village as we continue with our exploration. Our cultural discovery and village visits will enable us to learn about some of the traditional cultural practices of Kiribati that are in use today. You will have the opportunity to interact with those you meet along the way. You might see how garlands are made and how different types of mats are prepared from coconut or pandanus. Witness the preparation of thatched roofing and how toddy is cut. We will also visit a clam farm and learn about these beautifully coloured inhabitants of our reefs.

This evening we will enjoy a buffet dinner with some I-Kiribati traditional dance performances. Kiribati Dancers are recognised across the Pacific for their iconic cultural dress and incredible songs with accompanying dance. This is a true highlight!

Overnight in Tarawa, Kiribati.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9 Tarawa, Kiribati - Auckland, New Zealand

Today we fly from Tarawa to Auckland, New Zealand (via Fiji).

Located in the northern part of New Zealand, the cosmopolitan city of Auckland is the largest metropolitan area in the country. The geographical location of Auckland is such that it lies between the Hauraki Gulf of the Pacific Ocean to the east, the low Hunua Ranges to the southeast, the Manukau Harbour to the southwest, and the Waitakere Ranges and smaller ranges to the west and northwest. The region is also the site of Auckland Volcanic Field, comprising of around 50 volcanoes. This vibrant and bustling city is also the biggest Polynesian city in the world, a cultural influence reflected in many different aspects of city life.

Overnight in Auckland.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Auckland Sightseeing

Flight schedules to Niue dictate two nights in this beautiful city, so this morning we'll enjoy an orientation tour of Auckland followed by some well-deserved free time.

Travelling via Auckland's 'Golden Mile' (Queen Street), our tour takes us through the university grounds past many of Auckland's historical buildings. We will pass by Parnell Village, the Central Business District, the Mission Bay area, Tamaki Drive, and the Harbour Bridge before our visit to the Auckland Museum. Here we find three expansive levels that tell the story of New Zealand's history, from emergence as a nation through the loss and suffering of war, to their uniquely ancient natural history and priceless Maori and Pacific treasures.

You will have some free time this afternoon to explore this city and have dinner on your own (our hotel is well-located in the city center).

Overnight in Auckland.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 11 Auckland, New Zealand - Niue

Today* we fly from New Zealand to the island of Niue -- one of the smallest and most surprising countries on earth! This diverse rugged coral atoll in the South Pacific -- 'The Rock of Polynesia' -- is only 269 sq kms (100sq miles). This is a true hidden gem like no other island in the Pacific.

Niue may be one of the biggest coral atoll islands in the world, but it is also one of the smallest countries in the world with around 1,200 inhabitants scattered throughout 14 villages. With fewer than 8,000 visitors a year, this is the sort of place where you find a laid back atmosphere keeping with the islander way of life. This Polynesian island is situated 2400 kms (1,500 miles) northeast of New Zealand and just east of Tonga. Here the natural beauty is still largely intact, with spectacular steep limestone cliffs along the coast and a central plateau.

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The highest point on the island is only 226 ft above sea level, and a ring-road around the entire island takes us through lush forests and reveals dramatic coastal views. The capital Alofi has less than 1,000 inhabitants, and here the economy is small with most economic activity revolving around the government. Cultural values are well-preserved today, and many traditions have been handed down from generation to generation. Religion here is strong, and the church plays a large part in the community.

A coral reef surrounds the island, and the only major break in the reef is along the central western coast, close to Alofi. Two large bays indent the western coast, with Alofi Bay in the center and Avatele Bay in the south. Most of the population resides close to the west coast, around the capital, and in the northwest.

Originally settled by Polynesians from Samoa around 900 AD, further settlers arrived on Niue from Tonga in the 16th century. The first European to sight Niue was Captain James Cook in 1774. He made three attempts to land but was refused permission to do so by the inhabitants. The next notable European visitors were from the London Missionary Society, which arrived in 1846 on the "Messenger of Peace".

Agriculture is very important to the lifestyle of Niueans and to the overall economy. Most families grow their own food crops for subsistence and some goods are exported to family members in New Zealand. Nearly all households have plantations of taro, which is an island staple food. Tapioca and yams also grow very well, as do different varieties of bananas. Copra, passionfruit and limes dominated exports in the 1970s, but by 2008 vanilla and taro had become the main export crops.

Following a plea from British missionaries and island leaders, Niue became a British Protectorate at the turn of the 20th century. Shortly thereafter, New Zealand took over responsibility in 1901. The island remained a territory of New Zealand until 1974 when it adopted self-rule, but continues to retain New Zealand citizenship. Today Niue is a self-governing state in free association with New Zealand, and Niueans are New Zealand citizens. Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state in her capacity as Queen of New Zealand, and approximately 90% of Niuean people live in New Zealand. Niue is not a member of the United Nations, but UN organizations have accepted its status as a freely-associated state as equivalent to independence for the purposes of international law. As such, Niue is a full member of some UN specialized agencies such as UNESCO and the WHO.

* We cross the Date Line once again and go back one calendar day.

Overnight in Niue.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Niue: Island Touring

Over the next two days we will explore the island of Niue.

Niue's coastline is adorned with unique geological landmarks, spectacular limestone formations and extensive cave systems. Avaiki Cave is where Niue's first settlers landed. Here a narrow gorge leads to a coastal cavern cradling a heavenly rock pool. Located south of Tuapa village along the North West coast of the island is Palaha Cave, notable for its stalactites and stalagmites in varying shades of green and red. The waterline is marked by a number of traditional canoe-landing spots, including Opaahi Landing, the place where Captain Cook made an unsuccessful attempt to come ashore in 1744.

In the main town of Alofi is the Niue Tourism office / Information Center. If we are lucky, one of the tourism staff will give us a brief talk about the local culture and life on the island.

We will enjoy a walk to the Limu pools, located in northwest Niue. Accessible via a footpath leading down to the Pacific Ocean, here we find a series of natural pools, protected from the fury of the Pacific Ocean through an 'arm' of rock that breaks the waves. Noted for its expansive cliff face and historical importance as a reserved bathing place for Niue's traditional kings, Matapa Chasm is reached by a track which branches off from the main road at the foot of Hikutavake Hill. Located just beyond the reach of the churning Pacific Ocean, the tranquil Matapa Chasm is set amid stunning limestone cliffs. As well as the Matapa Chasm we will also see the Togo Chasm.

Avatele beach is a village on the southwest coast of Niue. Here we find the largest and most well known beach on the island. Prior to the construction of the Sir Robert Rex Wharf and International Airport in Alofi, Avatele Beach was the principal landing place for many visitors to the island. During our time here we will also see the Hikulagi Sculpture Park -- established in 1996 by members of the then Tahiono Arts Collective.

Overnight in Niue.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Niue: Island Touring

Today we will continue with our island touring and exploration, and then you will have some free time this afternoon.

We will see the Niue National Museum at its temporary location, and enjoy a plantation tour as well as a rainforest walk. Today we also plan to visit one of the local villages. During our island touring we will also make stops at the beaches of Utuko and Tamakautoga.

Overnight in Niue.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Niue - Auckland, New Zealand

This morning is yours free to relax, and later today we will fly from Niue back to Auckland, crossing the Date Line once again, arriving the next calendar day and in time for dinner.

Overnight in Auckland, New Zealand.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Auckland, New Zealand - Nadi, Fiji - Suva

Today we fly from Auckland to Nadi, Fiji. The town of Nadi (pronounced 'Nandi') was established in 1947 as a "Government Station" on the higher grounds of Nadi, and established itself as Fiji's tourist hub in the 1960s. For most travellers Nadi is a transit point for other destinations in Fiji. Our overnight on Fiji is a necessary one in order to connect with tomorrow's flight to Tuvalu.

Upon our arrival in Nadi in the afternoon we then commence with a drive along the southern coast to Suva on the east coast. Viti Levu is Fiji's largest island and home to 70% of the population (about 600,000). This is the hub of the entire Fijian archipelago! At 146 kilometers long and 106 kilometers wide, the island is comparable in size to the Big Island of Hawaii. In the realm of Pacific islands, it is exceeded in size only by New Caledonia.

If you're wondering why we don't deliberately spend more time in Fiji, we have found in the past that any time here was not considered a highlight by past travellers. That, plus the fact that the 'thrust' or theme of this tour is toward the more unknown, obscure islands, is why we do not emphasize Fiji in our promotion of the tour and treat it as simply a logistical point on our overall route.

Due to the possibility of an early flight tomorrow, and to give you a break from the group meal dynamic, dinner is on your own this evening.

Overnight in Suva.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 16 Suva, Fiji - Tuvalu / Island Exploration

Early this morning we fly from Fiji to the Polynesian nation of Tuvalu, one of the smallest and most remote countries in the world.

Extremely inaccessible and far off the travellers path, this tiny nation is one of the least visited countries in the world. Situated midway between Hawaii and Australia, on average fewer than 2,500 visitors make it here each year (and just a small percentage of those are true 'tourists'). It has often been said that if you want to disappear for a while, head to Tuvalu! Due to the country's remoteness, tourism here is

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not significant. This is one of the least populous states in the world (after the Vatican City and Nauru), and the second smallest country in the world in terms of population size, having only around 11,000 people in its entire population. This is an unspoiled corner of the South Pacific, but many believe that time is running out for Tuvalu due to rising sea levels!

Funafuti is Tuvalu's capital and the location of its international airport. Approximately 4,000 people make up the entire population here, and life is 'easy going' and laid back. Only some small manufacturing facilities remind visitors of the modern world lingering beyond the horizon. Although Tuvalu literally means 'cluster of eight', there are 9 islands in the nation (six true atolls and three reef islands).

The ancestors of Tuvaluan people are believed to have arrived on the islands about 2,000 years ago. Initial settlement took place as Polynesians spread out from Samoa and Tonga, and Tuvalu provided a stepping-stone to migration into the Polynesian Outlier communities in Melanesia and Micronesia. A referendum was held in 1974 to determine whether the Gilbert Islands and Ellice Islands should each have their own administration. As a consequence of the referendum, the colony ceased to exist on the 1st of January 1976, and the separate British colonies of Kiribati and Tuvalu came into existence. Tuvalu became fully independent within the Commonwealth on the 1st of October 1978.

Because of the low elevation, the islands that make up this nation are vulnerable to the effects of tropical cyclones and by the threat of rising sea levels. The highest elevation is 4.6 meters (15 ft) above sea level, which gives Tuvalu the second-lowest maximum elevation of any country (after the Maldives). Tuvalu is also affected by perigeon spring tide events that raise the sea level higher than a normal high tide.

Upon arrival we will head to the local Community Hall (Falekaupule), which is located just nearby the airport. The traditional island meeting hall is where most important matters are discussed, and is often used for wedding celebrations and community activities. Here we are welcomed with a traditional dance, and we can enjoy a light snack before heading to our hotel.

After checking in and taking some time to refresh we will head out for a short afternoon tour of the island.

Overnight in Tuvalu.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Tuvalu / Funafala Islet Visit

After breakfast we will head south along the island road and then take a boat across to the gorgeous little islet of Funafala, a tiny piece of land inhabited by just a handful of families. Our journey to this 'outer island' of the atoll will take approximately 1 hour +/- (depending on weather). Along the way we will pass the southern tip of Fongafale islet, and then several other islets, before the atoll curves as we head in a southeasterly direction towards the southern end of the atoll of Tuvalu. In the northern part of Tuvalu the islets are generally quite far one from another, but here in the south we find a string of islets with only small channels between them. Believe it or not, Funafala is the second most popular islet of the atoll.

This beautiful islet makes a nice day-trip escape. Several families from Funafuti relocated here for safety during WWII, and while most moved back after the war there is still a very small community settled here. The more traditional village lifestyle in this remote paradise gives us a taste of what life on the outer islands is like. We will have time to relax in the shade and/or walk around the white sandy beach, collect some beautiful shells to take home, and see the mangroves that are part of a coastal protection project.

We will enjoy a light lunch here before heading back to the capital island. You may have some free time this afternoon to explore on your own.

Overnight in Tuvalu.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 18 Tuvalu - Suva, Fiji - Nadi

Today we depart from Tuvalu and fly back to Suva, Fiji – on the southeast coast of the island of Viti Levu. Suva is the capital and the second most populated municipality of Fiji. Suva is the largest and most cosmopolitan city in the South Pacific, and over the years has become an important regional center.

Upon arrival into Suva we will proceed to drive to Nadi on the west side of the island.

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Overnight in Nadi, Fiji.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 * Technical Note *

Because our database generates tour dates automatically based on the number of days in an itinerary, this is a "blank" day that we must insert in order to compensate for crossing the International Date Line while on tour and to ensure that our documents and website show the correct tour end date. Our tour is actually 19 days if the loss of time crossing the date line is taken into account.

Day 20 (Actually Day 19) Departure

Departure from Nadi (on the departure date published for your chosen departure).

PLEASE NOTE: Due to ever-changing air schedules, this tour's end point can CHANGE up to 4-6 month prior to trip start date.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast