

UNTOUCHED PACIFIC ISLANDS

Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Micronesia & Nauru

17 days

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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). PLEASE NOTE: As is typical in the USA, our hotel does NOT include breakfast.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 * Technical Note *

Today we depart Honolulu and fly to Majuro, crossing the International Date Line en route.

* 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.*

Day 3 Arrival in Majuro, Marshall Islands*

This morning we arrive in 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.

On arrival we begin our sightseeing program (possibly accomplishing some of the items listed for tomorrow).

* 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 Majuro.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Majuro, Marshall Islands

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.

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).

Overnight in Majuro.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Majuro - Fly to Pohnpei, Fed. States of Micronesia

This morning we fly from Majuro to The Federated States of Micronesia (not to be confused with 'Micronesia' - the sub-region of Oceania). 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-ridged 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

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.

Overnight in Pohnpei.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Pohnpei: Nan Madol

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雨iest 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.

Overnight in Pohnpei.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Pohnpei - Fly to Nauru

This morning 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 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 8 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 we will continue with our exploration. 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.

Overnight in Nauru.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Nauru - Fly to 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.

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.

PLEASE NOTE that the description of our daily activities in Kiribati over the coming days are approximate and a general description of what we intend to accomplish while here. Your Tour Leader will advise in advance the exact content and order of sites visited in and around Tarawa.

Overnight in Tarawa, Kiribati.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 10 Tarawa Exploration

While in Kiribati we will explore South Tarawa, the bustling heart of Kiribati. This is where the majority of the population lives, where the government sits, and where the island's commercial activity hums. We'll take in the key points of interest, including the National Museum, a window into Kiribati's rich cultural heritage, and the Parliament House, a place where the nation's decisions are made.

We'll travel along the island's south side, where the remnants of World War II stand as silent witnesses to a pivotal moment in history. The Battle of Tarawa, a fierce and costly conflict, left its mark on this landscape. We'll visit significant sites and memorials, hearing stories that bring the past to life. You'll gain a deeper understanding of the battle's impact, the challenges faced, and the resilience of those involved.

As we move along the coast, you might notice the rusting hulls of landing craft, half-submerged in the lagoon, or the weathered concrete of bunkers, now overgrown with vegetation. These are stark reminders of a time when this peaceful island was a battleground. We'll take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices made, and to consider how history shapes the present. The day will be a mix of cultural immersion and historical exploration, a chance to connect with South Tarawa's past and present.

Overnight in Tarawa.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Kiribati Continued

Today we embark on a magical lagoon cruise, experiencing Kiribati's pristine marine environment as we make our way across crystal-clear waters to Tabitewea islet for an unforgettable Pacific picnic.

Our boat journey reveals the extraordinary beauty of Tarawa's lagoon system, where turquoise waters stretch toward coral-fringed horizons. The shallow lagoon, protected by reef barriers, creates perfect conditions for marine life while offering glimpses into traditional Kiribati navigation and fishing techniques that have sustained island communities for millennia.

Arriving at Tabitewea islet, we discover a small slice of paradise where coconut palms sway above pristine beaches and coral formations create natural swimming pools. This peaceful retreat offers the perfect setting for our included picnic lunch, featuring local specialties that showcase traditional I-Kiribati cuisine alongside tropical fruits and refreshing beverages.

The highlight awaits at Broken Bridge in north Tarawa, where we enjoy ample time for swimming in crystal-clear waters that reveal vibrant coral gardens below. This natural swimming area, formed by unique geological features, provides safe access to some of the lagoon's most beautiful underwater landscapes.

Whether snorkeling among tropical fish, collecting shells along pristine beaches, or simply relaxing beneath swaying palms while listening to gentle waves, this day offers pure tropical bliss. The lagoon cruise also provides opportunities to observe traditional outrigger canoes and witness local fishing techniques that remain unchanged across generations.

Overnight in Tarawa.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Kiribati Continued

We'll start by visiting key buildings and monuments, gaining insights into the island's administrative and historical significance. Think of it as a moving history lesson, with the added bonus of tropical scenery.

Of course, no island tour is complete without beach stops. We'll pause at stretches of pristine sand, where the turquoise waters invite us to cool off. You might want to take a dip, or simply relax and enjoy the gentle rhythm of the waves. Just remember the sunscreen; the equatorial

sun is no joke!

We'll also pay a visit to a local clam farm, a fascinating glimpse into sustainable aquaculture in this part of the world. You'll learn how these giant clams are cultivated, and perhaps even sample some fresh seafood. Afterwards, we'll immerse ourselves in village life, experiencing the warmth and hospitality of the I-Kiribati people. Prepare for genuine smiles and perhaps a bit of friendly curiosity.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Tarawa, Kiribati - Fly to Nadi, Fiji

Today we fly from Tarawa 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. On arrival we travel by road along the southern coast to Suva on the east coast to place us for tomorrow morning's flight to Tuvalu.

* 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 14 Suva, Fiji - Fly to Tuvalu: Island Exploration

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 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 perigean 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 15 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 16 Tuvalu - Fly to Nadi, Fiji

Today we fly from Tuvalu, back to Fiji where we have many connection options for your flight home.

Overnight in Nadi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 (Actually Day 16) Departure

Departure from Nadi.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast