

Interesting facts about Tuvalu you may not know

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This tiny archipelago of nine Polynesian islands in the Pacific Ocean has been inhabited since the 14th century, but it remains little known. Surrounded by coral and covered in palm trees, Tuvalu is a veritable paradise, but it takes a long time to get there. There are only two direct flights per week from Suva, Fiji. Tuvalu also has one of the most liberal visa policies in the world, but hardly anyone visits. Are you curious about this idyllic island nation that has just established diplomatic relations with Vietnam? If so, let's find out together!

Tuvalu is one of the smallest countries in the world.

Tuvalu is the world's smallest sovereign state by population. Although Vatican City is technically smaller, it is not a member of the United Nations. In terms of land area, Tuvalu is the world's third-smallest sovereign state; after Monaco and Nauru.

It took Tuvalu a while to become a member of the United Nations because for many years it was unable to afford the entry fee. However, when internet domain names were first issued to countries, Tuvalu got the coveted .tv domain. The country negotiated a 12-year lease for \$50 million in 2000, and again in 2012. **Tuvalu** has used the

profits to join the United Nations, install electricity on its remote islands, and start a scholarship program.

Tuvalu is one of the lowest countries in the world.

Tuvalu has an average elevation of just 2 metres, meaning it is seriously threatened by rising sea levels due to climate change. Coastal erosion has already raised two of Tuvalu's nine islands. There has also been talk of moving the entire country to New Zealand or Fiji.

The country has just 11,000 inhabitants, most of whom live on the island of Fongafale, which is just 20 metres long at its narrowest point.

Tuvalu has no ATMs on the island.

Tuvalu does not have ATMs. Restaurants, cafes and hotels do not accept credit or debit cards. If you want to visit the islands, you will need to carry Australian dollars with you throughout your trip.

Tuvalu was once known as the Ellice Islands.

The Spanish explorer Alvaro Mendana de Neyra was the first European to 'discover' the Tuvalu archipelago in 1568 and 1595. From 1892, it became part of the British protectorate and colony of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. The islands were named after British MP Edward Ellice, who also visited them. In 1976, the government split the islands to form Kiribati (Gilbert Islands) and Tuvalu (Ellice Islands). Tuvalu means 'eight islands standing side by side' – a reference to the eight originally inhabited islands. In 1978, Tuvalu gained independence from Britain.

Tuvalu has a history of blackbird hunting.

Like several other Pacific islands, Tuvalu has a history of blackbirding. In the 19th century, people were forced to work on plantations in Australia, Fiji, New Caledonia, Samoa and Peru in response to the booming trade of the 1860s. A few signed up voluntarily, but most were tricked or lured onto ships by sailors disguised as priests. Blackbirding devastated many Polynesian communities. In 1872, the British Pacific Islanders Protection Act finally outlawed the practice, in response to persistent lobbying by missionaries.



Tuvalu has no standing army.

Tuvalu is one of 22 countries in the world without a standing army, including Andorra, Dominica, Aruba and the Cook Islands.

Tuvalu has one of the smallest economies in the world.

Due to its small size, lack of resources and remote location, Tuvalu has one of the smallest economies in the world. Tuvalu's gross domestic product (GDP) is \$42.59 million. Tuvalu earns about a twelfth of its annual gross domestic product from licensing its domain names to tech giants like Amazon-owned streaming platform Twitch through Virginia-based Verisign.



Tuvalu may disappear in the future

One of the disadvantages of Tuvalu's topography is that it is not very high above sea level. The highest point in the country is only 4.6 meters (15 feet) above sea level. This means that if sea levels rose just a few feet, much of the country would be underwater.

There are already talks underway to relocate the entire country to New Zealand or Fiji if/when this becomes a pressing issue in the future.

Not only is this a problem, but many crops – such as taro and coconuts, which are grown on the island – can be at risk when saltwater enters their root systems.

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