

Kiribati: Atolls, Lagoons and Battles

Kiribati (pronounced Kiribas) is an independent republic within the Commonwealth of Nations, located in the central Pacific Ocean, about 4,000 km (about 2,500 mi) southwest of Hawaii. It is part of the division of the Pacific islands that is known as Micronesia. Kiribati consists of 33 coral islands divided among three island groups: the Gilbert Islands, the Phoenix Islands, and the Line Islands.



Kiribati is for travellers - those who have a passion for exploring and discovering, people who like an adventure off the tourist trail to places where few have been before, and people who want to understand a country - not just see it. Kiribati will challenge your view of how life should be and show you a less complicated way of living where family and community come first.

Situated in the equatorial Pacific, in the east Kiribati offers world class fishing (both game and bone fishing) from Kiritimati Island. In the west is the Gilbert Group of islands, which offer amazing and unique cultural experiences.

Bone and Sports Fishing

Whether you prefer the deep blue waters with big game fish, or prefer the crystalline waters and serenity of saltwater flyfishing, Kiribati is the destination for you. One big reason anglers come to Kiribati though is the mighty bonefish - by fly or saltwater spin, Kiritimati (Christmas) Island is the place to be.

There's also some world class game fishing, having obtained many International Game Fishing World Records, the waters in Kiribati are open for international anglers to try their hand. With the

bonefish, Giant Trevally, or Sail Fish and Marlin, Kiribati won't disappoint you.

Living Traditions

The culture of Kiribati is complex and diverse, with each island having its own unique ways. Though a living body, many people remain true to the century old traditions and practices that define what it means to be I-Kiribati.

Cultural practices such as community meetings under the maneaba (traditional meeting house) to socialize and feast (a botaki), respect to elderly people, guest hospitality and importance of family remain important facets in the local culture.



The way of living is very simple and people plan their living for a day only, without worrying about their future, living with the motto "Tomorrow is another day". Survival revolves around strength, motivation and ambition to live within that particular day. Daily lives revolve around the rise and fall of the tide, dictating fishing conditions and timing and availability of transport.

Dancing Like Birds

The traditional dances of Kiribati are a unique form of art and expression. The movement of the feet, hands and of course the whole body imitates the movement of the frigate birds while walking and flying. The costumes are made out of local materials. The frigate bird symbolizes many important things in the traditional living context of the I-Kiribati. It provides navigation to fishermen while lost at sea, provides weather information for the people and also gives a sign of peace and harmony.

Visitors can experience I-Kiribati culture in many shapes and forms. However we do recommend the best way is to take the plunge and live on an outer island for a week and to immerse fully in our daily

culture.



World War II Sites

The Islands of Kiribati was a place of several bloody battles of the World War II. Sixty years on and much of the evidence of these battles still remain available for travellers to view as a living museum of this part of history; in particular Tarawa, Butaritari and Abemama of the Gilbert group, and Banaba island.

The Japanese entered the Pacific and invaded the Gilberts in December of 1941, two days after they bombed Pearl Harbour. In August of 1942, the US Marines held three major operations in an attempt to remove the Japanese, including "The Battle of Tarawa", reputedly one of the bloodiest battles ever fought in World War II.

On Tarawa and Butaritari Atoll there are still physical relics of the occupation and operations. This includes four eight inch coastal defense guns, and solid concrete bunkers and pillboxes. Rusted tanks, amtracs, ship wrecks, and plane wrecks can also be seen on the shores at low tide.

33 Islands of Kiribati

All of the islands are atolls (ring-shaped islands with central lagoons) except for the island of Banaba in the Gilbert Islands which is a raised limestone Island. Of the 33 islands of Kiribati, 21 are inhabited. Most of the population is concentrated in the Gilbert Islands and only one of the islands in Phoenix Group (Kanton Island) is inhabited and three of the Line Islands are permanently inhabited. The capital of Kiribati is Tarawa, an atoll in the Gilbert Islands. Bairiki, an islet of Tarawa, serves as an administrative center.

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