

PALAU

Fascinating Pacific country with deep ties to Japan

A paradise nestled in the heart of the Pacific Ocean just south of Japan. Situated between the Philippines and Guam, this enchanting archipelago graces the western edge of Micronesia, boasting pristine beauty and timeless charm. Palau shares the same time zone as Japan, fostering seamless travel experiences.

Spanning an area similar to Japan's Yakushima Island, Palau is a haven of natural wonders, enveloped by vibrant coral reefs and unparalleled seascape. Among its renowned attractions are the iconic 'Rock Islands' - a collection of 445 mushroom-shaped islets that form a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2012. It is a dream paradise for divers!

Palau is deeply tied to Japan, with over 8000 Japanese words woven into its language, a legacy of the post-World War I Mandate period. Peleliu Island, located in the southern part of Palau, is known as a fierce battleground of the Pacific War, and many battle sites still remind us of its history. Beyond language, the cultural landscape of Palau bears the imprint of Japanese influence, offering visitors a unique blend of nature, history, and heritage to explore.



Palau ties with Japan deeply

Historical Background

Palau's history intertwines closely with Japan, marked by a period as a mandate territory from the aftermath of World War I to World War II. During this time, Japanese was the language of education, leaving a lasting linguistic legacy that echoes in Palau today. Japan contributed to building infrastructure such as schools and hospitals at that time. This is one of the reasons why Palau is renowned as one of the most pro-Japanese nations in the Pacific Islands.

Cultural contribution

Before the advent of writing, Palauan ancestors immortalised their history and legends through intricate pictographs adorning the pillars of communal meeting places. This cultural practice remains as 'storyboard' today. Mr. Hisakatsu Hijikata, a Japanese art teacher stationed in Koror for three years since 1929, introduced wood carving techniques to the Palauans. This has contributed to the preservation of their culture to the present day.

Souvenir

Beautiful souvenirs born from scrap glass

Palau's creative spirit finds expression in its innovative glasswork studio, in which discarded glass finds new life as exquisite crafts. Transforming waste into treasures, artisans can craft stunning ornaments inspired by marine life, including fish and jellyfish. This eco-conscious initiative is realised through technical collaboration with Japan. Why not pick up a beautiful piece of glasswork as a souvenir of Palau? An experience program is also available if you apply in advance!

Q Impressed by the traditional Palauan meeting place, Abai, Japanese art teacher Mr. Hijikata, taught the Palauans to preserve their traditional culture through wood carving. Who was the other French artist who came to the Pacific Island region?

The answer is on p.18!

Column 1 Palauan Greetings

Try learning the simple local language and communicate with the locals!

Hello ▶ Alii Good bye ▶ Mechikung
Thank you ▶ Mesulang

There are also some Japanese words that are used in Palau due to the influence of the period of occupation, such as okyaku (guest), daijobu (okay), katsudo (movie), shashin (photograph), denki (electricity), and kankoudan (tourist).

Column 2 Leading country in Environmental Conservation

Palau is one of the most advanced Pacific Island Countries in terms of environmental conservation. One of their activities is to request visitors to agree to the 'Palau Pledge' at the time of entry into Palau. This is a pledge not to pollute the Palauan environment and is stamped on passports as an entry stamp that visitors must sign. Moreover, since 2020, Palau has taken decisive actions to safeguard its delicate marine ecosystems by banning the import, sale, and use of sunscreens containing harmful ingredients that are detrimental to coral reefs. Visitors to Palau must bring sunscreens that do not contain prohibited ingredients, or purchase sunscreens legally sold in Palau.

Palau's attractiveness plan

Beginners' course Let's go to Rock Islands!

- 1st day**
- AM ● Arrive at Palau International Airport at midnight, leaving Japan the previous evening. First, check into hotel and get some sleep for the day. Join in a half-day cultural experience! Visit a traditional chief's meeting place (Abai) and see a war canoe. Enjoy a traditional Palauan meal at lunch.
 - PM ● At the recycling centre, you can try making glass crafts by your hand using scrap glass. Make a one-of-a-kind souvenir (The product can be received after the next day or later). Visit the Palau International Coral Reef Centre, established with the cooperation of Japan. Learn about Palau's environment and see coral and fish around Palau. Have an early rest for the next day after having a dinner.
- 2nd day**
- All day ● Departure to Rock Islands, a World Heritage Site! Enjoy a full day at Rock Islands, which consists of mushroom-shaped islands! Diving and snorkelling, where you can encounter a wide variety of marine life, are also essential.
 - Jellyfish Lake A fantastic place to swim with jellyfish that have almost lost their toxicity.
 - Milky Way White mud deposited on the sea bottom in a corner of the Rock Islands has a great whitening effect.
 - Long Beach A relaxing stroll on the pure white beach of Omekeang Island.
- 3rd day**
- AM ● A short trip from Koror to the natural beauty of Ngardmau Waterfall. Enjoy Ngardmau Waterfall, the largest waterfall in Palau, overflowing with the nature surrounding the waterfall. Enjoy tropical fruits at the nearby botanical garden.
 - or
 - If you are not physically fit to visit the waterfall, you can take a Cessna tour of Rock Islands from the sky.
 - PM ● Have lunch at a restaurant near the sea and visit to see storyboards at a wood carving workshop. Enjoy last minute shopping for souvenirs!
- 4th day**
- AM ● Early morning flight to Japan via Guam.

Advanced course Enjoy the entirety of Palau from its northernmost point to its southern highlights!

- 1st day**
- Depart from Japan the previous evening and arrive at Palau International Airport at midnight.
- All day ● Join in a full-day cultural experience! Visit a traditional chief's meeting place (Abai) and see a war canoe. Observe traditional taro farming and skirt making, after having a Palauan lunch.
- 2nd day**
- All day ● Depart for Rock Islands, a World Heritage Site. (see the details in the Beginners' course)
- 3rd day**
- All day ● Visit the northernmost island: Kayangel Island.
 - Snorkeling in the clear coral reef-covered waters
 - Enjoy a day on a pure white beach away from busy daily life
- 4th day**
- All day ● Visit Peleliu Island, the battleground of the Pacific War.
 - Peleliu Island, located in the south of Palau, was the site of fierce battles between the Japanese and American forces during the Pacific War.
 - Experience the history of the island through the caves where Japanese soldiers hid during the war, at the War Museum, and the Zero fighter plane that remains in the jungle.
 - Listen to the explanations by a historically knowledgeable guide to better understand the relationship between Palau and Japan.
- 5th day**
- AM ● A short trip from Koror to the natural beauty of Ngardmau Waterfall.
 - PM ● After returning to Koror for lunch, enjoy shopping for souvenirs in the city until departure.
- 6th day**
- AM ● Depart for Japan via Guam on an early morning flight.

Let's enjoy online content

Visit the Palau Visitors Bureau website for more information! You can check the details of local tours and experience programs.