

OCEANIA · ISLANDS · OFF THE BEATEN PATH · HISTORY · WILDLIFE



Kiribati

Kiribati scatters 33 coral islands across some 3.5 million square kilometres of the central Pacific. On Tarawa, Japanese guns and bunkers still line Betio's shore from the 1943 battle; on Kiritimati, the world's largest coral atoll by land area, anglers stalk bonefish across shimmering lagoon flats. Flights are infrequent, so flexibility matters.

Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Kiribati and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 19 March 2026.

CAPITAL South Tarawa	CURRENCY Australian dollar (AUD) £1 ≈ A\$1.91	LANGUAGE Gilbertese, English	BEST TIME May–Nov
DAILY BUDGET £70–£320 £££ Expensive	PLUGS Type I 240V · adapter needed	FLIGHT FROM LONDON 36h via Nadi (Fiji) or Brisbane/Nauru, after Asia or US hub ~£1,800–£3,000 return	TIME ZONE UTC+12, UTC+13... standard time

Kiribati is three island groups in one country: the Gilberts, home to Tarawa and most of the population; the Phoenix Islands, almost uninhabited and protected as a vast marine reserve; and the Line Islands, led by Kiritimati. In 1995 Kiribati shifted the International Date Line eastwards so the whole country would share the same calendar day, and the Line Islands are now among the first places on Earth to see each new year. The two visitable hubs are more than 3,000 km apart and rarely combined: Tarawa for World War II history and I-Kiribati culture, Kiritimati for fishing and birdlife.

Expect a slow, unpolished experience. South Tarawa is a crowded, narrow strip of road, houses and causeways, with simple hotels and guesthouses; the outer islands offer thatched-hut stays, canoe trips and village life centred on the maneaba, the communal meeting house. Costs run higher than you might expect because almost everything is imported and flights are expensive. Visitors are few, which means warm curiosity and genuine welcomes. Many are surprised by how visible the threat of rising seas is, by the energy of Kiribati dancing, and by how completely life stops on Sundays.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY

Betio battlefield

In November 1943 around 6,000 men died in three days' fighting for this tiny islet. Japanese coastal guns, concrete bunkers — including the commander's two-storey blockhouse — and rusting landing craft and tanks on the reef remain.
- 2

ADVENTURE

Kiritimati's bonefish flats

Kiritimati's huge, shallow lagoon flats are among the world's great saltwater fly-fishing grounds. Guides from the island's lodges lead anglers on foot after bonefish, while giant trevally patrol the channels.

3

WILDLIFE

Kiritimati seabird colonies

Huge numbers of seabirds — sooty terns, frigatebirds, boobies and tropicbirds — breed on Kiritimati's protected islets and remote shores. Look out too for the bokikokiko, a reed warbler found only in Kiribati's Line Islands.

4

CULTURE

North Tarawa

Beyond the end of South Tarawa's road, North Tarawa's islets have almost no traffic and few concrete buildings. Stay in a thatched guesthouse, eat fresh reef fish and watch village life unfold around the maneaba.

5

BEACH

Abaiang Atoll

A short flight or boat ride north of Tarawa, this lagoon atoll offers palm-fringed beaches, snorkelling, outrigger canoe trips and simple island guesthouses, with village life far removed from the capital's crowding.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

South Tarawa

≈ 63,000 people

The capital is a ribbon of islets joined by causeways from Betio to Bonriki; come for Betio's WWII sites, lagoon sunsets, local markets and the maneaba-style parliament building at Ambo.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Kiritimati

≈ 7,400 people

The world's largest coral atoll by land area draws fly-fishers to its bonefish flats and birders to vast seabird colonies; its villages include London, Banana and Tabwakea.

Kiribati has only one real urban area, South Tarawa, which includes Betio; every other community is an atoll village, and the largest cluster of them is on Kiritimati.

When to go to Kiribati

Best time: **May–Nov.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

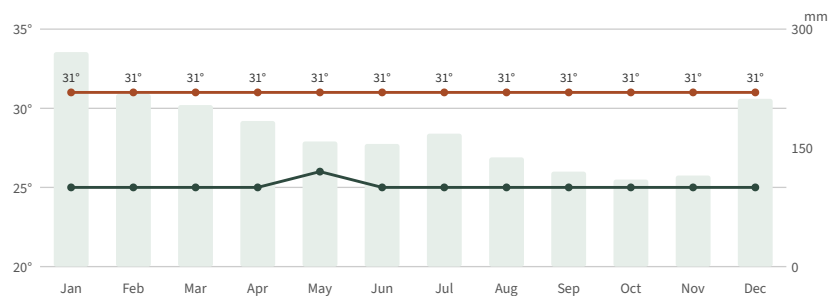
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Tarawa

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan, Dec	New Year Kiritimati, on UTC+14, is among the first inhabited places on Earth to greet the new year, and across Kiribati the holiday brings church services, feasting and dancing in the maneabas.
Jul	Independence Day Kiribati marks independence from Britain, gained on 12 July 1979, with a week of celebrations: parades, canoe races, sports and fiercely contested traditional dance competitions.

How much does Kiribati cost?

SHOESTRING £70 per person / day ≈ A\$134 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £140 per person / day ≈ A\$267 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £320 per person / day ≈ A\$611 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Babai Giant swamp taro grown for years in dug pits; prized and ceremonial, it is cooked with coconut cream or pounded and sweetened for feasts.	Raw tuna Freshly caught yellowfin or skipjack tuna eaten raw, sashimi-style with soy and chilli or marinated in lime and coconut cream.	Karewe (coconut toddy) Sweet, fresh coconut toddy tapped from the palm's flower spathe twice daily; boiled down, it becomes kamaimai, a dark, treacly syrup.
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Getting around

On South Tarawa, privately run minibuses ply the single road between Betio and Bonriki all day for low flat fares — just flag one down. Taxis are scarce, but some guesthouses rent cars or bikes. Air Kiribati flies to the outer islands, and boats serve Abaiang and North Tarawa. On Kiritimati, lodges handle transport. International flights reach Tarawa from Nadi in Fiji or via Nauru, and Kiritimati from Nadi or Honolulu.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



240V — bring a UK-to-I adapter

DIALLING CODE

+686

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone **999** (ambulance, fire, police) or local numbers:

Ambulance: **994**

Fire: **993**

Police: **992**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONES

UTC+12, UTC+13, UTC+14 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the left

TIPPING

Tipping isn't customary and can cause embarrassment; a sincere 'ko rabwa' or a small gift for hosts is appreciated far more.

ETIQUETTE

Ask before entering a maneaba, sit cross-legged on the mats and avoid standing over seated people. Dress modestly away from the beach, covering knees and shoulders, and keep Sundays quiet.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Bonriki International Airport (TRW), Tarawa; Cassidy International Airport (CXI), Kiritimati

Visas & entry for Kiribati

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Kiribati without a visa for up to one month.

You must hold a ticket for return or onward travel and enough funds for your stay.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Bat Lyssavirus

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Kiribati

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Wed 9 Dec 2026

Human Rights and Peace Day

Fri 25 Dec 2026

Christmas Day

Sat 26 Dec 2026

Boxing Day

Mon 28 Dec 2026	Boxing Day (observed)
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Mon 8 Mar 2027	International Women's Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Mon 19 Apr 2027	National Health Day
Sun 11 Jul 2027	Gospel Day
Mon 12 Jul 2027	National Day - Independence Anniversary
Thu 15 Jul 2027	National Day (in honor of Unimwane)
Fri 16 Jul 2027	National Day (in honor of Unaine)
Thu 5 Aug 2027	Youth Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Gilbertese

ENGLISH	GILBERTESE	SAY IT
Hello	Mauri	<i>MOW-ree</i>
Thank you	Ko rabwa	<i>koh RAH-bwah</i>
Please	Taiaoka	<i>tie-ah-OH-kah</i>
Excuse me	Ko matauninga	<i>koh mah-tow-NEE-ngah</i>
How much is this?	Iraua boon aio?	<i>ee-RAH-wah bohn AI-oh</i>

Know before you go

Bring plenty of Australian dollars in cash: ATMs are concentrated on South Tarawa, card acceptance is patchy and the outer islands run entirely on cash.

In Gilbertese 'ti' is pronounced 's', so Kiribati is 'KIRR-ee-bass' and Kiritimati 'kee-RISS-mass' — the local rendering of Christmas, Captain Cook's name for the island.

Flights are few and schedules change, so leave buffer days before any onward connection and reconfirm bookings a few days before flying.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.