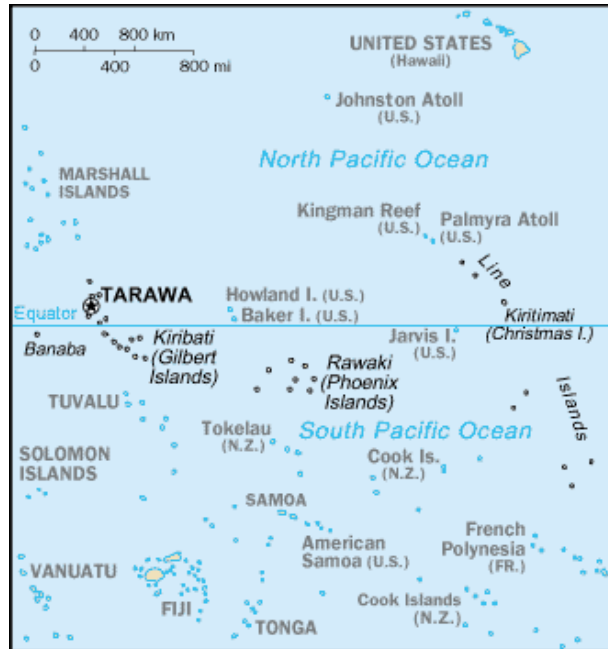


Republic of Kiribati

Central Pacific Ocean

Micronesia

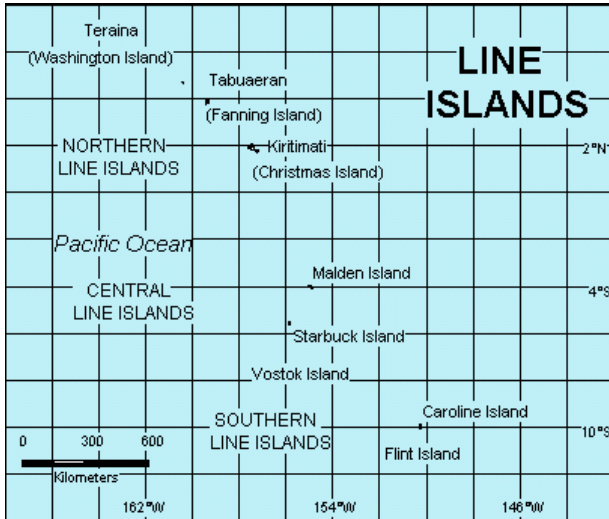
The Republic of Kiribati (pronounced kir-ree-bas) is an island group scattered over the Central Pacific Ocean. Straddling the Equator, it consists of an archipelago of some 33 low-lying coral atolls surrounded by extensive reefs, with a total land area of 800 square kilometers. The republic covers about 5 million km² and is made up of three groups of islands:



- **Gilbert Group (Kiribati)** - sixteen islands or atolls, as well as Banaba (Ocean Island), about 400 km south-west of Tarawa;
- **Line Islands** - eight islands, 2400 km east of Kiribati and includes Kiritimati (Christmas Island), Fanning Island (Tabuaeran) and Millennium Island (formerly Caroline Island); and
- **Phoenix Group** - eight islands, 1120 km east south east of Kiribati and include Canton Island (Kanton) and Hull Island (Orona).

Kiribati gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1979 and has an elected President and a legislative assembly. The capital city of Kiribati is Tarawa. Kiribati has few natural resources, and its economy is very small. Tourist facilities are not widely available.

Kiritimati – Christmas Island



The pincer-shaped Christmas Island (Kiritimati) - member of the Line Islands group - lies 105 nautical miles north of the equator and 1160 miles south of Honolulu.

It is the largest and oldest coral atoll in the world with an area of 248 square miles and contains nearly half of Kiribati's total land area. A third of the island is occupied by brackish or salt lakes and the lagoon. The latter measures 12 by 8 miles and occupies much of the western third of the island. The lagoon is nearly completely filled by coral growth.

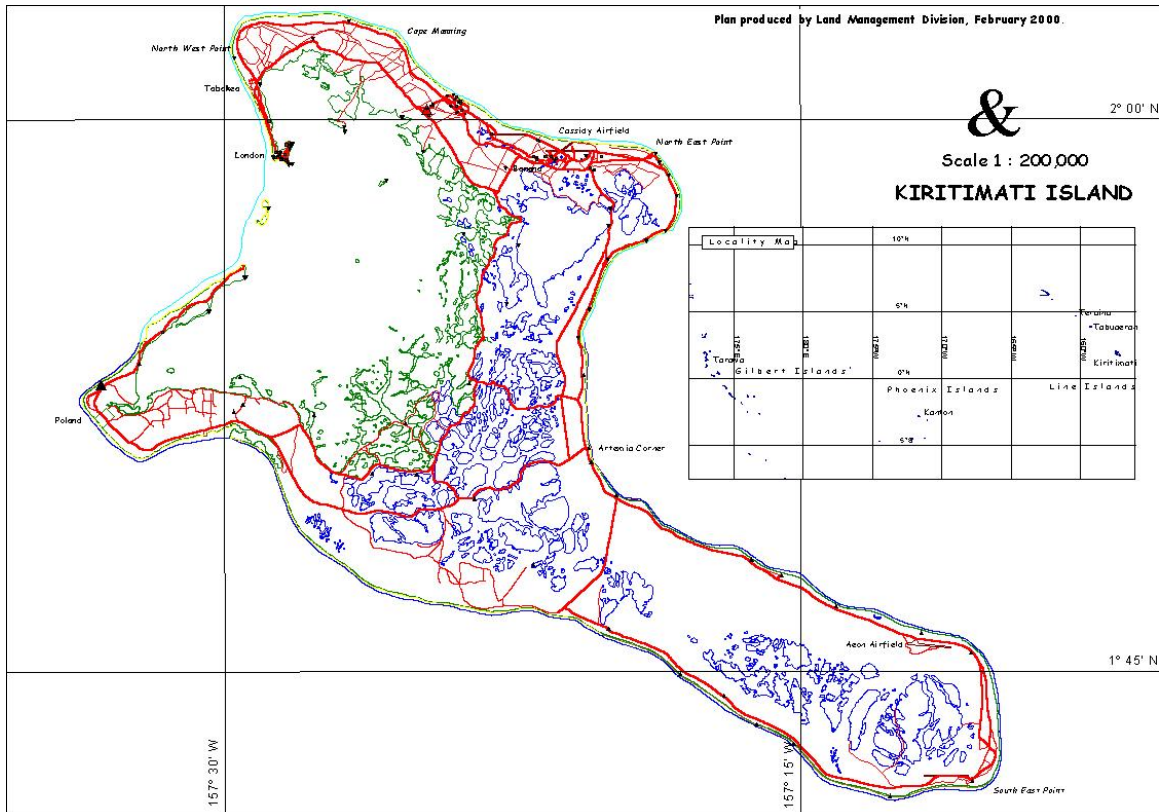
The height of the land averages 10 feet or less. There are a few lines of sand hills which reach a height of 20 to 40 feet, the highest of these are along the southern shore of the Bay of Wrecks. A strong current sweeps into this bay from the east and has caused sailing ships and even a steamer or two to pile up on the jagged reef, which averages a width of 100 to 300 feet. Only a shallow entrance exists on the northwest end, an entrance that is so small that supply ships during World War II lay offshore and unloaded supplies on a lighter to get them ashore.

The island's population is mainly Micronesian from the I-Kiribati archipelago, with a small group of Polynesians from Tuvalu and some expatriates. Most of the local people speak English although the native language is I-Kiribati.

Most government services are located in **London**, at the northern-most pincer. London moves at a leisurely pace, and is home to the tourist office, post office, bank and telecommunications center.

Christmas Island enjoys year-round near-perfect weather, with an air temperature between 74-84 degrees F, minimal rain and low humidity due to the gentle trade winds and water temperature consistently between 80-84 degrees F.





The island remains largely unspoiled with very little commercialism. A copra plantation and a number of other government operations, including salt extraction and fish export, a minor tourist trade centered on activities such as scuba diving provide employment for the local population, which numbers about 1800. There are few vehicles on the coral-packed roads.

The island was discovered by Captain James Cook on December 24, 1777 where he and his crew stayed until early January to restock. Cook said: "*As we kept our Christmas here, I called this discovery Christmas Island*". While no fighting occurred on Christmas Island during World War II, it was a staging area for the Pacific theater, and the roads and airfield created for these purposes are quite extensive. Today a Japanese downrange satellite tracking station is located on the island. The island received its independence from Great Britain as part of Kiribati in 1979.

Coconut groves can be found throughout the old lagoon; on the southern tip, where the Gilbert Islanders live; and on the short southern tip on the east side, where the main airstrip on the island is outlined on the wide, sandy beach. As is typical of tropical islands that maintain large old groves of coconut palms, visitors to Christmas Island will see enormous land crabs that guard every road and pathway.

The island is a protected **wildlife sanctuary** renowned for its seabirds and fish. Fish are found in profusion in Christmas Island's lagoons and the ocean waters are home to bonefish, trevally, wahoo, yellow fin tuna, sailfish, groupers and sharks. With its large

colonies of sea birds, vast reefs, endless flats, lagoons, and surrounding ocean, it offers excellent opportunities for observing bird and marine life as well as outstanding fishing.

Attractions:

- **Cook Island**
Across the channel from London, Cook Island is home to more than 18 varieties of seabird. A permit and guide are needed to visit; permits can be bought at The Fish & Wildlife Service in the Ministry of Line and Phoenix Development Building.
- **Diving / Snorkling**
Cook Island and Paris channels are superb dive sites where a wide range of species can be viewed.
- **Wrecks**
South of the airport is the Bay of Wrecks, a watery grave for unlucky 19th century square riggers (the site cannot be dived). There is also a Korean wreck on the south-eastern tip of the island.
- **Game Fishing**
Game fishing is one of the island's key attractions, and many visitors arrive on a sportsfishing package. The prize catch is the large bonefish that swims in the coral flats.