

Where is the Republic of Kiribati (Kir-ee-bahs)?

Kiribati (pronounced Kir-ee-bahs) is an independent republic within the Commonwealth of Nations, located in the central Pacific Ocean, about 7,800km Northeast of the Diocese of Port Pirie. It is part 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.

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. These low-lying coral atolls are the protruding tips of undersea volcanoes, and extend only a few feet above sea level. Of the 33 islands of Kiribati, 21 are inhabited. Most of the population is concentrated in the Gilbert Islands. The capital of Kiribati is Tarawa, an atoll in the Gilbert Islands. Bairiki, an islet of Tarawa, serves as an administrative centre.

The local economy now depends on subsistence farming, fishing, and the island's prolific stands of coconut palms, and the subsequent sale of copra (coconut meat.)

The isolated location of the Kiribati islands prevents tourism from flourishing, and becoming a major business, even though the weather is consistently warm, offshore reefs teem with colourful fish, and WWII shipwrecks are commonplace, especially off the eastern edge of Kiritimati (Christmas Island). There is still much evidence of war activity on Tarawa.

That island, incidentally, is the world's largest coral atoll, and was once used for the testing of nuclear weapons. It comprises more than half the land mass of Kiribati.

Facts and Figures

Official Name	Republic of Kiribati
Population	103,100 (2010)
Capital City	South Tarawa
Languages	I-Kiribati, English (official)
Official Currency	Australian Dollar
Religions	Catholic, Protestant, others
Land Area	849 sq km (328 sq miles)
Highest point – average	2-3 metres
Distance from Adelaide	7,792 km
Travel time from Adelaide	7 hours (approx)

Climate

The tropical islands of Kiribati are hot and humid throughout the year. The Gilbert Islands receive the most rain, while rainfall is sparse in the Phoenix and Line islands, and extended periods of drought are common. With climate change it is getting hotter.

Flag The flag of Kiribati was officially adopted on July 12, 1979.

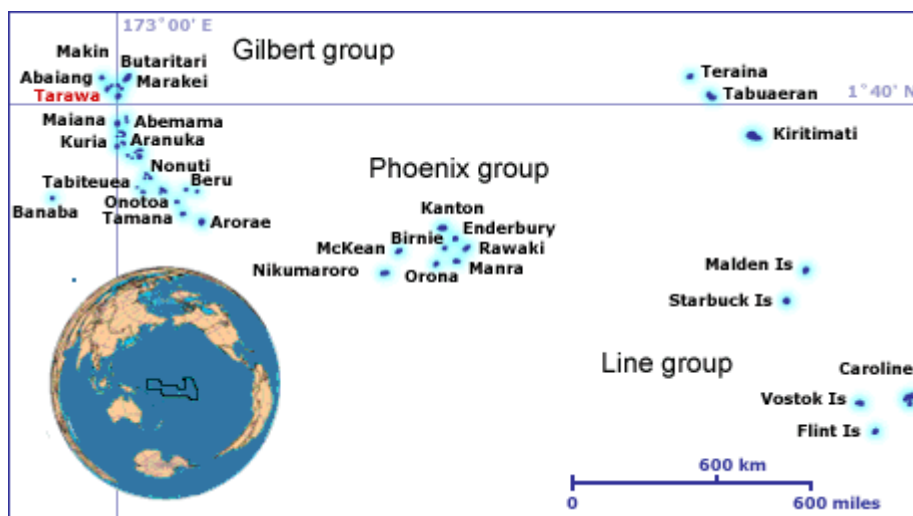
The blue and white bands represent the surrounding Pacific Ocean. The frigate bird flying over the rising sun is taken from the coat of arms, and is said to symbolise strength and power at sea. The three blue and white bands represent the three Island groups; Gilbert, Phoenix and Line.



A country at risk

Because of the threat of rising sea levels caused by global warming, many more people are becoming aware of the location and the plight of the people from the Republic of Kiribati.

The sea level is rising and if this rise is greater than the growth of coral, Kiribati will be no more. More than one-third of Kiribati's 100,000 people live on the main atoll of South Tarawa. High population intensity had led to problems including; overcrowding, fresh water, lack of employment, waste disposal and the like.



Kiribati has a total land area of 811 sq km. The islands extend about 3,900 km from east to west. From north to south they extend about 2,100 km, straddling the equator. Kiribati's exclusive economic zone (area of the ocean in which it controls fishing and other rights) covers more than 3 million sq km. The majority of the atolls is barely more than three metres above sea level and surrounded by barrier reefs creating picturesque lagoons.



The atoll of Tarawa, is the capital of Kiribati and is the second largest of the 16 islands in the Gilbert group that is in shape of a back the form 'L'. The southern side of Tarawa is the commercial and business centre of Kiribati often regarded as crowded, dusty and dirty.



What the Good Sams do in Kiribati

There are now two communities in Kiribati and the I-Kiribati and Australian sisters are engaged in a variety of ministries; primary education, youth ministry, outreach to people with disabilities and mental illness, prison ministry, nursing and the Kiribati Adaptation Project (KAP).

In 2009, the Good Samaritan Early Childhood Centre was opened. In 2016 the centre is staffed by three I-Kiribati Good Sams and two local assistants.

Sr. Marella Rebgetz, an Australian Good Samaritan with a degree in water management, is employed by the government to help address Kiribati's critical water needs caused by the rising sea level and the increasing salination of drinking water.

Good Samaritans, both in Kiribati and Australia, are involved in the Pacific Calling Partnership and advocate for the rights of environmental refugees.

Pacific Calling Partnership Being neighbourly in the Pacific

The countries in which the Good Samaritans live and work are linked by the Pacific Ocean. The peoples of the Pacific are our neighbours – and they are neighbours in need. This is particularly true of Kiribati, a country of low-lying coral atolls threatened by rising seas. Because of their presence in Kiribati, the Good Samaritans have joined and play a key role in the Pacific Calling Partnership.



What are the Pacific Calling Partnership aims?

- To listen to calls from our low-lying island neighbours in the Torres Strait and the Pacific about their serious threat of climate change.
- To recognise that Australia has an ecological debt to these peoples.
- To raise awareness of our responsibility to these communities.

What is the approach?

- To raise awareness in Australia and the Pacific of our connection as neighbours with each other by celebrating the stories that bind us.
- To encourage leadership and advocacy skills around climate change issues among Pacific and Torres Strait Islanders.
- To support a regional approach to climate-related migration and labour mobility that gives priority to people in the Pacific and increases the choices of Pacific Islanders.