

KEY FACTS

Official name: Republic of Niue

Head of State: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Governor General of New Zealand and High Commissioner Mark Herbert Blumsky (from Oct 2010)

Head of government: Prime Minister Toke Talagi (elected by parliament 2008; re-elected 7 May 2011)

Ruling party: There are no political parties; parliamentarians sit as independents

Area: 256 square km

Population: 1,229 (July 2013)*; over 20,000 Niueans reside in New Zealand.

Capital: Alofi is the main town.

Official language: English, Niuean

Currency: New Zealand dollar (NZ\$) = 100 cents

Exchange rate: NZ\$1.21 per US\$ (Dec 2012)

GDP per capita: US\$10,277 (2009)

GDP real growth: 0.10% (2009)

GDP: US\$15.80 million (2009)

Inflation: 5.40% (2010)

Aid flow: US\$2.60 million (annually)

* estimated figure

Niue

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

The first inhabitants arrived from Tonga, Samoa and Fiji between AD600 and AD1000.

1774 Visited by Captain James Cook and given the name, Savage Island

1846 Conversion to Christianity commenced by the London Missionary Society.

1900 Niue became a British protectorate.

1901 Niue was formally annexed to New Zealand, as part of the Cook Islands.

1960 The first Niue Assembly was established.

1974 Niue was granted 'self-government in free association with New Zealand'. It became the smallest self-governing state with that status.

1982 Robert Rex was elected prime minister.

1992 Robert Rex died. He was succeeded by Young Vivian.

1993 Frank Lui won the election and became prime minister.

1996 Lui was re-elected.

1999 Sani Elia Lakatani of the Niue People's Party (NPP) was elected prime minister.

2001 The US imposed trading sanctions on Niue due its tax haven status. A census recorded 1,799 people.

2002 All 20 members of the Niue Assembly were re-elected and Young Vivian (NPP) was elected prime minister.

2003 The NPP was dissolved, despite which the coalition government continued.

2004 A 300km per hour cyclone, Heta, devastated Niue.

2005 A census recorded that the population figure was 1,600, a drop of almost 200 people, with the village of North Alofi losing 113 of its 256 residents. There are some 20,000 Niueans living abroad, mostly in New Zealand; the government is trying to encourage them to return. Young Vivian retained his parliamentary seat unopposed and was re-elected prime minister.

2006 Niue had been suffering from frequent power failures when one of its generators was damaged causing further problems in pumping water from the reservoir. The island's electricity network was over 30 years old and due for upgrading; a new replacement, five tonne generator was flown in from New Zealand at short notice.

2008 20 independent members were elected (nine unopposed) to

parliamentary. Toke Talagi became prime minister. 500 educational laptops were distributed among all school children, allowing them to web-surf via existing wireless internet services.

2009 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a list of countries that had not implemented international tax information exchange standards, of which Niue was one despite signing a co-operation agreement in 2002.

2010 Air New Zealand began a direct weekly flight between Auckland and Niue. New Zealand appointed Mark Blumsky as high commissioner.

2011 In parliamentary elections, held in May, 20 non-partisan candidates were elected. Toke Talagi was re-elected as prime minister (with 12 votes). In July, the New Zealand government announced it would committed US\$12.65 million (NZ\$15 million) to help Niue develop into a 'boutique tourism destination', building on Niue's natural beauty and environment as the main attraction for adventure holidays.

2012 On 14 March, a new shipping registry was launched and expected to receive revenue of US\$100,000 in its first year of operation and double this in the second. Such registries for countries without a fleet of their own (including Niue) are known as 'flags of convenience'. On 4 October, Niue signed an agreement under which they will receive US\$4 million from the Pacific Environment Community (PEC) to install photovoltaic cells to replace fossil fuel electrical generation for public use. The solar power should provide savings of US\$320,000 per annum and around 300 tonnes in fuel.

2013 Two new Niue US\$2 coins were minted in 2013 - the Great Horned Owl and the Osprey. The sale of coins is an important source of revenue.

Political structure

Constitution

Under the 1974 constitution, New Zealand remains responsible for defence and foreign affairs and is ready to provide necessary economic and administrative assistance. Niueans are New Zealand citizens.

The head of state, the British monarch, is represented in Niue by the Governor General of New Zealand.

Village affairs are handled by 14 village councils of three to five members, elected

to three-year terms in conjunction with the Community Affairs Office.

Form of state

Self-governing state, in free association with New Zealand.

The executive

The four-member executive cabinet is headed by a prime minister elected by the Legislative Assembly, who in turn appoints three ministers.

National legislature

The island is governed by the 20-member Niue Assembly – 14 elected from village constituencies and six from the common roll – elected by popular vote for a three-year term.

Last elections

7 May 2011 (parliamentary)

Results: Parliamentary: 20 non-partisan candidates were elected.

Next elections

2014 (parliamentary)

Political parties

The Niue political system is not based on formal political organisations. Until 2003, two loose groupings existed: the Niue People's Party (NPP) and the Alliance of Independents. The NPP was dissolved in July 2003 and all candidates since then have run as independents.

Ruling party

There are no political parties; parliamentarians sit as independents

Population

1,229 (July 2013)*; over 20,000 Niueans reside in New Zealand.

There is considerable migration to New Zealand, as people from Niue are New Zealand citizens. The government is running a campaign to repopulate the island by persuading some of the 18,000 expatriates to return. Pensions in Niue are much lower than those in New Zealand, so restrictions on the proportion of New Zealand pensions they could bring with them remain a problem.

In September 2003, Niue invited Tuvaluans to migrate to their island to boost the dwindling population.

Last census: 9 September 2006: 1,625

Population density: 8 inhabitants per square km. Urban population 38 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: -2.3 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Ethnic make-up

The population is mainly of Polynesian (Tongan) descent, with some New Zealand elements.

Religions

Predominantly Christian.

Education

The education system is modelled on New Zealand's with services provided free until aged 14. For the first four years teaching

may be in either Niuean or English. In 2004, the schools increased the content of Niuean language in the curriculum. The government has backed the 'one laptop per child' programme (OLPC).

Compulsory years: Five to 14

Health

Life expectancy: 71 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 2.8 births per woman, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 25 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012)

Main cities

Alofi (largest settlement) (estimated population 554 in 2012); Avatele (212), Hakupu (181).

Languages spoken

English is widely understood. The people who live in the north speak a Polynesian dialect which differs from the dialect of the people living on the rest of the island who speak a language closer to Tongan.

Official language/s

English, Niuean

Media

There is limited media availability.

Press

The weekly *Niue Star* is a private newspaper published in English and Niue. A fortnightly newspaper *Niuean* (www.niuean.com) is published in Australia. An online news round-up is *Niue Business News* (www.webpost.net/nb/nbn).

Broadcasting

The Broadcasting Corporation of Niue operates the only radio (Radio Sunshine) and television station, which broadcasts in English and Niue in the evenings only.

Radio: Radio Sunshine broadcasts are transmitted on AM594/FM91 six days/week during limited hours.

Television: Television Niue broadcasts in English and Niue in the evenings only, usually 1730–2200.

Other news agencies: ABC Pacific Beat: www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat
Pacific Magazine: www.pacificmagazine.net

Economy

Niue's economy is wholly dependent on financial assistance from New Zealand, which contributes around 40 per cent of GDP. Per capita income at over US\$8,200 is one of the highest of the Pacific islands and kept artificially high by New Zealand's aid.

The local economy is based on government employment and subsistence farming, raising vegetables, fruit, pigs and poultry for family consumption. Industry is limited to agricultural production,

although some small building and joinery operations have been started. Sales of postage stamps and remittances from Niuean workers overseas are important sources of revenue.

New Zealand began the process of accustoming Niue to fiscal responsibility in 2004 by providing capital investment (NZ\$30 million (US\$44 million) up to 2009) to fund infrastructure projects to boost tourism, a sector thought likely to become Niue's major source of foreign exchange.

In order to boost Niue's meagre income, the government leases international telephone codes for use by foreign companies and has built a quarantine station for alpaca – a wool-bearing llama-like South American mammal – *en route* to Australia. Marketing of the '.nu' Internet domain name has been a controversial income source. The government is also hoping to gain revenue from investment partnerships in fishing and organic products and is seeking interest in developing tourism.

External trade

Niue is a member of the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement (Sparteca) along with 12 other regional nations, which allows products duty free access by Pacific Island Forum members to Australian and New Zealand markets (subject to the country of origin restrictions).

In March 2012, a new shipping registry was launched and expected to receive revenue of US\$100,000 in its first year of operation and double this in the second. Such registries for countries without a fleet of their own (including Niue) are known as 'flags of convenience'.

Imports

Main imports are food, live animals, construction materials, manufactured goods, vehicles, fuels and medicines.

Main sources: New Zealand (95.5 per cent in 2008), Japan (2.7 per cent), China (1 per cent).

Exports

Agricultural products – fish, taro, copra, honey, vanilla, passion fruit, paw paws, root crops and limes, financial and telecommunication services.

Main destinations: Principally to New Zealand, Fiji, Cook Islands, Australia

Agriculture

Development of agriculture has been hindered by the limited amount of fertile or cultivable land, lack of surface water and susceptibility to drought conditions. Only 20 per cent of land can be used for agriculture. Cyclones are a major problem. Alienation of land is forbidden, but leases may be granted for a maximum term of 66 years.

Limes and passion fruit are grown for export. Goats have been introduced on a trial basis.

Annual fishing production typically includes 200t marine fish. A new fish plant employs 30 people.

About 20 per cent of the land area is forest with millable timber, and logging serves local demand.

Malaysian logging companies have approached the government to harvest timber from the small hardwood forests. Not everyone is in agreement with such production that could leave the island deforested and the terrain at more risk from cyclones.

Industry and manufacturing

The Office of Economic Affairs is responsible for planning and financing productive ventures relating to agriculture, tourism and industry. Niue Handicrafts handles production and marketing of objects plaited from pandanus and coconut palm leaves.

Small-scale industries include honey extraction and bottling, saw milling, joinery, furniture and handicrafts.

Investment has been made in the vanilla and forestry industries.

Tourism

Niue offers all the traditional tropical island features, with water activities and ecotourism as important elements of the experience. Tourism is an important component of the economy, although Niue's one flight per week from New Zealand hampers the growth in the market for those wishing to stay for shorter periods. New Zealand agreed to invest NZ\$15 million (US\$18 million) (2011–14) on essential infrastructure and management systems to develop Niue as a 'boutique tourism destination'. Previous investment has included a new visitor centre and re-development of the Matavai Resort (Alofi) with an increase in the number of rooms from 24 to 44, which is due to be completed in 2012.

Hydrocarbons

There are no known hydrocarbon reserves. Consumption of oil was around 30 barrels per day (bpd) in 2007, all of which was imported.

Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 1MW in 2007. The Niue Power Corporation is responsible for electricity generation and supply. The majority of the population relies on non-commercial biomass, mostly fuel wood for cooking, lighting and power.

In October 2012, Niue signed an agreement under which they will receive US\$4 million from the Pacific Environment Community (PEC) to install photovoltaic

cells to replace fossil fuel electrical generation for public use. The solar power should provide savings of US\$320,000 per annum and around 300 tonnes in fuel.

Banking and insurance

Central bank

Reserve Bank of New Zealand

Offshore facilities

In 2002, the introduction of US sanctions on banking activities was a major blow to Niue. The US accused Niue of having connections to Latin American tax haven operations.

Niue licensed six offshore banks operating in Australia, which the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) wanted to close down. In 2002, the Niue Legislative Assembly repealed the legislation which authorised the issuing of banking licences and Niue was removed from the OECD Financial Action Task Force (FATF) blacklist of places associated with money laundering. The OECD published a list on 2 April 2009 of countries that had not implemented international tax information exchange standards, of which Niue was one, despite signing the co-operation agreement in 2002.

Time

GMT minus eleven hours

Geography

Niue is a coral island in the Pacific Ocean about 480km (300 miles) east of Tonga and 930km (580 miles) west of the southern Cook Islands. It rises to only 65 metres, as an outcrop, from the sea, with a steep and jagged coastline. The land has many caves and fissures and although it has no rivers there are plenty of wells to keep the topsoil fertile. It is also known as the 'The Rock of Polynesia' and is the world's largest coral island.

Hemisphere

Southern

Climate

Subtropical and humid, with temperature 25–30 degrees Celsius and average rainfall of nearly 200cm per annum.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all.

Visa

Not required by tourist visitors staying less than 30 days. Visitors are required to have return/onward tickets and all necessary entry documentation for the next destination, as well as sufficient funds for length of stay and suitable accommodation. Visitors may extend their stay by applying to the Immigration officials upon arrival, an extension permit of three months (cost of NZ\$30) is usually granted.

Visas are required by all visitors for stays of over 30 days. Further information may be obtained from the Immigration Department, PO Box 69, Alofi, Niue Island (email: immigrationniue@mail.gov.nu).

Currency advice/regulations

The import of local currency is unlimited; export is limited to NZ\$10,000. The import of foreign currency must be declared; export is limited to the amount declared.

Customs

Personal items are duty free, only one personal electronic item, camera or binoculars are allowed.

The export of native artifacts, coral and rare shells is prohibited.

Prohibited imports

Firearms and ammunition require a permit from the Chief of Police in Alofi.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

Vaccination certificates for yellow fever are required if travelling from infected area.

Advisable precautions

Vaccinations for diphtheria, TB, hepatitis A and B, polio, tetanus and typhoid are all recommended. There is a rabies risk. It is advisable to take water precautions.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 4 Jan (Takai Commission Holiday), 6 Feb (Waitangi Day), 25 Apr (Anzac Day), 16–19 Oct (Constitution Celebrations), 17 Oct (Peniamina's Day), 25–26 Dec (Christmas).

Holidays that fall on the weekend are taken *in lieu* on the following Monday/Tuesday.

Variable dates

Good Friday (Mar/Apr), Easter Monday (Mar/Apr), Queen's Official Birthday (first Mon in Jun).

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Thur: 0900–1500; Fri: 0830–1500.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0730–1530.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0830–1600; Sat: 0830–1500.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

The Harris Cellular Network provides fixed and mobile coverage.

Social customs/useful tips

It is customary to shake hands on meeting and taking leave. Gratuities are not encouraged.

Getting there

Air

There are limited connections from Auckland, New Zealand; Sydney, Australia; Samoa; Fiji and Los Angeles, US.

International airport/s: Hanan (IUE), 7km north of Alofi.

Airport tax: Departure tax: NZ\$25

Surface

There are no port facilities. Ships anchor off Alofi and barges transfer cargo.

Getting about

National transport

Road: There are approximately 130km of all-weather road and 96km bush track negotiable by heavy trucks and four-wheel drive vehicles. A 60km road circles the island and roads link main centres.

Car hire

Visitors with an foreign driver's licence must obtain a local licence from the Niue police department before driving a hired vehicle. It is advisable to reserve hire vehicles before arrival.

Driving is on the left.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling code (IDD) for Niue is +683 followed by subscriber's number.

Useful telephone numbers

Police, fire and ambulance: 999/4000
Hospital: 998.

Chambers of Commerce

Niue Chamber of Commerce and Industry, PO Box 160, Alofi (tel: 43-99; fax: 40-17; e-mail: chamber@sin.net.nu).

Banking

Westpac Banking Corporation, PO Box 76, Alofi (tel: 4221; fax: 4043).

Central bank

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand, PO Box 2498, Wellington, New Zealand (tel: (+64-4) 472-2029; fax: (+64-4) 473-8554).

Travel information

Air Nauru, Government Building, Yaren District, Republic of Nauru (tel: (+674) 3141, 3418; fax: (+674) 3170).

Matavai Resort (hotel), PO Box 133, Alofi (tel: 4360, email: matavai@niue.nu).

Niue International Airport (Hanan), PO Box 83, Alofi (tel: 4020, 4133, 4096; fax: 4010).

National tourist organisation offices

Niue Tourism Office, PO Box 42, Alofi (tel: 4224; fax: 4225; internet site: <http://www.niueisland.com>).

Other useful addresses

Broadcasting Corporation of Niue, PO Box 26, Alofi (tel: 4026; fax: 4217).
Business Advisory Service, Alofi (tel: 4228).

Department of Immigration, PO Box, Alofi (tel: 4349, 4333; fax: 4336; email: immigrationniue@mail.gov.nu).

Office of Economic Affairs, PO Box 42, Alofi (tel: 4126).

Office of the Prime Minister. PO Box 40, Alofi (tel: 4200; fax: 4206, 4232).

Office of the Secretary to Government, PO Box 67, Alofi (tel: 4017; fax: 4232).

Other news agencies: ABC Pacific Beat: www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat

Pacific Magazine: www.pacificmagazine.net

Internet sites

Niue government website: <http://www.gov.nu>

Niue website: <http://www.niueisland.nu>

South Pacific Tourism Organisation: <http://www.tcsp.com/niue/index.html>