

Niue (New-ay)

Before reading the text, look at the photos and guess: What is Niue? Where is it? Why is it interesting? Do people live there? What does its name mean?



Niue is the smallest country where English is an official language. It is also one of the tiniest independent countries in the world, with only 260 km² of land and just a little over 1,600 people who live there. Situated in the South Pacific Ocean, its nearest neighbours are New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands.

How did it become a country?

People have lived on “the Rock”, as Niue is called, for over a thousand years. The Europeans discovered it in the 18th century and called it Savage Island, until they learned its proper name, which means “look at the coconut”. In late 19th century, Niueans were afraid that foreign countries would invade them, so they asked Queen Victoria to make Niue a part of the British Empire. After a while, she agreed.

What does Niue look like?

Niue is one of the world's largest coral islands. A coral reef almost completely surrounds the island. It is made of limestone, a soft material which makes strange and wonderful caves on the seaside. There are two bays and fourteen villages, but only a single beach, because the shore is very high. It has a tropical climate, with temperatures mostly between 20°C and 40°C. The water is so warm that from June to September humpback whales come to raise their young there.

In which ways is Niue unique?

In 2003, Niue became the first WiFi Nation in the world, offering free internet access to all people on the island.

All students on the island have a laptop.

There are no political parties on Niue – all politicians are independent.

Although there is a jail on Niue, there are no prisoners. All people on Niue are free, and crime is rare.

There is only one TV channel – Television Niue, only one radio – Sunshine, and only one newspaper – the Niue Star.

Sports are very popular on Niue: both men and women play in the Rugby union, and there is also a golf course, netball clubs, a bowling green, and even a national football team.

It is one of the few places in the world where you can swim with the whales.

Are there any problems on Niue?

Yes, of course there are. The biggest one is the loss of people: in the past 50 years, Niue has lost 4/5 of the population. People move to larger islands, such as New Zealand, where they can find better jobs, education and healthcare. The stories, songs and language that are a part of its culture are at risk of vanishing.

What is a typical saying from Niue?

“If you keep your bush knife sharp – or stay motivated – you will clear yourself a bigger plantation.”

There are many facts that have not been mentioned about Niue. Go online and find out:

- 1) What is the capital city of Niue?
- 2) When and how did it become independent?
- 3) What was the greatest known natural disaster to hit the island?
- 4) What is the most common food on Niue?
- 5) Which religions exist on Niue?
- 6) How many Niueans live in other places?
- 7) How do people reach the island?
- 8) Why is Niue one of the world leaders in green growth?
- 9) How dangerous is the island's high radioactivity?
- 10) What is Taoga Niue and why is it important?