



# Kiribati

*Joined the Commonwealth in 1979 - visited by the Queen in 1982*



**Kiribati is a small Polynesian island nation in the central Pacific.**

Pop: (2012) 101,000

Capital: Tarawa

Area: 811 sq km

Kiribati (pronounced *Kirabas* and formally the Gilbert Islands) consists of 33 islands spread across 5.2 m sq km of ocean in the central Pacific. The islands are mainly coral atolls on a submerged volcanic chain. Nowhere is higher than 2m above sea level except Banaba (formerly Ocean Island) a coral out-crop, that rises to 80m. There are no streams or hills. Most islands have lagoons, some of which are very large, up to 80km in length. Kiritimati (formerly Christmas Island) is the world's largest coral atoll at 388sq km. All the inhabited islands are connected to the capital by air.

The islands have a hot maritime equatorial climate though rainfall patterns vary from year to year. Drought is a constant danger. Soils are very poor and unproductive. Coconut palms cover most of the islands. Many sea birds visit but otherwise, apart from marine life, there are few animal species. With very few resources and due to its remote location which limits tourism, the best prospects for economic development lie in the country's marine resources. Due to sea level rise, Kiribati is seen as an endangered country.



*A coral atoll with its lagoon, Kiribati*

