

Federated States of Micronesia

Often referred to as 'Micronesia', the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is often assumed to be simply another island agglomeration, like the Northern Mariana Islands perhaps, with a shared cultural identity. Yet the FSM tag is an arbitrary construct, lumping together the four unique states of Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap; about the only element they share is a history of oppression and occupation under various colonial powers.

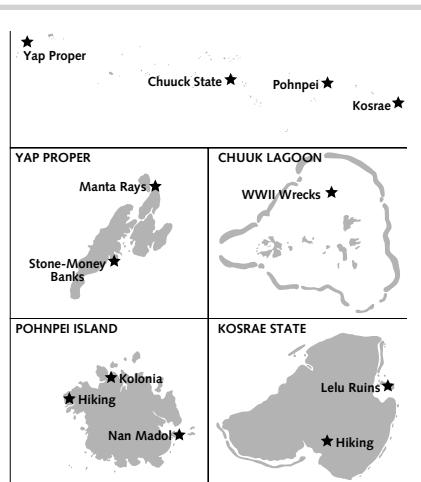
The four states have distinct cultures, traditions and identities, as colourful and diverse as the multitudes of coral formations that live in their fringing reefs. Chuuk is renowned for its wreck diving – explore an underwater WWII 'museum' that's hailed as one of the world's ultimate aquatic experiences; Yap is the most traditional state, resisting the onslaught of Western mores with true island spirit; Kosrae is a Pacific paradise, possibly the FSM's most beautiful island; while Pohnpei is home to mysterious ancient ruins and a plethora of lush landforms.

Travellers looking to experience a variety of lifestyles are in luck. Kosraeans are true believers; Kosrae is a state where everything shuts down on Sunday and full focus is given to vibrant all-singing, all-dancing church ceremonies (with a relaxed island twist, naturally). Yap's people retain their culture, their skills, their architecture, their customs, their religions, their gigantic stone money – it's an eternally fascinating place. Pohnpei retains its system of chiefs and clan titles, a distant style of governance that still exerts significant social and political influence. Then there's misunderstood Chuuk – although the island is just starting to come to terms with international tourism, the uncompromising nature of the Chuukese holds firm.

If you can't find something to expand your world-view in the FSM, check your pulse.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sample some of the Pacific's best diving, including Chuuk's amazing **WWII wrecks** (p124) and Yap's beautiful **manta rays** (p131)
- Explore Kosrae's **Lelu ruins** (p105) and Pohnpei's ancient stone city, **Nan Madol** (p114), for a taste of island mystery
- Marvel at Yap's enormous **stone-money banks** (p130) for a well-preserved glimpse into traditional Yapese values
- Stroll around **Kolonia** (p111), a vibrant, ramshackle hub that's also the FSM's biggest town
- Hike around the lush volcanic swells of **Pohnpei** (p109) and **Kosrae** (p103) for joyous outdoor vibes



CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Temperatures on all FSM islands average 26°C to 27°C (80°F to 81°F) year round. The wettest months are in late spring and summer; rainfall is heaviest on Pohnpei, where the interior gets as much as 10,000mm annually, making it one of the rainiest places on earth. Yap is the driest island. For more climatic information, see p827.

The FSM is outside classic typhoon tracks; on Kosrae strong storms are rare, although the other states are not immune from them.

In July 2002, Super-typhoon Chataan hit Chuuk. Thirty-seven people died and almost 1300 people lost their homes, while enormous crop damage caused debilitating food shortages.

In April 2004, Yap was hit by Super-typhoon Sudal, which destroyed or damaged just about every building on the atoll; one person died, 1500 people were left homeless, and water, electricity and phone services were lost.

HISTORY Magic & Empires

Pottery and other archaeological finds on Map Island date the earliest known Yapese settlement at around AD 200.

The Yapese once reigned over a scattered empire, ranging as far north as the Mariana Islands and encompassing Chuuk to the east. This empire was built on the powers of magic: the Yapese employed sorcerers who were believed to have the powers to induce famine, sickness and typhoons.

The Saudeleurs, a tyrannical royal dynasty, ruled medieval Pohnpei; they reigned from Nan Madol, an elaborate city of stone fortresses and temples. By 1400, stratified Kosrae was unified under one paramount chief, who ruled from the island of Lelu.

There are indications that Kosrae was also once an important power in the region. Pohnpeian legend says that around the 14th century, Kosraean warriors sailed to Pohnpei and overthrew the Saudeleurs.

Chuukese legend says that around the 14th century the great leader Sowukachaw came by canoe to Chuuk with his son Sowooniiras; where they really came from is anybody's guess, but most people put their money on Kosrae since in Chuuk (as in Pohnpei) there are many legends relating to Kosrae.

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA FACTS

- **Capital city (and island):** Palikir (Pohnpei)
- **Population:** 108,105
- **Land area:** 702 sq km
- **International telephone code:** ☎ 691
- **Currency:** US dollar (US\$)
- **Languages:** English and state languages
- **Greeting:** *Lotu wo; Kaselehie; Ran annim; Mogethin* ('Hello' in Kosraean; Pohnpeian; Chuukese; Yapese)
- **Website:** www.visit-fsm.org

Retribution & Massacres

Early attempts to settle Yap were half-hearted at best. In 1731 a Spanish Jesuit mission was established on Ulithi Atoll, but when a supply ship returned a year later, it found that the islanders had killed all the colonists.

Apparently Europeans got the hint and for the next 100 years their visits to Yap were few and far between.

Europeans sighted Kosrae at least as early as 1801, but it wasn't until 1824 that a Western ship finally pulled into harbour – the French ship *Coquille*, captained by Louis Duperry.

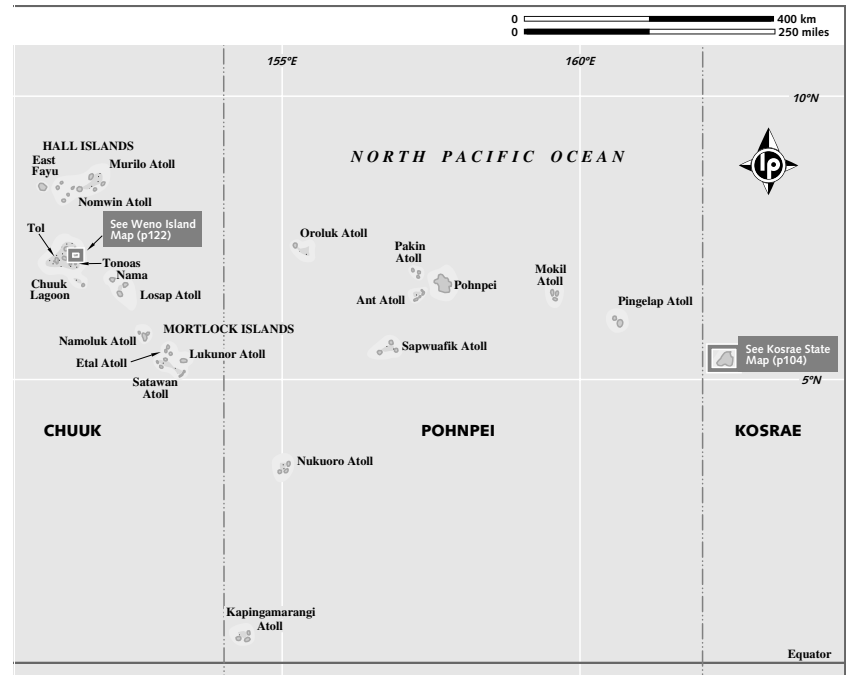
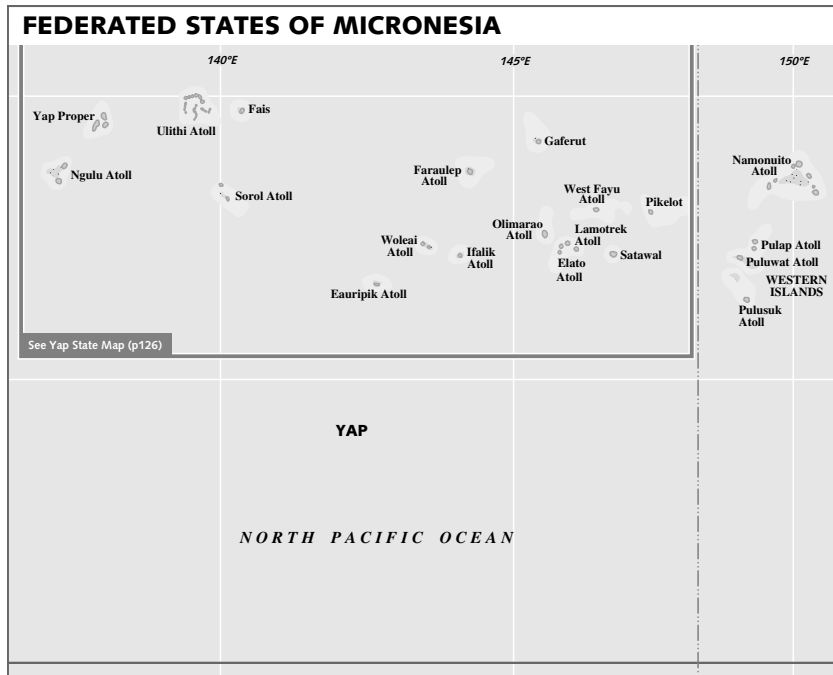
In 1835 Kosraeans torched the Hawaiian ship *Waverly* and massacred the entire crew, apparently as revenge on the sailors who had bedded island women without first getting permission from Kosraean men.

In the early 1840s relations again became harmonious under the reign of Chief Awane Lapalik I, who was known as 'Good King George' by visiting Westerners.

Suppression & Rebellion

Diseases spread by visiting Westerners took their toll on Pohnpei; the indigenous population dropped from 10,000 in the early 19th century to 5000 by century's end.

The Spanish began to occupy Pohnpei in 1886, following the papal arbitration that gave Spain authority over the Caroline Islands. They didn't receive a hospitable welcome. Three months after his arrival, Pohnpei's first Spanish governor was killed in a rebellion by Pohnpeians



protesting the use of forced native labour to build Spanish forts.

The Germans arrived in 1899 after buying the Carolines from the Spanish. The infamous 1910–11 Sokehs Rebellion was sparked when a German overseer beat a Pohnpeian working on a labour gang on Sokehs Island. The Pohnpeians killed the overseer and the revolt was on.

The Germans promised revenge, blockading Kolonia and sending Melanesian troops charging up Sokehs Ridge. The uprising was suppressed and the 17 rebel leaders were executed and thrown into a mass grave. The Germans then exiled 426 Sokehs residents to Palau and brought in people from other Micronesian islands to settle on Sokehs.

In 1914 the Japanese navy took control of the islands, and their numbers dwarfed that of the locals.

All That & World War, Too

As WWII approached, the Yapese were forced to build airfields and military fortifications for the Japanese. As punishment

for noncooperation the Japanese would smash pieces of Yap's highly valued *rai* (stone money), sometimes using the broken pieces as road fill.

During WWII, US forces decided not to invade Yap Proper, although they bombed the island during air raids. Ulithi Atoll was captured and developed into a major Allied support base in 1944.

On Kosrae, developments in agriculture, forestry, fishing and copra helped support the Japanese war effort during WWII. Allied forces never invaded Kosrae.

At the beginning of WWII there were nearly 14,000 Japanese, Okinawans and Koreans living on Pohnpei and only about 5000 Pohnpeians. Although Japanese military were hit by US aerial bombings throughout 1944 and Kolonia was virtually levelled, Pohnpei was not invaded.

Chuuk's huge, sheltered lagoon became the Japanese Imperial Fleet's most important central Pacific base, so impenetrable that it was called the 'Gibraltar of the Pacific'.

On 17 February 1944, the US navy air-bombed the Japanese fleet docked in the

lagoon and sank some 60 ships, which lie on the bottom today.

In July 1978 the Trust Territory districts of Pohnpei, Kosrae, Chuuk, Yap, the Marshall Islands and Palau voted on a common constitution. The Marshalls and Palau rejected it and went on to establish separate countries.

What was left became, by default, the Federated States of Micronesia.

THE CULTURE

The National Psyche

Given that the FSM as a 'nation' is a political rather than a cultural construct, it's hard to describe elements of it in 'national' terms.

There's not a lot of unity. In fact, the other FSM states see Chuuk as an economic burden; the Chuukese unemployment rate is 34%, amid serious allegations of government corruption and other fiscal woes. Pohnpei has mooted the possibility of seceding from the FSM, while Yap talks of joining the Republic of Palau – this is unsurprising, given that the Yapese share more ties with Palauans than they do with Chuukese, Kosraeans or Pohnpeians.

Lifestyle

On Kosrae, traditionally, everything closes on Sunday and church becomes the only activity. The service includes prayers, a sermon, hymns, glorious choral singing and psalm readings. Attending is a fine way to experience local culture.

Most people in Kosrae still rely on subsistence farming and fishing for their livelihood, as they do in Chuuk, where the main crops are breadfruit, coconuts, bananas and taro. Copra production provides some local income.

Each Chuukese island has a predominant clan, generally the descendants of the first people to settle that island. Members still enjoy limited privileges.

On Pohnpei, agriculture is important and subsistence farming widespread. Although Pohnpeian society is becoming Westernised, many Pohnpeians retain a title related to the clan system.

Pohnpeian funeral feasts are important social events that can last for days, and everyone brings gifts of food and *sakau* (see the boxed text, p119). Dog is a traditional

feast food, but the casual visitor is unlikely to come across it.

Most Yapese continue to make a living in subsistence farming and fishing, and copra production is still important on the outer islands.

In Yap to this day the village in which one is born determines one's name and caste. Members of a village belong to the same caste, although their rank within that caste varies. Caste has a more profound effect on people's status than upon their standard of living.

Both Western and traditional dress are seen all around Yap.

Population

The people of the remote Pohnpeian islands of Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi are the only Polynesians in the FSM.

ARTS

All the FSM states have beautiful handicrafts and dances. See the individual island sections for details.

Literature

The horror writer HP Lovecraft used Pohnpei and Nan Madol as settings for his stories *Out of the Aeons* and *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. Lovecraft's disciple August Derleth did the same in various works.

His Majesty O'Keefe (1950), by Lawrence Klingman and Gerald Green, tells the true story of David O'Keefe, the Irish-American sailor who landed on Yap in the late 1800s, where he evolved into a very successful entrepreneur (see the boxed text, p128). The book was made into a film in 1954, directed by Byron Haskin, and starring Burt Lancaster as O'Keefe in a performance des-

cribed by one critic as 'filled with manic over-confidence, heroic muscularity, and toothy self-esteem'.

Island of the Sequined Love (1998), by Christopher Moore, details the absurd adventures of a pilot named Tuck, who is posted on a cargo run to the Yapese islands. There, he discovers bizarre cargo cults, a black market in native vital organs, a mad doctor, a crazed sex goddess, a Filipino transvestite navigator and a talking fruit bat.

LANGUAGE

The islands have their own indigenous languages, although English is the official government language for inter-island communications. Besides the main languages, on Pohnpei Mokilese, Pingelapese, Ngatikese and Nukuoro-Kapingamarangi are spoken. On Chuuk, there are several minority dialects. On Yap, outer islanders also speak Ulithian, Woleaian and Satawalese.

ENVIRONMENT

The FSM has 607 islands sprinkled across more than 2.6 million sq km of the Pacific, extending 2899km from east to west. About 65 islands are inhabited.

Pohnpei has nearly half the land area, with the rest almost equally divided between the other three states.

Geography

Kosrae is the easternmost island of both the FSM and the Caroline Island chain; it's the only FSM state with no outer islands. Seventy per cent of the island is mountainous and another 15% is given over to mangrove swamps. Lelu, Utwe and Okat are the main deepwater harbours and all villages are along the coast.

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA LANGUAGE BASICS

English	Kosraean	Pohnpeian	Chuukese	Yapese
Hello.	<i>Lotu wo.</i>	<i>Kaselehie.</i>	<i>Ran annim.</i>	<i>Mogethin.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Kut fwa osun.</i>	<i>Kaselehie.</i>	<i>Kone nom.</i>	<i>Kefel.</i>
How are you?	<i>Kom fuhkah?</i>	<i>la iromw?</i>	<i>Ifa usum?</i>	<i>Ke us rogom buoch?</i>
I'm well.	<i>Nga ku na.</i>	<i>I kehlaik.</i>	<i>Ngang mei pochokum.</i>	<i>Kab fe'l rogom, kam magari.</i>
Please.	<i>Nunakmuna.</i>	<i>Menlam.</i>	<i>Kose mwochen.</i>	<i>Wenig ngom.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Kulo (ma lunhllhp).</i>	<i>Kalahngan.</i>	<i>Kiniso/Kilisou.</i>	<i>Kam magari.</i>
Yes.	<i>Aok.</i>	<i>Eng.</i>	<i>Wuu.</i>	<i>Arrogo'n.</i>
No.	<i>Moohi.</i>	<i>Soo.</i>	<i>Apw.</i>	<i>Danga'.</i>

BEST EATING

You won't find local delicacies like Chuukese preserved breadfruit or Pohnpeian dog in the islands' restaurants. There's still wonderful variety, though, and some superb eating houses.

- Inum (p109), in Kosrae's largest traditional-style building, serves outstanding seafood.
- Village Hotel Restaurant (p118), on Pohnpei, serves the freshest seafood in a romantic, open-air, thatched-roof dining area.
- Veranda View Conservatory Restaurant (p133), on Yap, boasts the island's only local chef, who utilises a delectable variety of local foodstuffs.

Kosrae is roughly triangular and about one-third the size of Pohnpei Island, the largest island in the FSM and Micronesia's third largest; Pohnpei is also high and volcanic and it's roughly circular.

Pohnpei's interior has rugged mountain ridges and deep valleys and its coastline is mainly tidal flats and mangrove swamps. In between the island and its surrounding circular reef is a 181-sq-km lagoon containing dozens of small islands, many with lovely white-sand beaches.

Chuuk State includes 192 outer islands, in addition to the 15 main islands and

THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA IN...

Continental is the only airline flying to the FSM and it has an infamously inflexible schedule – you need to plan carefully. See the boxed text, p135, for details.

Two weeks

In the first week, the excellent diving in Chuuk (p124) could fill three or four days. You could then round out the rest of the week exploring Pohnpei (p109).

In the second week, glorious, unhurried Kosrae (right) could be good for three days, while four days in Yap (p126), with its traditional culture and excellent diving, would be sweet as a nut.

more than 80 islets that make up Chuuk Lagoon. About 40 of the state's islands are inhabited.

Yap Proper consists of the four tightly clustered islands of Yap, Tomil-Gagil, Map and Rumung; the islands are 830km southwest of Guam. The interior regions are full of gentle rolling hills.

KOSRAE

pop 7686 / area 109 sq km

Kosrae (pronounced 'ko-shrye') is one of Micronesia's least spoiled and least developed areas, an unhurried place rich in stunning natural beauty. On this casual, unpretentious island, dubbed the 'Sleeping Lady', people consistently return a smile – more than a few dozen visitors at any one time is considered a stampe, and residents are naturally curious when newcomers arrive.

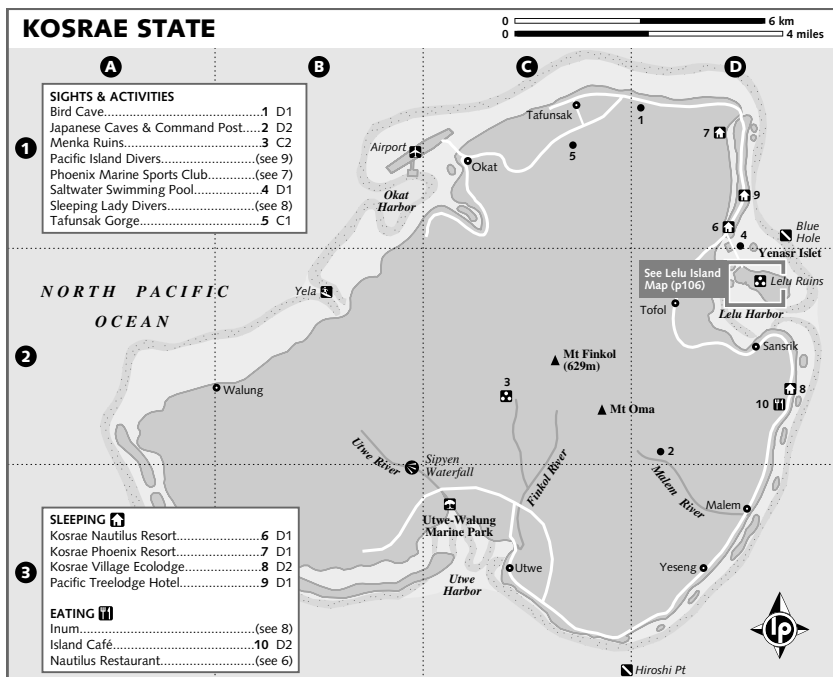
Kosrae's peaks are draped in lush tropical greenery; when they're shrouded in clouds, you know you're witnessing something special. The interior contains uncharted rainforests and mangrove swamps, and there's a pristine fringing reef and many delightful sandy beaches to explore. Flowering hibiscus, and bananas and coconuts are abundant, and the island is known for its citrus fruit, especially oranges, tangerines and limes.

The ruins of Kosrae's ancient stone city, Lelu, are not as well known as Pohnpei's Nan Madol ruins, but they're almost as impressive and more easily accessible, plus there's some good diving and surfing for aquatic types.

ORIENTATION

Kosrae has one major road that circles the island; it now extends to Walung, which was previously accessible only by boat. The capital, Tofol, is on the east coast.

The airport is about 12km away, on an artificial island off the northwest side of Kosrae; it's about a 20-minute drive from Tofol or Lelu. The hotels provide free transportation to and from the airport for their guests. If you haven't made arrangements before you arrive, call from the airport and the hotel will send someone out to fetch you.



INFORMATION

There are no ATMs on Kosrae; credit cards are accepted at hotels.

Bank of the FSM (Map p105; ☎ 370 8952)

FSM Telecommunications (Map p105; Tofol; Internet access per hr US\$4) Place long-distance calls here.

Hospital (Map p105; ☎ 370 3012; Tofol)

Kosrae visitor information centre (Map p105;

☎ 370 2228; Tofol; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Thu)

Post office (Map p105; Tofol; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Mon-Fri) Next to the bank.

TRANSPORT

Getting There & Away

See p135 for information on international flights.

Getting Around

A taxi from the airport to your hotel will cost around US\$4; in general, it's much cheaper to rely on taxis than to rent a car. Try **JM Taxi** (☎ 370 3658).

For car hire, try **Andy's Car Rental** (☎ 370 2308), **Neime's Car Rental** (☎ 370 3368) or **Senny's Car Rental** (☎ 320 3288). Alternatively, ask at your hotel for room-and-car packages.

Cycling is a good way to see the island, but be warned that there's no pavement; on the plus side, locals drive slowly and are courteous. **Pacific Treelodge Hotel** (Map p104; ☎ 370 2102) hires out bicycles (US\$15 per day).

BULLY BOY

Traders started arriving on Kosrae in the 1870s, among them the American 'Bully' Hayes, a notorious swindler and trader who roamed the Pacific after years of involvement in China's opium trade. He was a frequent visitor to Kosrae, where he traded in *bêche-de-mer*, copra and coconut oil.

In March 1874, Hayes' 218-ton brigantine *Leonora* sank in Utwe Harbor during a storm. Hayes was murdered at sea three years later in a brawl with his ship's cook, Dutch Pete. Some believe that at the time he died, he was on his way back to Kosrae to recover the treasure he'd rescued from the sinking *Leonora* and reputedly buried somewhere on the island. These rumours have inspired many a treasure hunt on Kosrae.

TOFOL

Kosrae's state administrative centre is so small it seems kooky to think of it as the centre of anything – it's just a few buildings scattered here and there along a couple of dusty roads. There's a beautiful backdrop, though: Mt Finkol (629m) looming in the distance.

The **Kosrae Museum** (Map p105; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Thu) is up the narrow dirt road just past the farmers market; the top of the hill has a sweet view of Tofol and Lelu Island. The museum has only one room, with charts and drawings detailing different parts of Lelu's history and photos of archaeological work. Other artefacts include ancient basalt food pounders, an outrigger canoe made from a breadfruit tree trunk, and the ship's log from the pirate ship *Leonora* (see the boxed text, opposite).

LELU ISLAND

Also spelled and pronounced 'Leluh', Lelu Island is connected to the rest of Kosrae by a causeway; there's a natural **saltwater swimming pool** (Map p104) off to the left at the start of the causeway, a deeply cut expanse that's full of water even when the tide is low and the flats surrounding it are exposed. It's a great place to swim.

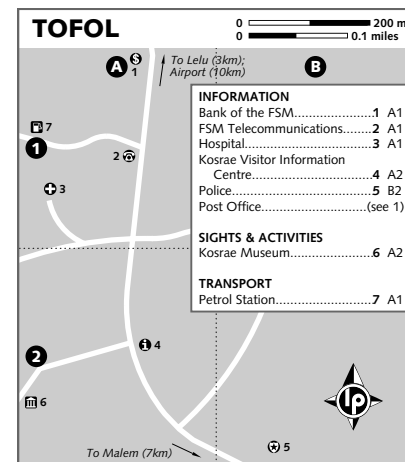
Lelu Hill, the island's high point, has **WWII caves and tunnels** used by the Japanese.

Lelu Ruins

The early Kosraeans artificially extended Lelu by piling stones and packing coral upon the surrounding reef, using the new land to build a massive walled city for Kosraean royalty. Dating back to at least AD 1400 (maybe to AD 1250), this feudal capital covered Lelu's entire lowland area; its ruins, hidden from the road, still cover one-third of the island.

A ride around Lelu's perimeter road reveals only a sleepy waterfront village and a smattering of homes and businesses, with not a single stone wall in sight. But Lelu deceives, as the ruins are just behind these homes – beyond their backyards – and almost completely hidden by thick tropical vegetation.

Once you're inside the complex, Lelu's walls rise up around you and your perspective changes completely: suddenly you're in an ancient, hidden city, the kind of isolated



setting you might imagine trekking hours through dense jungle to find elsewhere in the world.

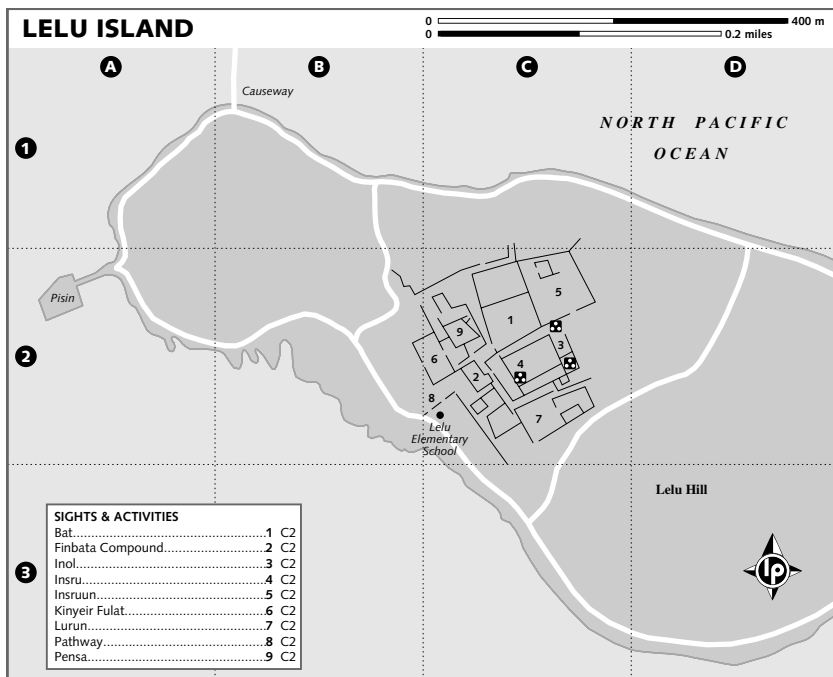
You can still see the dwelling compounds of the high chiefs, two royal burial mounds, a few sacred compounds and numerous large walls, built from huge hexagonal basalt logs stacked like a log cabin. On-site signs tell the full story.

To enter the ruins, take the driveway next to Lelu Elementary School; follow the path to the graveyard site and continue straight ahead through the complex. Just before crossing the channel, take the stone footpath on the right to get to the impressive **Kinyeir Fulat**, with its stacked prismatic basalt walls reaching 6m high; it's believed to have been both a dwelling compound and meeting house.

The compounds opposite Kinyeir Fulat are called **Pensa**. The walls at Pensa are mostly of medium-sized round basalt stones. The high chief's feast house occupied the southeastern compound, and the adjacent areas of Pensa, used for food preparation, still contain about 20 pounding stones.

Bat is the large dwelling compound across the canal from Pensa. Its high basalt walls are thought to be among the newest in town, dating from around AD 1600.

The **Finbata Compound**, just to the south of Bat, contains the remains of a feast house, while **Lurun**, a high-walled dwelling compound, offers another example of



impressive stacked prismatic architecture. **Insrurun**, at the northeastern end of the complex, is thought to have originally been a dwelling compound that was later converted for other uses.

Insrur and **Inol** contain mounded tombs that served as temporary resting places for deceased royalty. It was a sacred area, closed to commoners except for a group of wailing female mourners who, from the time the king was laid in the crypt, kept a continuous watch over his tomb and decaying body. After the king's flesh had decomposed, his bones were ceremoniously carried to Yenasr Islet and dropped into a deep natural hole in the reef.

In 1910 a German excavation found a male skeleton in one of the tombs, presumably Lelu's last buried king.

Sleeping Lady

Looking southwards across Lelu Harbor towards Tofol, you'll see the rugged profile of the Sleeping Lady mountain range. To view the profile, imagine a woman lying on her back facing southeast, with her hair

flowing out behind her; the pointy 'breasts' are easy to spot.

According to legend, the gods were angry with a woman so they laid her in the sea in a sleeping position and turned her into a supposedly menstruating, so that accounts for the rich, red soil found in the jungle between her 'thighs'. Kosraean men used to trek into the interior to gather the red soil from this sacred place and use it to paint their canoes.

MALEM

At the mouth of the Malem River, about 5km south of Tofol, this is Kosrae's third-largest village.

Behind the municipal building, there's a small **stone monument** honouring the island's 700 WWII dead.

The first road to the right past the municipal building goes up to a small dam; this marks the beginning of a short, overgrown trail leading to the old **Japanese command post**. The commander's cave-bunker is a few minutes walk up the river's right side.

UTWE

Eight kilometres past Malem, at the mouth of the Finkol River, is the pleasant village of Utwe (also called Utwa). Here you'll find the **Utwe-Walung Marine Park** (☎ 370 2321; marinepark@mail.fm), a conservation area extending between Utwe and Walung; the office can organise cultural shows and guided tours. The park is within the Utwe-Walung Conservation Area, a fascinating, dense agglomerate of reefs, lagoons, mangrove channels and wetland forest.

There's a pretty 45-minute walk from Utwe up the Finkol River to some nice pools; ask anyone in Utwe how to get started. If you want to go all the way up Mt Finkol, you should ask for a guide; you'll be rewarded with a splendid view that includes all three of the island's harbours.

The **Menka ruins** lie in rainforest around Utwe, featuring the remains of basalt walls, living quarters and ceremonial platforms. The ruins were the sacred spot of Ninlaku, the goddess of nature and breadfruit.

AIRPORT TO LELU

The drive between the airport and Lelu is very pretty, offering mountain and coastal views, as well as up-close looks at Kosrae's oh-so-lush greenery. Approaching Lelu, you'll see picturesque **white-sand beaches** lined with coconut palms.

The bridge connecting the airport with the main island crosses a **reef channel** of striking turquoise waters; these are popular with snorkellers. Just beyond the bridge there's a **mangrove swamp**, where you might spot a grey Pacific reef heron scenically perched on bleached white logs.

Bird Cave

A large, swampy cave (Map p104) in the Wiya area is home to a sizable colony of swiftlets, who cling to the cave walls by their claws and build nests from dried saliva and moss. In flight, they resemble small bats.

Islanders collect the bird droppings in the cave bottom to use as a rich fertiliser. Like lots of other places in Kosrae, this big, swampy cave is thought to be haunted; locals reckon it's because of the Kosraean bodies supposedly left in the back of the cave by the Japanese.

There's no need to explore further, unless you've a powerful subterranean bent;

you can see this place easily from the road and the swiftlets can be spotted circling just outside the entrance. At any rate, it smells something shocking.

TAFUNSAK

Tafunsak, which stretches along the entire western flank of Kosrae, includes the remote Walung village, Okat Harbor, airport and Tafunsak village.

The steep 21m **gorge** in Tafunsak village makes for good exploring; it's extremely narrow, so be wary of flash floods.

To get there, take the path southeast from the crossroads in Tafunsak village; it's a 45-minute walk up the gorge, following an old steel water pipe.

Walung

A recent, unpaved extension of Kosrae's circle road connects Walung on the west coast with the rest of the island. Home to just a few hundred people and lined with lovely sandy beaches, Walung is the island's most traditional village and rather enjoys its isolation, though visitors are welcome. Tidal channels spanned by log footbridges crisscross the village, which has the foundations of an old mission.

You can hike to Walung following the southern coast; a guide is essential for this all-day, arduous trip.

ACTIVITIES

Diving

Kosrae has unspoiled coral reefs, varied marine life and visibility up to an amazing 60m in summer. Lelu Harbor holds a US PB search plane, a 91m Japanese freighter skip-bombed during WWII, and the remains of a whaling ship. All these dives are best done during a spell of clement weather, as rain can substantially cut visibility.

Other good spots include the Blue Hole – across from the Kosrae Nautilus Resort – with coral heads, lionfish, stingrays and lots of big fish, including barracuda; and Hiroshi's Point, a drift dive to the south over beautiful soft coral.

There's good diving between Utwe Harbor and Walung, where large groupers, barracuda and hump-headed parrotfish can sometimes be spotted. At several places you can step into the water at high tide, swim out 15m to 30m and start diving.

DIVE SHOPS

Kosrae Nautilus Resort (Map p104; ☎ 370 3567; www.kosraenautilus.com; PO Box 135, Kosrae) Two-tank dive US\$95; snorkelling, including lunch (on the boat with/without divers) US\$30/55; circle-island boat tour (minimum two people) US\$125; kayak hire US\$15.

Pacific Island Divers (Map p104; ☎ 370 7856; www.divekosrae.com; PO Box 637, Kosrae) Run by the Pacific Treelodge Hotel. Two-tank dives US\$89; sunset cruises US\$10; kayaking trips (single/double) US\$20/30; snorkelling trips US\$40; fishing trips US\$70.

Phoenix Marine Sports Club (Map p104; ☎ 370 3100; phxkosrae@mail.fm; Lelu, PO 607, Kosrae) Run by the Kosrae Phoenix Resort.

Sleeping Lady Divers (Map p104; ☎ 370 3483; www.kosraevillage.com; PO Box 399, Kosrae) Run by the Kosrae Village Ec lodge. One-/two-tank dives US\$59/89, third tank extra US\$25; snorkelling US\$55; kayak hire US\$25; guided kayak tours, including lunch US\$35; fishing trips US\$65; blue-water hunting US\$65. Also offers outrigger canoe hire, rainforest hiking, mountain climbing and archaeological tours (US\$10 to US\$50 per person).

Snorkelling & Swimming

The best snorkelling and swimming spots change with the seasons and the trade winds. Conditions are usually good between Malem and Utwe in winter, though there are treacherous currents and rogue waves around Malem itself. The areas near Tafunsak, around the bridge to the airport and off Kosrae's northeast point are usually good in summer but can be rough from December to February. The northeast side of the airport runway is a favourite snorkelling spot, with 4m to 6m walls, lobsters, giant clams, stingrays and good visibility. Be cautious of channel currents.

The natural swimming hole formed in the reef alongside Lelu causeway is good for swimming, but it tends to silt up so it's not suitable for snorkelling.

Further out on the reef, the Blue Hole is larger and deeper and harbours lots of marine life and coral. This is where the early Kosraeans deposited the bones of their kings; snorkelling is good here – if you dare.

Kayaking & Canoeing

The Mutunnena Channel, wending past Kosrae Nautilus Resort on the eastern side of the island, and the Utwe/Walung Mangrove Channel, along the island's southwest fringe, are laced with thick mangroves; a canoe or kayak trip through them is magical. The

east-side channel, which actually winds beneath the wooden walkway that leads to Kosrae Village Ec lodge, is too narrow for an outrigger canoe but is perfect for kayaking.

Contact the dive operators, left, for tour information. **Utwe-Walung Marine Park** (☎ 370 2321) also organises canoe trips through its mangrove channel.

Hiking

Kosrae has many wonderful hikes, though some require guides as they go through private land and the trails are difficult to find. For a short hike in Tofol, the easy stroll up to the museum offers a pleasing view of the surrounding area and of Lelu. For something meatier, the hike up the Tafunsak Gorge makes for a pleasant little afternoon outing. The Japanese caves (Map p104) near Malem are a novel option.

The most rewarding and challenging hike is from Utwe to the top of Mt Finkol; it takes eight to 10 hours, and hikers should be in tip-top shape as it's a strenuous climb.

Another arduous hike is up Mt Oma, beyond the Japanese caves. A guide is necessary for the six-hour trip.

The trip to the Menka ruins (p107) is another good hike.

Surfing

Kosrae is coming up as a surf destination, kick-started by US Peace Corps volunteers on the island. Apparently, the best breaks are in Lelu's Pihkusrik district. For intermediate surfers, Malem is handy, while Inmolsron, Wot and Yela in Walung are suitable for advanced surfers. Contact the visitor information centre (p104) for info on Peace Corps tours; **Sleeping Lady Divers** (☎ 370 3483) also has information.

KOSRAE FOR CHILDREN

It shouldn't be too hard to keep your little hellions occupied. If they misbehave, you could always instil the fear of God into them at one of Kosrae's **lively church services** (p101). Failing that, culture might just do the trick, and there's no better place than the **Lelu ruins** (p105); you might even like to play hide-and-seek behind an ancient basalt-log wall, thereby combining education *and* fun. **Lelu Island** (p105) in general is terrific for kids; strolling around the perimeter road, you're bound to bump into

Kosraean kids playing in the bushes, by the waterside and by the road. A spot of **kayaking** (opposite) might go down nicely. Failing all of this, teach your brood how to recognise the outline of the **Sleeping Lady** (p106) – although if you haven't taught them the birds and the bees yet, you might want to skip this option.

TOURS

The dive shops offer trips and tours; see opposite for details.

Kosrae Adventure Tours (☎ 370 4405) Waterfall hike or beach hike (three hours) US\$20; Mt Oma hike or river hike (five hours) US\$20; full-service camping US\$25; wild-pig hunting (half day) US\$20.

Utwe-Walung Marine Park (☎ 370 2321) Menka ruins tour US\$25.

SLEEPING

If you want to camp, it's best to approach the mayor of the village where you want to pitch your tent; he can find locals willing to let you camp on their land. The visitor information centre (p104) should have some suggestions.

Kosrae Village Ec lodge (Map p104; ☎ 370 5839; www.kosraevillage.com; PO Box 399, Kosrae; s/d from US\$89/109) The Village is a very special place, constructed from native materials in the style of an old-time Kosraean village and shaded by coconut and pandanus trees. The grounds are amazing: these superbly rustic bungalows are tucked between the mangrove channel and the ocean, all linked by connecting walkways through the jungle. Everything is wheelchair accessible.

Pacific Treelodge Hotel (Map p104; ☎ 370 7856; www.divekosrae.com; PO Box 637, Kosrae; s/d US\$55/75; ♿) These modern duplex cottages share a quirky feature – they're spread around a large mangrove pond, with the waters almost lapping at your back door. The rooms are large and comfortable and the staff are gracious and hospitable. The Treelodge is just across from a really gorgeous sliver of beach – island bliss. The grounds feature walkways that snake in and around the swamp; at the time of writing, a restaurant was being constructed at the swamp end of the walkway.

Kosrae Nautilus Resort (Map p104; ☎ 370 3567; www.kosraenautilus.com; PO Box 135, Kosrae; r from US\$75; ♿) This upmarket Australian-run place, a few minutes' walk from the

Lelu causeway, has comfortable, modern and clean rooms with minifridge and bath. Staff are very accommodating and there's a convivial atmosphere.

EATING

Inum (Map p104; ☎ 370 4686; mains US\$8-11; ♿) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Located at the Kosrae Village Ec lodge, in what is apparently the island's largest traditional-style building, Inum serves up outstanding food. The salads are superb, especially the Mangrove Crab Super Salad, which is filling enough to have as a main.

Nautilus Restaurant (Map p104; mains US\$8-15; ♿) lunch & dinner) At the Kosrae Nautilus Resort's restaurant, eat outside next to the pool or under a lovely thatched hut. Service is a little slow, but the food is excellent, ranging from pizza to local dishes such as breadfruit chips.

Island Café (☎ 370 3724; PO Box 331, Kosrae; mains US\$5-7) This cosy little café is the island's only nonhotel eating option and it's not too bad. Let 'Chef Dave' fix you a Locomoco Breakfast: fish with Spam. The dinner menu is also filling, with the seafood stir-fry probably the best pick.

SHOPPING

Typical Kosraean crafts include wooden taro pounders, carved canoes, woven bags and purses, and wall hangings of fibres and shells.

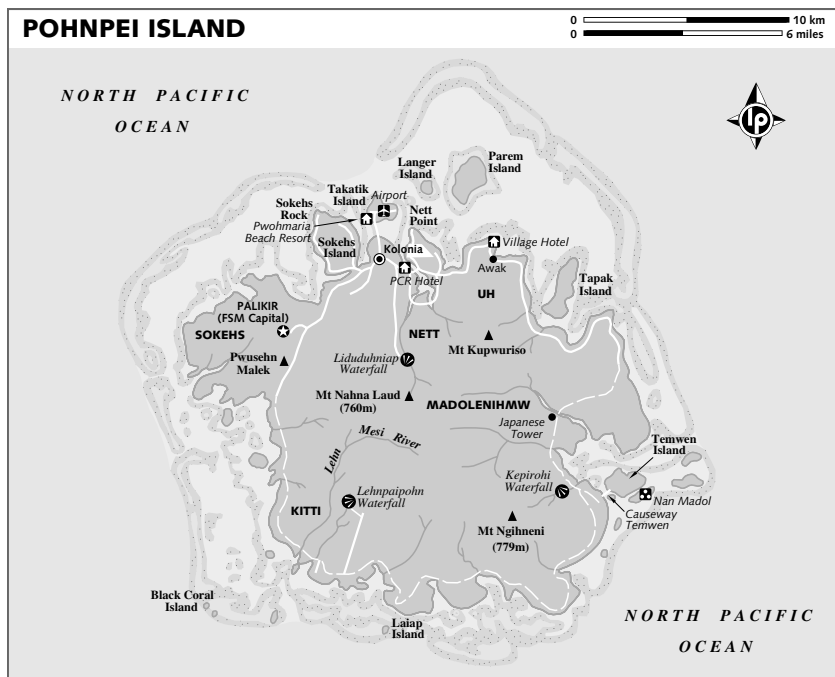
The visitor information centre (p104) sells a most pleasant CD of Kosraean music, entitled *Tidal Wave* (US\$10).

POHNPEI

pop 34,486 / area 345 sq km

Lush vegetation, jungle hillsides and flowering hibiscus: in many ways, Pohnpei fits the typical South Sea islands image, albeit a wet one, as copious rainfall feeds a multitude of streams, rivers and tumbling waterfalls.

Pohnpei's boldest landmark is the very scenic Sokehs Rock, a steep cliff face often compared to Honolulu's Diamond Head. The ancient stone city of Nan Madol, abandoned on nearly 100 artificial islets off the southeast coast, is Micronesia's best-known archaeological site and should be at the very top of your list of priorities.



Pohnpei’s capital, Kolonia, is sizable by island standards, while elsewhere the island is unspoiled and undeveloped, with just a smattering of small villages.

What more do you need? Well, there’s the diving – not as unique as other destinations, but still rewarding; the surfing, which some say is among the sport’s undiscovered gems; and the small lagoon islands, which lend themselves to pleasant day trips.

ORIENTATION

An 87km road circles Pohnpei Island; it takes about 1½ hours to travel the 36km from Kolonia clockwise to the Madolenihmw municipal building, and around four hours to go around the entire island.

Pohnpei’s airport is on Takatik Island, which is connected to Kolonia by a mile-long causeway.

INFORMATION

Bank of Guam (Map p111; ☎ 320 2550; PO Box 367, Kolonia) Has an ATM outside.
Computer Island (Map p111; ☎ 320 4942; Internet access per hr US\$3)

FSM Telecommunications (Map p111; Main St; Internet access per hr US\$4; ☎ 24hr)
Main post office (Map p111; Main St, Kolonia)
Pohnpei Public Library (Map p111; ☎ 320 2423; Internet access per hr US\$2)
Pohnpei State Hospital (Off Map p111; ☎ 320 2215)
Pohnpei visitor information centre (Map p111; ☎ 320 2421; Main St) The official tourist body.
Pohnpei Visitors Bureau (Map p111; ☎ 320 4851; pohnpeivb@mail.fm; ☎ 8am–5pm) A nonprofit tourist organisation.

TRANSPORT
Getting There & Away

See p135 for information on international flights to Pohnpei.

Caroline Islands Air (☎ 320 8406) flies from Pohnpei Island to Pingelap, Mokil and Sapwafik once or twice a week. Schedules are extremely erratic and they change like the wind, so make sure you contact the airline as late as you can for confirmation.

The state boat *MV Caroline Voyager* offers irregular voyages to the outer islands. Call the **Island Affairs Office** (☎ 320 2710) for fares and schedules.

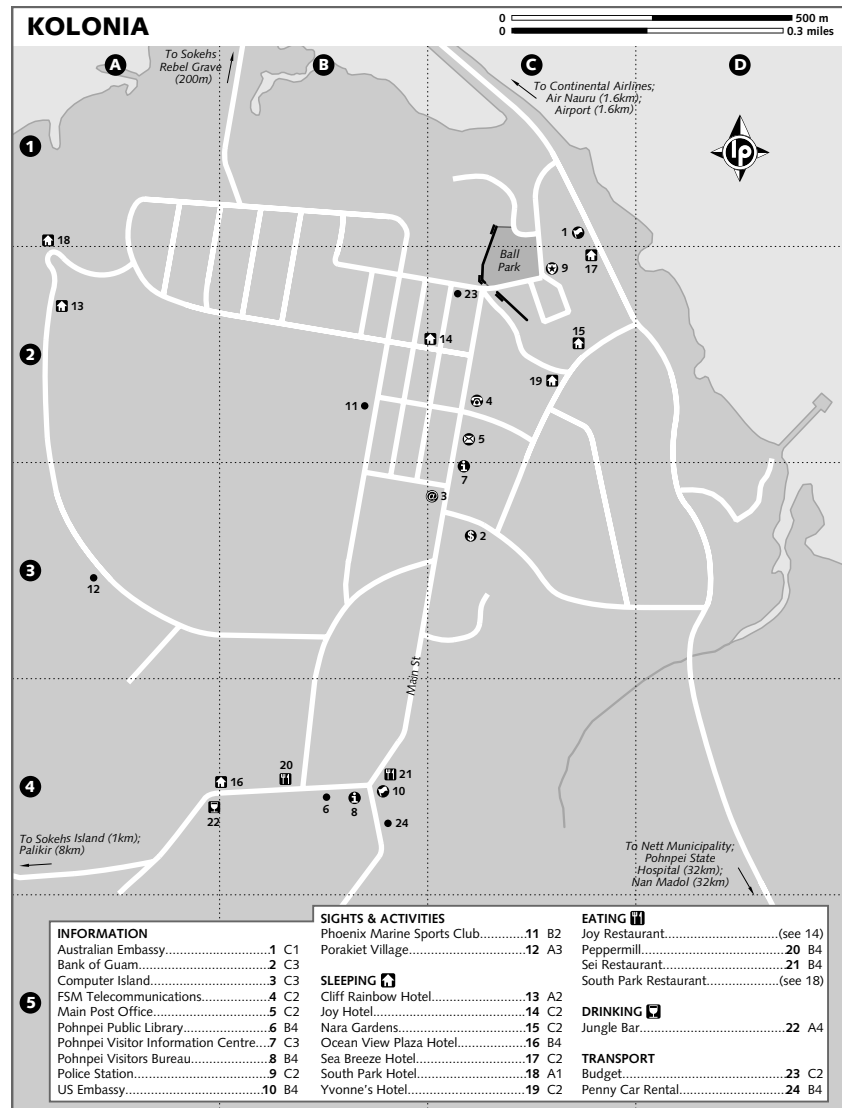
Getting Around

A taxi from the airport to Kolonia costs around US\$3. Try **Capital Taxi** (☎ 320 6486) or **Waido Taxi** (☎ 320 4129).

For car hire, give these a go:
Apollo’s Rent A Car (☎ 320 2403)
Budget (Map p111; ☎ 320 8705)
Penny Car Rental (Map p111; ☎ 320 5770)

KOLONIA

pop 5681
 Kolonia is a ramshackle town that’s very much alive with the pulse of the tropics. Although it’s the FSM’s largest town and even experiences occasional ‘rush hour’ traffic, it just can’t shake that slow, frontier-like vibe. The rural character is really apparent in the



FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

back streets, where dogs laze on the side of the road and every other yard, no matter how small, contains a pen of squealing pigs. About those dogs: they're absolutely everywhere. Some are mangy mutts, and some appear to be cute and domesticated, but most are very territorial, so don't be surprised if a pack of canines chases you on your back-street wander. Be on your guard, as they can bite (but you will have your revenge: some Pohnpeians eat dogs).

Kolonia Walking Tour

Begin in the north of town at the **German bell tower (1)**, the only structure from Pohnpei's original Catholic mission that managed to survive WWII.

WALK FACTS

Start German Bell Tower

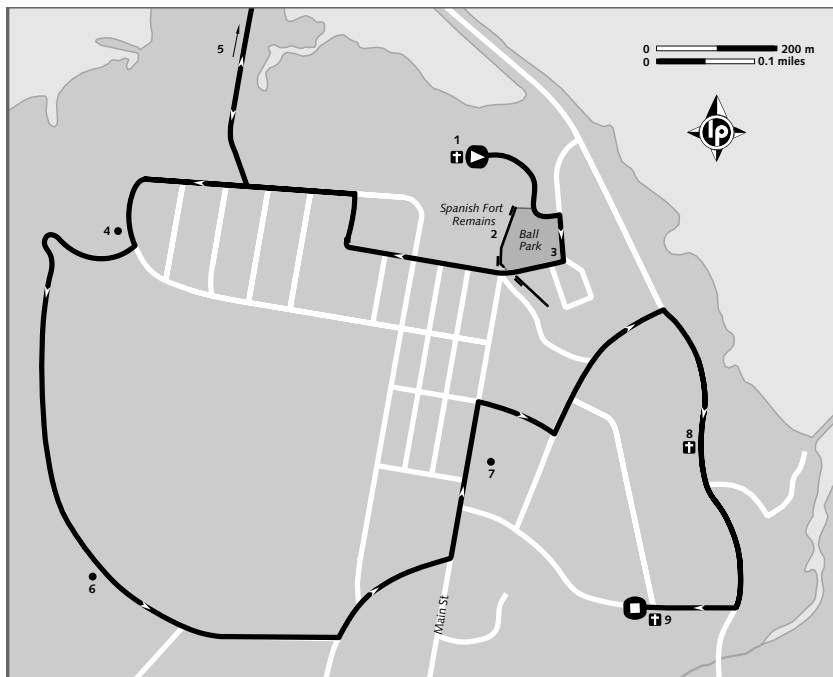
Finish Kosrae-Kolonia Congregational Church

Distance About 3.2km

Duration Two hours

Walk 150m southeast to the mossy remains of Kolonia's **Spanish stone walls (2)**, which were built around 1887 and once enclosed Fort Alphonse and large sections of Pohnpei's Spanish colony. One section of the old wall is at the side of the **ball park (3)**, while another starts across the street and runs along the road leading down to the waterfront. Often you'll be able to catch a softball game here or a lively church choir in the park on the other side of the wall; when the sun sets behind the wall, with rosy-fingered clouds splitting the trees, it's a magical sight.

Walk 600m to the west; the **German cemetery (4)**, behind the church down the hill from the South Park Hotel, holds the remains of sailors from the German cruiser *Emden* who died fighting the Sokehs rebels (see p100). It also has the grave of Victor Berg, the German governor who died suddenly and mysteriously in 1907 after excavating a Nan Madol grave (see the boxed text, p115). Unfortunately, the cemetery is overgrown and enclosed by a fence, so it's hard to make out the gravestones, but you might be able to feel some vibes.



The Sokehs rebels don't miss out; the **mass grave (5)** for the executed dissidents is in a residential area 500m northeast of the dead Germans. Look for the small, unmarked cement enclosure at the left edge of the road, shortly before the...er...dead end.

Backtracking past the German cemetery, take the road that goes through **Porakiet village** below. This will afford you a real slice of authentic Polynesian-Pohnpeian life, as you wend past men pounding out a *sakau* rhythm, dogs napping at bones (not yours, hopefully), kids playing in the street and women chatting to neighbours all day long.

Back on Main St, head north to the visitor information centre, where you'll find a small **Japanese tank (7)** painted in camouflage splotches.

Take the next right, just past the post office, then the first left until you come to the waterfront road on the eastern side of town. Turn right on the waterfront and you'll find old warehouse-style businesses, a public market, a few retail stores and the island's largest **Protestant church (8)**, built in the early 1930s.

Further down, to your right – between the College of Micronesia and the cinema – is the most colourful church in town, the **Kosrae-Kolonia Congregational Church (9)**, the place of worship for the island's Kosraean population.

PORAKIET VILLAGE

This village (Map p111) is home to the Polynesians who moved to Pohnpei from Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro Atolls following typhoon and famine disasters early last century. They live a more open and outdoor lifestyle than other Kolonians – their breezy, thatched homes with partly open-air sides are built on raised platforms half a metre off the ground.

The Kapingamarangi men make wood-carvings and the women weave; this enclave has sprouted a few outstanding craft shops (see p119).

SOKEHS ISLAND

Cross the causeway onto Sokehs (Map p110) and you'll see that the road divides; both ways come to a dead end rather than circle around.

It takes a half-day to walk around the island. The northern part is the road the

Germans built with forced labour in 1910, an incident that touched off the infamous rebellion (see p100).

The 275m **Sokehs Ridge**, loaded with **anti-aircraft guns, naval guns, pillboxes and tunnels**, has an excellent view of Kolonia and the surrounding reef, as well as nesting tropic-birds and fruit bats. The easy 45-minute trail starts on a 4WD road behind the municipal office.

The sheer, challenging climb up 152m **Sokehs Rock** (Map p110) yields an awesome view. After crossing the causeway, take the road to the right; the trail begins shortly before the end of the road, near the church. A guide is advisable.

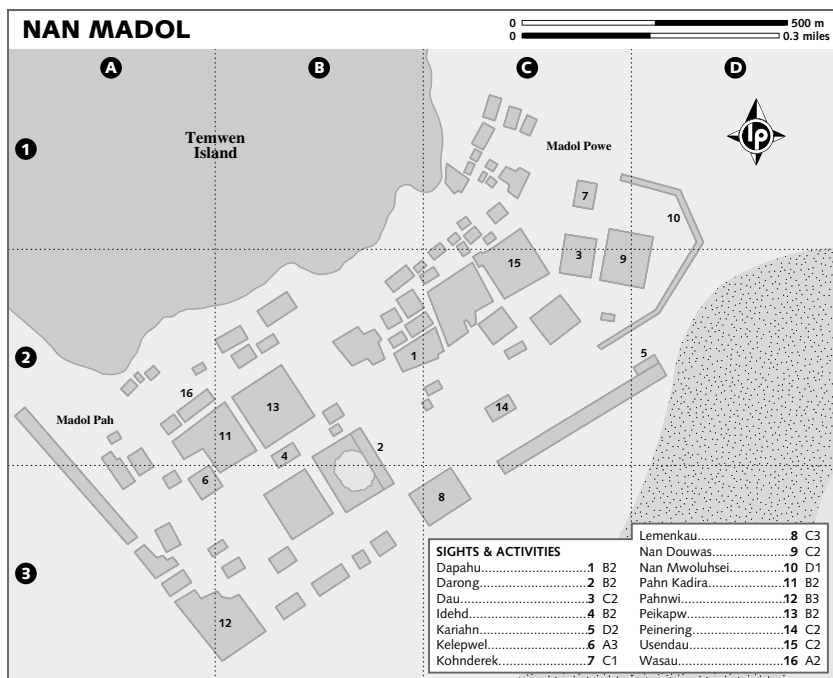
AROUND POHNPEI

There are several magnificent waterfalls off the circle-island drive. The 15m **Liduduhniap Waterfall** (Map p110) in Nett, a 15-minute drive from Kolonia, is a popular swimming spot. Take Kolonia's waterfront road heading south; turn right onto the paved road that starts just before the tyre shop. After 4.4km along this riverside road, there's a small power plant; continue for just over half a mile to where the road forks, turn left at the fork and stop at the kiosk 300m in. The trail to the waterfall begins at the small village directly opposite the kiosk. It's a five-minute walk to the falls along a pleasant hibiscus-lined path.

The 21m **Kepirohi Waterfall** (Map p110) is further along in Sapwehrek. It might look familiar: it's the impressive waterfall pictured in all the tourist brochures. The broad falls cascade over a basalt rock face into a pool that's fine for ultra-refreshing midday dips.

The waterfall is at the far end of the village of Sapwehrek. About 200m past Sapwehrek Elementary School, you'll cross a river followed by a small church on the right side of the road; park at the church and walk back 15m to the trail, which begins on the north side of the church property. It takes about 15 minutes to walk up to the falls.

Lehnpaipohn Waterfall (Map p110) is a pleasant 10m fall that drops into a wide, deep pool, ideal for swimming. To get to the trailhead when coming from Kolonia, continue 16km south of Palikir, at which point you'll cross the wide bridge that spans the Lehn Mesi River. About 1½km further



on, turn inland at the school bus stop, pass the Pohn Alamwahu Church and continue on the dirt road for another 2½km.

Palikir, the 54-hectare FSM capital complex built in 1989, incorporates traditional Micronesian architecture: Kosraean traditional-style roofs, Nan Madol-style black pillars, and beam ends that resemble Yapese stone money and Chuukese outrigger canoes.

An easy trail up the high volcanic cone of **Pwusehn Malek** (Chickenshit Mountain; Map p110) starts by the telephone pole on the right-hand side, about 2½km south of the Palikir capital complex. Legend says this formation was created during the defeat of Pohnpei's Saudeleur dynasty (see p99): Palikir's ruler became a giant rooster, flew to Nan Madol and left behind a huge mound of droppings. That's the 'chicken shit'; never let anyone tell you Pohnpeians don't have a sense of humour.

The paved road to Palikir heads uphill to the left just before the causeway to Sokehs Island; this is also the start of the circle-island road. The entrance to Palikir is 5.6km further down.

NAN MADOL

For many travellers, Nan Madol is the highlight of their Micronesian odyssey; it's a criminal offence to come to Pohnpei and not visit here.

An important political, social and religious centre built during the Saudeleur dynasty, Nan Madol was a place for ritual activity and the homes of royalty and servants. Comprising 92 artificial islets extending 1½km, it's built on the tidal flats and reef off the southeastern side of Pohnpei, near Temwen Island.

Wide basalt pillars, up to 7½m long, formed naturally into hexagonal columns. They were quarried on Pohnpei Island and hauled to the site by raft, then stacked horizontally around the islets as retaining walls; the resultant twisting canals are known as the 'Venice of Micronesia'. On the level surfaces were temples, burial vaults, meeting houses, bathing areas, and pools for turtles, fish and eels. The eastern half, **Madol Powe** (Upper Town), had priests and rituals; the western half, **Madol Pah** (Lower Town), was the administrative section.

Nan Madol's construction began between AD 1100 and 1200 and continued for another 200 to 300 years; it was uninhabited, though recently abandoned, when the first Westerners arrived in the 1820s.

Many of the ruins have collapsed, but that just adds to the dramatic impact, especially as you round a sharp corner in the canal and suddenly find yourself in the shadow of the massive **Nan Douwas**, the largest structure still standing and the most impressive. Its outer walls stand 7½m high and its inner compound contains four crypts, burial places for the Saudeleur dynasty and later the *nahnmwarki* (district chief).

The islet of **Kariahn** also has high walls surrounding a tomb. The administrative centre of Nan Madol was probably **Pahn Kadira**, which also featured the temple of the Thunder God. A large, low platform is all that remains of the temple.

The islet of **Idehd** was the religious centre. An annual ritual performed here by high priests culminated with the offering of cooked turtle innards to Nan Sanwohl, the 'holy eel' that was kept in the compound pool. The ritual was part of a two-week religious ceremony that included canoe-building competitions, feasting, singing, dancing and *sakau* drinking.

Darong, an important ritual area, has a natural reef pool in its centre, which may have been used for raising clams. Near one wall is a large stone once used for pounding *sakau*.

Other major islets are **Usendau**, an area where priests lived; **Nan Mwuluhsei** ('Where the Voyage Stopped'), the ocean entrance to Nan Madol; **Pahnwi**, a multipurpose islet that included burial tombs; **Kelepwel**,

a residential islet for servants and visitors; **Wasau**, an area where food was prepared; **Kohnderek**, a site for funeral services; **Dapahu**, an islet where canoes were made; **Dau**, a place where warriors lived; **Peikapw**, an islet that had two pools for turtles; **Lemenkau**, the medical centre; and **Peinerling**, a coconut-processing centre.

The dive companies provide boat tours of Nan Madol (p116). You can also arrange to have kayaks or canoes taken to Nan Madol so you can paddle through.

Visit by boat at high tide, so you can easily navigate the twisting mangrove-lined channels and see most of the islets.

You can try driving then wading across to Nan Madol, but the road will badly scrape your car belly and you won't be able to see most of the islets.

Make sure you pick up a copy of the informative Nan Madol brochure from the visitor information centre (p110).

ISLANDS IN POHNPEI LAGOON

Langer Island (Map p110), equipped with covered picnic tables, is a popular place for weekend family picnics and has clear waters with good swimming and snorkelling.

The small **Black Coral Island** (Map p110), on Pohnpei's southwestern barrier reef, is owned by a friendly Pohnpeian family and makes a fine place for either a day outing or an overnight getaway. There's nice coral around the island and splendid marine life on the ocean side. Be careful of strong tidal currents in the channel. A good spot for swimming and snorkelling, the island can also be a fun place for shell searching or just lying on the beach.

Contact the dive shops (p116) for tour information.

MYSTERIES OF NAN MADOL

Nan Madol is Pohnpei's foremost tourist spot, but not all Pohnpeians feel comfortable there; the local belief is strong that people shouldn't disturb the ruins. Actually, there's evidence this may be more than mere superstition: in 1907 Pohnpei's German governor, Victor Berg, died of a mysterious ailment immediately after excavating a burial tomb on Nan Madol. The German administration claimed it was heat exhaustion, but a lot of older Pohnpeians still doubt that diagnosis.

Nan Madol holds its mysteries well. Some believe that the legendary lost continent of Mu, or Lemuria, may lie off its waters and that Nan Madol was built as a mirror image of a sunken city that, at the time of construction, could still be seen lying beneath the water's surface.

The horror writer HP Lovecraft and his acolytes played on this legend in their stories, piling on many more layers of weirdness (see p102).

OUTER ATOLLS

Ant Atoll (Map pp100–1), a few miles south-west of Pohnpei Island, has white-sand beaches, abundant coral and fish that make for good diving, and a large sea-bird colony.

Pakin Atoll (Map pp100–1), a popular dive spot, is 40km off Pohnpei Island's north-western coast.

Oroluk Atoll (Map pp100–1) has a tiny population of only a dozen people, but a sizable population of hawksbills and Pacific green turtles.

Mokil Atoll (Map pp100–1) has friendly people, a pretty lagoon and a 300m airstrip.

Pingelap Atoll (Map pp100–1) is known for *kahlek*, a kind of night fishing that uses burning torches to attract flying fish into hand-held nets. Oliver Sacks, in his book *The Island of the Colourblind*, discusses the total colour blindness that arose on Pingelap after the population bottleneck caused by a cyclone that killed 90% of the island's population.

Sapwuaifik Atoll (Map pp100–1), once known as Ngatik Atoll, is famed for its outrigger canoes, made from breadfruit logs and assembled using wooden pegs and coconut-fibre twine.

The 400 or so people of the beautiful **Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi Atolls** (Map pp100–1) are physically, linguistically and culturally Polynesian.

See p110 for information on getting to the atolls; the dive shops (right) also arrange tours.

ACTIVITIES

Diving & Snorkelling

Pohnpei has pretty coral reefs, manta rays and lots of fish. It's also possible to dive Nan Madol.

While snorkelling is not good on Pohnpei Island itself, small nearby atolls have good coral and marine life. Ant Atoll is a favourite diving spot for its schools of barracuda and reef sharks, as is Pakin Atoll for its virgin reefs with gorgonian fans and abundant marine life. Spring, summer and autumn are the best times for diving.

DIVE SHOPS

Aqua World Pohnpei Inc. (☎ 320 6556; http://homepage2.nifty.com/aquaworld/untitled1_001.htm; PO Box 1416, Kolonia) One/two dives US\$50/100; one dive at Pwohmaria Beach US\$25; one dive at Nahlap Island US\$35. Add-on to Ant Atoll US\$35, Pakin Atoll US\$35, Black Coral Island US\$35 and Na US\$35. Overnight camp tours to Ant Atoll US\$140, Nahlap Island US\$120, Black Coral Island US\$120 and Langer Island US\$100. Snorkelling and sightseeing tours to Ant Atoll US\$100, Nahlap Island US\$80, Langer Island US\$60, and Nan Madol and Kepirohi Waterfall by car/boat US\$40/100. Located at Pwohmaria Beach Resort.

Phoenix Marine Sports Club (Map p111; ☎ 320 5678; phoenix@mail.fm; PO Box 387, Kolonia, Pohnpei) One-/two-tank dives US\$56/86, Ant and Pakin Atolls extra US\$20; snorkelling including lunch US\$56; full-day fishing trip including lunch US\$400; Nan Madol and Kepirohi Waterfall full-day tour including lunch US\$56; land tours including lunch US\$46.

The Village (Map p110; ☎ 320 2797; www.thevillagehotel.com; PO Box 339, Pohnpei) Scuba diving with one/two/three or more divers US\$200/100/85. All-day boat tours (one/two/three or more people) to Nan Madol ruins and the waterfalls, with lagoon snorkelling, or to Japanese caves and reef islands with lagoon snorkelling US\$110/60/50. Kayak hire US\$25; kayak tours for one/two people US\$25/35; guided kayak tours US\$60 per person, minimum two people. Land tours, speciality tours (birding, fishing) and surfing also possible. Rates available on request.

BLOODY HART

A visit to Ngatik (now Sapwuaifik) by the British ship *Lambton* in 1837 left an indelible mark on Pohnpei. Charles 'Bloody' Hart, the ship's Aussie captain, was after fine pieces of tortoiseshell he'd seen on an earlier excursion. But the shells had religious significance to the Ngatikese and they refused to trade; during the first visit, trading negotiations were halted by a group of armed islanders who attacked the crew and forced them to run for their lives back to the ship.

Hart was a swindler, accustomed to getting his own way, and although his crew had escaped unharmed they sought revenge. The Ngatikese, armed only with clubs and slings, had little defence against the muskets of the *Lambton's* crew, and the sailors massacred all the island men.

As a result, the 600 people of Sapwuaifik Atoll are largely descended from a mix of Ngatikese women and British, American, Pohnpeian and Gilbertese men, many of them crew members of the *Lambton*.

Surfing

Surfers are discovering Pohnpei, where the waves break a long way from the beach; it's like Tahiti, they say. It's certainly a unique experience; you can't paddle out so you need to catch a boat to the waves. Palikir Pass (P-Pass) is the exemplar of Pohnpeian surfing, followed by Main Pass (Sokehs Pass).

The **Pohnpei Surf Club** (☎ 320 7845; www.pohnpeisurfclub.com; PO Box 1893, Pohnpei) organises trips and guides.

Hiking & Other Activities

The two main hikes around Kolonia are on Sokehs Island (p113); hikes into the interior need a guide.

Trolling, bottom-fishing and spear-fishing trips can be arranged through the dive shops (opposite).

POHNPEI FOR CHILDREN

Take the kids for a stroll around **Kolonia** (p111). The town is guaranteed to amuse; try a picnic in the park next to the **Spanish stone walls** (p112). A walk through **Porakiet village** (p113) is guaranteed to please; it's a vibrant slice of island life. Pohnpei's waterfalls – **Liduduhniap** (p113), **Kepirohi** (p113) and **Lehnpaipohn** (p113) – are pleasant spots for a swim, and you can arrange a kid-friendly tour that embraces them (opposite). **Langer Island** and **Black Coral Island** (p115), in the lagoon, make excellent day trips for the family, with good beaches and swimming opportunities. Finally, there's **Nan Madol** (p114), the ancient ruined city that's an eye-opener for human beings of all ages.

TOURS

For information on tours, contact the dive shops, opposite.

SLEEPING

Camping can be arranged on the uninhabited islands of Ant and Pakin Atolls; ask the visitor information centre (p110) to help with arrangements.

Ocean View Plaza Hotel (Map p111; ☎ 320 7049; www.fm/oceanview; PO Box 416, Kolonia; r from US\$53; 🍷) This upscale joint is on a hill overlooking Kolonia Harbor; it's as scenic as you'd guess. The rooms have mountain or harbour views. It's a bit sterile but that's probably because it's clean and modern. Not too bad a place. You can hire cars here.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Village Hotel (Map p110; ☎ 320 2797; www.thevillagehotel.com; PO Box 339, Pohnpei; r from US\$103) This outstanding resort, perched on a hillside 8km east of Kolonia, has 20 local-style thatched cottages, each with two queen waterbeds, wicker furniture, mosquito netting, screened windows and private bathrooms. Prime views cost a bit more, but the whole place is simply delightful. There's a fantastic restaurant (see p118) on the premises, and you can take your meals on a scenic-beyond-words gazebo that juts out over the jungle. The owners are friendly and accommodating, and they have obvious love for the island of Pohnpei, which translates into an ideal Micronesian experience for you, the traveller.

South Park Hotel (Map p111; ☎ 320 2255; southparkhotel@mail.fm; PO Box 829, Pohnpei; s/d old wing US\$43/48, new wing US\$80/90; 🍷) This place has a fine hillside location. The new wing has pleasant rooms with verandas boasting an unspoiled view of Sokehs Rock, while the old wing also has fine ocean views but a more cottagelike atmosphere (and rooms are pretty basic).

Nara Gardens (Map p111; ☎ 320 2774; bnn@mail.fm; PO Box 307, Kolonia; studio/deluxe units US\$40/50) This pleasing little budget spot has a few apartments for overnight guests (and a few for long-term stays); each apartment has twin beds, a TV and kitchenette, and the friendly management lives just across the street. It's advisable to make advance reservations given the limited space. Credit cards are not accepted.

Pwohmaria Beach Resort (☎ 320 5941; pwohmaria.beach@mail.fm; PO Box 1416, Nett) These beachside cottages are squeezed between the commercial dock and the airport's backside. The runway proximity could disrupt sleep – Pohnpei has several late-night flights. The clean cottages have a rustic appeal, with wood interiors and wicker furniture; ceiling fans and a stiff sea breeze keep them cool.

Cliff Rainbow Hotel (Map p111; ☎ 320 2415; cliff.rainbow@mail.fm; s US\$40–85, d US\$48–95; 🍷) This hotel has two classes of rooms; the cheaper rooms are in an older section that's really quite ordinary and not much chop at all, although they are clean and adequate. The

newer rooms are bigger, and well...newer – and just as clean. There's a restaurant on site and the staff are sweet.

Also:

Joy Hotel (Map p111; ☎ 320 2447; joy_ponape@mail.fm; PO Box 484, Pohnpei; s/d US\$69/90; 🍷) This town hotel has nicely furnished rooms with balconies.

PCR Hotel (Map p110; ☎ 320 4981; pcr_pohnpei@mail.fm; PO Box 101, Pohnpei; s/d US\$65/85; 🍷) Rooms overlooking the water on the Nett Peninsula.

Sea Breeze Hotel (Map p111; ☎ 320 2065; PO Box 692, Pohnpei; back view s/d US\$45/56, front view US\$56/67; 🍷) A good option on the harbour road; some rooms have ocean views.

Yvonne's Hotel (Map p111; ☎ 320 5130; yneth@hotmail.com; PO Box 688, Pohnpei; old rooms s/d US\$55/65, new rooms US\$65/75; 🍷) Pleasant rooms in a central location.

EATING

Peppermill (Map p111; ☎ 320 7612; PO Box 310, Kolonia; mains US\$10-20; 🍷 lunch & dinner) This is Pohnpei's newest restaurant, and it's a bit more upmarket than most. The macadamia-nut chicken with papaya and pineapple is indicative of its fresh approach. The décor tries hard, too, with prints on the walls depicting scenes of island life.

PCR Hotel Restaurant (Map p110; ☎ 320 4981; PO Box 101, Pohnpei; mains US\$8-15; 🍷 lunch & dinner) This place, on the way to Sokehs, has a loyal following that appreciates its great waterfront setting and consistently excellent food. It serves Japanese food, including sushi on a conveyor belt, as well as Italian pizza and pasta. There's music some nights – gospel, bluegrass, what-have-you.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Village Hotel Restaurant (Map p110; ☎ 320 2797; PO Box 339, Pohnpei; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) As it does with accommodation, so it comes up trumps with good eating; you've got to come here when the sun's going down for the ultimate dining experience. Perched on a ridge overlooking the lagoon, the open-air dining room is encased in what's touted as Micronesia's 'largest thatched-roof building'; it is indeed impressive. That would probably be enough to convince most people, but the capper is that the food is absolutely superb. You'll be wanting to try the chilled sashimi.

Joy Restaurant (Map p111; ☎ 320 2336; PO Box 454, Kolonia; dishes US\$6-9; 🍷 lunch) This place is a lunch specialist and a perennial favourite at that, forever dishing up a menu of excellent Japanese food. Fresh fish is the speciality, though there are beef and chicken dishes, too.

South Park Restaurant (Map p111; ☎ 320 2255; South Park Hotel; mains US\$9-16; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Another place that packs 'em in (such as can be done on Pohnpei), with a varied menu and a nice view of Sokehs Rock through glass-louved windows. It showcases Pohnpeian dancing on Saturday nights.

Sei Restaurant (☎ 320 2403; PO Box 254, Kolonia; buffet US\$10; 🍷 lunch & dinner) With its wood-pannelled floors and ceiling, this barnlike space is certainly arresting. It's a popular meeting place and social space, not least for its all-you-can-eat, serve-your-own buffet, stuffed with seafood, fried goods and all kinds of BBQ meats.

DRINKING

Sakau, the local narcotic drink, is made from *Piper methysticum*, the roots of a pepper shrub; to prepare it, pepper roots are pounded on a stone and the pulp is squeezed through hibiscus bark. The juice is then mixed with water and, traditionally, poured into a coconut shell, which is passed around. Every neighbourhood has a *sakau* bar, though most are small, casual and inconspicuous; mostly they're simple thatched-roof, open-air structures in someone's backyard.

Unlike boisterous, temperamental alcohol drinkers, *sakau* drinkers are quiet and relaxed. They generally sit in a circle sharing stories, passing the *sakau* bowl and gradually falling into quiet contemplation (see the boxed text, opposite).

The bars can be a bit hard to find – ask the locals (who always know).

Jungle Bar (Map p111; Kolonia) You can get booze here if you wish, but at night you might feel left out; that's when *sakau* rules. Mellow music, peaceful staff and a huge, open-air seating area ensure everyone's grooving on the pepper-root tip.

Tattooed Irishman (Map p110; ☎ 320 2797; Village Hotel) Rip into some island-style cocktails at the Village Hotel's large open-air, thatched gazebo. It's out of town, but well worth the effort if you happen to catch a spine-chilling Pohnpeian sunset over the lagoon.

FOUR CUPS OF SAKAU & A PACK OF FERAL DOGS *Simon Sellars*

As a travel writer, my job is to research local culture. So in Pohnpei I did what Pohnpeians do – I got bent; I drank *sakau*.

Sakau is like kava from Fiji or Vanuatu, only much stronger. In ancient times, the drinking of *sakau* had religious significance and it was usually only consumed when the high chief was present.

At Kolonia's Jungle Bar (opposite), a mellow, open-air place, I ordered *sakau* and was given what looked like a mud milkshake.

I took in the scene. By the pool table, old and young men sat quietly, watching a game in progress. There was no real conversation; everyone was calm and still. Every five minutes or so a young guy would appear and offer each man the *sakau* bowl in turn. I loved the communal aspect of this ritual, but felt wistful that I wouldn't be able to join in.

After a short while, the young lady who'd served me came over.

'Your first time with *sakau*? I'll show you. It's simple; just close your eyes when you drink...'

I did and I discovered that *sakau* has a clammy consistency from the hibiscus, not as gritty as mud, but close. But it wasn't too unpleasant.

We chatted for a while; I finished my cup and ordered another. *Sakau* is a real creeper; my tongue and lips went numb and I began to feel benevolence and wellbeing. All the stresses of my trip melted away as I sat there listening to the reggae on the sound system. My new friend told me the band was Black Shadow, from Chuuk. No drums, just loping bass runs and fuzzed-out guitar, with a mournful, high-voiced man singing over the top. I agreed it was perfect for *sakau*.

On the third cup, just like the guys around the pool table, I fell into silent contemplation. Further conversation seemed unnecessary; I felt like I could read minds.

FW Christian, who researched Nan Madol in the 1890s, wrote that 'after four cups of *sakau*, one leg struggles south while the other is marching due north'; I was on my fourth cup when I decided to leave. Like Christian, I was soon to test the duality of man: my body went one way, my mind another.

I got completely lost trying to find my way back to the hotel, following what was supposed to be a simple 20-minute route. It took me an hour to get home; I ended up in Porakiet village at 1am, with puzzled locals wondering what the hell I was doing out so late.

I couldn't explain and I didn't ask directions because I had this powerful determination to get myself home, to try and solve the dilemma of why I was lost. That single-minded focus was from the *sakau*, I think, which was great, but the fuzzy logic was also from the *sakau*, so there was a trade-off.

Then the inevitable pack of feral dogs chased me, before a flash storm almost flattened me to the ground and washed me away. I gave up and asked a kind lady the way home.

Back at the hotel, I looked at a map and saw that I'd walked past the turnoff to my place at least four times, going around in circles. *Sakau*, it would seem, fries the most basic neurological functions.

When I woke the next morning, it was from the deepest sleep – like I'd been buried alive.

And that's *sakau*. Nothing more to say, really.

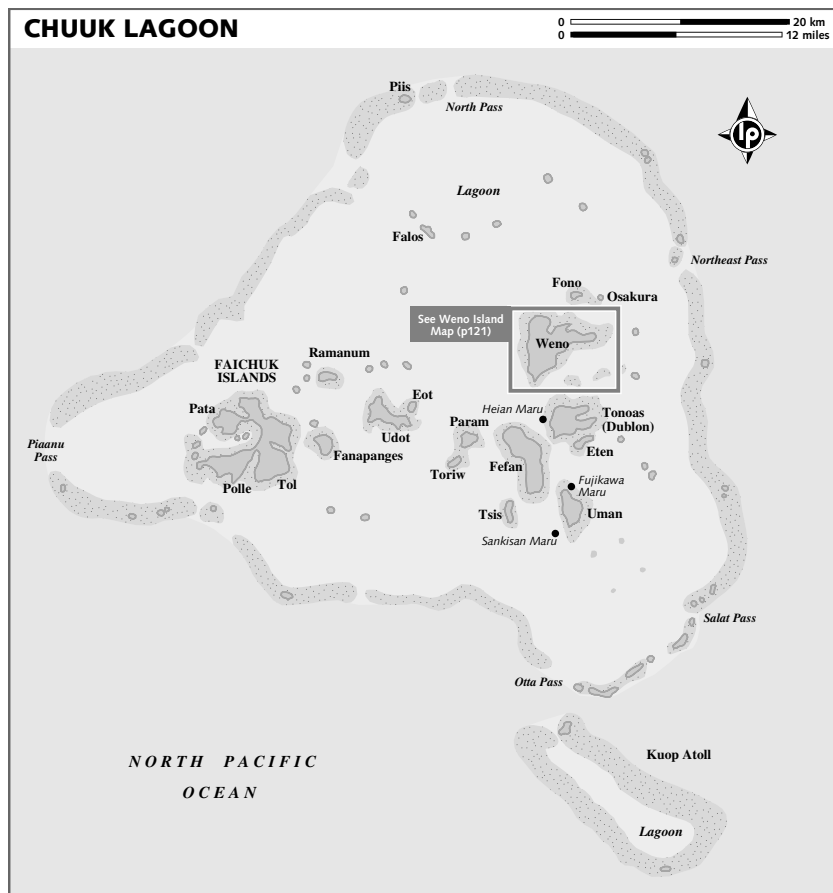
SHOPPING

Kapingamarangi islanders make Pohnpei's fine handicrafts. Most common are carved mangrove or ironwood dolphins, sharks with real shark teeth, turtles, and outrigger-canoe models with woven sails. There are also manta rays and dolphins carved from ivory palm nut. A few places in Porakiet village sell handicrafts; try the Carving Spot Handicraft Shop and the Kapingamarangi Gift Shop, and ask the locals for advice. Traditional Micronesian handicrafts are sold at Joy Restaurant (opposite).

CHUUK

pop 53,395 / area 127 sq km

Chuuk is colourful, lively and rough around the edges. Houses are commonly painted in several bright contrasting colours, and on hot days village women sit bare-breasted in streams doing laundry and young children run around naked. Speedboats zip back and forth across the lagoon and from Weno you can watch the sun set behind the Faichuk Islands, often with a brilliant light show.



Chuuk's ace in the hole is its sunken war wrecks, which attract devoted divers from all over the world. An entire Japanese fleet rests on the lagoon floor – a bloody moment in time captured forever in an underwater museum (save for the creeping rust). Together, these wrecks represent the largest naval loss in history.

ORIENTATION

Weno is the main island. Villages skirt the outer edges, and the district centre, government offices and airport are on the northwest side. A coastal road extends most of the way around Weno, broken by a narrow gap of mangrove swamp between the tiny villages of Nukunap and Winipis on the east side.

INFORMATION

Bank of Guam (Map p122; ☎ 330 2567; PO Box 69, Weno) Has a 24-hour ATM.

Chuuk visitor information centre (Map p122; ☎ 330 4133; cvb@mail.fm; PO Box FQ, Weno; ⌚ 8am–5pm)

FSM Telecommunications (Map p122; Internet access per hr US\$4; ⌚ 24 hr) Telephone calls can be made here.

Hospital (Map p122; ☎ 330 2216)

Post office (Map p122; Weno)

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Catch them at the right time and the Chuukese can be friendly, but you should know that Chuuk has a reputation. High unemployment rates, economic malaise and a general dissatisfaction among young men mean that trouble is never far away.

Male and female travellers alike should not venture out after dark, even in a car.

If you must go out at night, do so at your own risk; travellers tell numerous tales of raucous bars becoming bottle-hurling scenes in the blink of an eye. Stick to the tamer bars at the Truk Stop hotel and Blue Lagoon Resort.

Don't accept lifts in vehicles or boats from strangers and don't hitchhike under any circumstances.

Foreign women walking alone will probably be subject to constant verbal harassment; take a taxi or walk around in a group.

TRANSPORT

See p135 for details of international flights to Chuuk. Weno's airport is smack in the centre of town. Taxis wait out front, but most hotels provide airport transfers if given notice.

Commuter boats and private speedboats regularly journey between the main lagoon islands and Weno. Note that these depart from the islands for Weno in the morning,

leaving Weno in the afternoon for the return journey; this makes it difficult to plan a day trip. You'll therefore need to plan an overnight stay, and this could be unwise, considering the Chuukese way.

Ask at the visitor information centre for advice and help in maybe finding a sponsor. If this is all too much, try the dive shops (p124) for tour information.

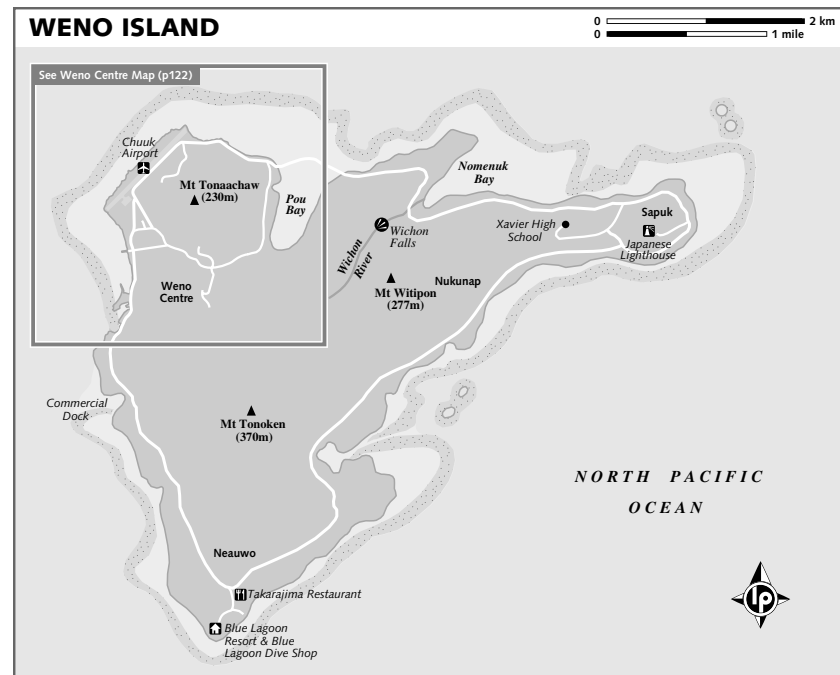
For Weno car rentals, try **Chuuk Star** (☎ 330 2040), **J & R Rentals** (☎ 330 2215), the **Kurassa Hotel** (Map p122; ☎ 330 4415) or the **Truk Stop hotel** (Map p122; ☎ 330 4232).

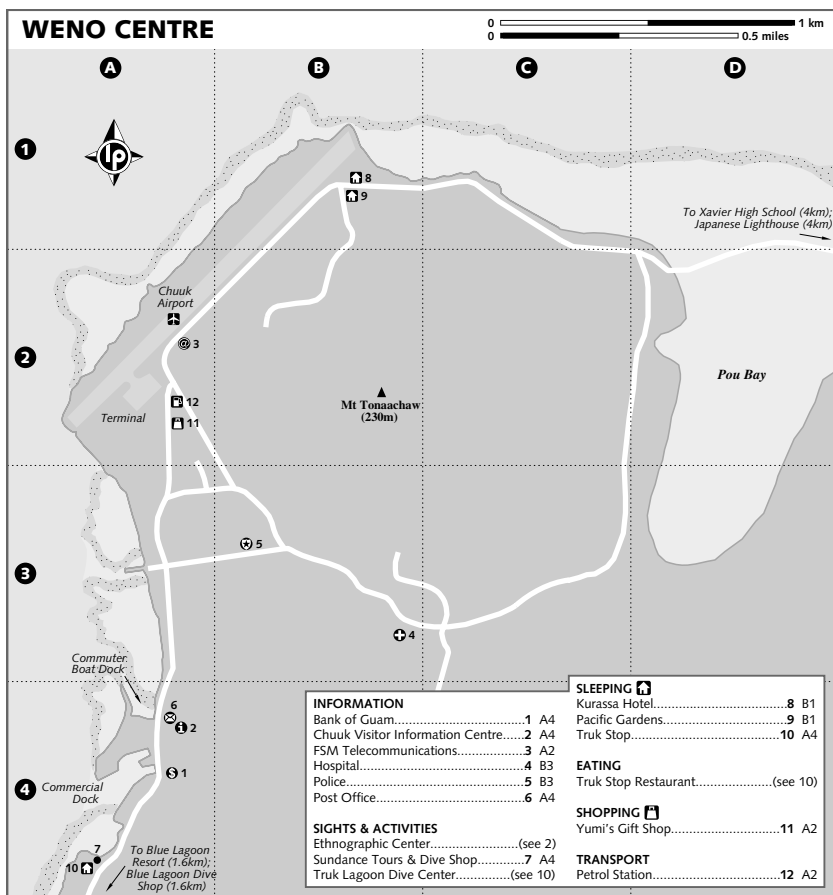
WENO

pop 15,000

Weno, the second-largest island in the lagoon, is Chuuk's capital and commercial centre. It certainly has a pretty setting, ringed by mangrove forests, but as one of Micronesia's most densely populated islands, it also has its share of pollution problems, including sewage that runs into the lagoon and streets littered with trash.

Many outer islanders come to Weno in search of job opportunities, of which there are





few for those without political connections; they end up living in poverty.

Ethnographic Center

The **center** (Map p122; ☎ 330 4133; cvb@mail.fm; PO Box FQ, Weno; admission US\$1.50; ☎ 8am-5pm) is a small one-room museum at the tourist office. It features love sticks (see p125), outrigger-canoe models and a few other interesting traditional items, such as a coconut grater and a *ulong*, a special food bowl that was used to present the season's first harvest to the high chief. There are also artefacts from the lagoon shipwrecks, and a display of photos taken during the two-day US bombing assault on the Japanese fleet.

Mt Tonaachaw

When the legendary Sowukachaw arrived on Chuuk, he stuck a lump of basalt rock on the summit of Mt Tonaachaw (Map p122) and built a meeting house from which he ruled all of Chuuk Lagoon.

The steep-sided 230m mountain is the backdrop for the airport and harbour. A trail goes to the top of Mt Tonaachaw from the Civic Action Team (CAT) camp. It's about 30 minutes to the summit, where there's a Japanese bunker, one tree and good panoramic views.

Chuukese are wary of climbing this mountain because Neawacha, the ghost of an old woman who lives there, is believed to have the power of curses.

Xavier High School

East of the airport, the Jesuit-run Xavier High School (Map p121) opened in 1953. Originally the site of a German chapel, the land was taken by the Japanese in 1940 and a fortresslike wartime communications centre was constructed. The main building, with 600mm reinforced-concrete walls and vaultlike steel doors and windows, miraculously survived two direct hits by US bombers. Visitors can climb the roof for a panoramic view of Chuuk Lagoon and walk around the grounds, provided they don't disturb classes.

Japanese Lighthouse

Even better than the view from Xavier is the one from the Japanese lighthouse (Map p121) in Sapuk. The lighthouse, which was built in the early 1930s, sits atop Newech Hill at an elevation of 117m, but it's on private property; someone may ask you for money. Park your car where the road briefly plateaus at a house, and walk the rest of the way up; as at Xavier, the road can be very muddy, rocky and treacherous even with a 4WD car.

ISLANDS IN CHUUK LAGOON

Tonoas (Dublon)

pop 3000
Both the Germans and the Japanese made Tonoas their administrative centre, but intense US bombings left the Japanese military headquarters in ruins. Most WWII relics are on the island's western side; seeing them generally costs cash.

Overgrown vegetation in Sapou village partly conceals a ruined city. A former

Japanese naval hospital can be explored. Driving counterclockwise from Sapou to the southern side of Dublon, you'll see a large Japanese dome-like **concrete bunker**; the protruding iron pipe served as an air vent. Ahead, take the road's right fork to a fortified **Japanese building** with heavy metal doors and windows and, further on, an old **Japanese seaplane base**. Other island sites include a small **Japanese memorial** and a massive **Japanese cement tunnel**.

Eten

The Japanese used Chuukese labour to tear down Eten's mountaintops and turn Eten into an airfield. There's a massive two-storey **concrete structure** on the island, which islanders say was hit by 15 to 20 bombs; one room is, amazingly, still intact. There's a **demolished tower** and a **big gun** on top of the hill, as well as **wrecked planes** in the water around the island.

Other Islands

Fefan (Map p120) is known for its fresh produce and high-quality basketry woven of banana and hibiscus fibres. Pieces of pottery found in archaeological digs on Fefan date back 1500 years.

The **Faichuk Islands** (Map p120) contain one-third of Chuuk's population. Tol, the largest and most populated island, is a one-hour boat ride from Weno and has Chuuk's tallest peak, 443m Mt Tumuital. Warning: the islanders here have a reputation for being rough and rowdy.

The **Picnic Islands** are numerous small, uninhabited coral islets scattered around

THAT'S THE POWER OF LOVE

Believers say Chuukese magic is an extremely potent force and they take it very seriously indeed. It can surface in many forms: as a curse, as a love potion, as a way to remove evil spirits or as a form of protection. Satawan Atoll is said to have the strongest magic.

Perfumed love potions, called *omung*, may contain such exotica as centipede teeth mixed with coconut oil; if a beautiful woman falls in love with a plain-looking man, people will joke and say he used *omung*.

This power spreads all the way to Yap, where the locals tell of the Legend of the Ghost from Chuuk, who supposedly haunts Yap. The ghost was a local magician who disguised himself as a handsome Chuukese. He invented a love potion made from crushed stingray tail, black ants and centipede legs; he would give this to beautiful women, who would accompany him into the forest for a 'delightful romp in the bush'. Once there, the ghost's appearance would turn hideous and he would eat the women.

The moral? Beauty can hide evil, probably. Don't be seduced by appearances.

the lagoon, many of them with white-sand beaches and good snorkelling, like **Falos** (Map p120).

OUTER ISLANDS

Outside Chuuk Lagoon are the far-flung Mortlocks (southeast), Hall Islands (north) and Western Islands (nearest to Yap's outer islands). All are flat coral formations; some are mere wisps of sand. All are traditional – a day's work might include fishing, cultivating the taro patch or preparing copra.

ACTIVITIES

Diving

They say Chuuk Lagoon is the world's finest wreck-diving site: at the bottom rest about 60 Japanese ships, including oil tankers, submarines, cruisers, tugboats and cargo ships, and scores of US and Japanese planes. See p75 for more details.

The ships lie just as they sank in 1944: some are upright, some are intact, and some are in pieces strewn across the lagoon floor. Each is a separate time capsule, their holds full of guns, trucks and fighter planes; the dining areas littered with dishes, silverware and sake bottles; the skeletal remains of the doomed crews 'buried' at sea.

The wrecks have become artificial reefs for hundreds of species of vividly coloured corals, sponges and anemones, which have attached themselves to the metal; they also attract large schools of fish. The water is warm, about 29°C, and visibility is generally 15m to 30m.

The largest wreck in the lagoon is the **Heian Maru** (Map p120), a 163m passenger and cargo ship lying on its port side at 12m to 33m. Divers can see the ship's name and telegraph mount on the bow, as well as large propellers, periscopes and a torpedo.

The **Fujikawa Maru** (Map p120), an aircraft ferry that landed upright in 12m to 27m of water, is one of the most popular dives. The main deck is 18m below the surface, while the hold, which contains four Zero fighters, is at 27m.

The **Sankisan Maru** (Map p120), with excellent soft-coral formations, is upright at 15m to 30m and still has a cargo of trucks, machine guns and ammunition.

DIVE SHOPS

To keep souvenir hunters at bay, Chuuk Lagoon's wrecks have been declared an underwater historical park and they can't be visited without a guide. You'll need a State Diving Permit (US\$30); your shop can organise this.

Blue Lagoon Dive Shop (Map p121; ☎ 330 2796; www.truk-lagoon-dive.com; Blue Lagoon Resort) One-/two-/three-tank dives US\$65/100/130; night dives US\$70; outer reef dives with two tanks US\$120; snorkelling trips US\$65; boat charter including diving US\$665; land tours one/two to six/seven to 12 people US\$80/40/25; Jeep/Fanamu Island trip including overnight stay and BBQ meal US\$120 per person.

Sundance Tours & Dive Shop (Map p122; ☎ 330 4234; sundance@mail.fm; PO Box 85, Weno)

Truk Lagoon Dive Center (Map p122; ☎ 330 4232; www.trukstophotel.com) Two-tank boat dives US\$95, third dive US\$35; night dive US\$50. Boat tours, island tours, shopping tours, snorkelling tours and fishing tours also available. Rates on request.

DIVE BOATS

These are good options for divers who don't want to put up with Weno and its attendant hassles.

SS Thorfinn (Seaward Holidays Micronesia; ☎ 330 4032; www.thorfinn.net; weekly occupancies from US\$1295) A 58m vessel with 11 rooms.

Truk Odyssey (☎ 330 2727; www.trukodyssey.com; weekly occupancies from US\$2395) A 40m liveaboard.

Snorkelling

The waters of Chuuk Lagoon are clear and calm, so you don't have to be an experienced diver to take a look at its underwater attractions; some wrecks are about a metre under the surface. Boat trips for snorkellers usually include a visit to the **Dainihino Maru**, a small coral-encrusted transport ship that lies on its starboard side in 12m of water off Uman. Other wrecks visited are a Zero fighter in shallow waters off Eten and the **Susuki Maru**, a sub-chaser off the coast of Tonoas, with its deck about 3m underwater.

See above for dive-shop rates.

CHUUK FOR CHILDREN

Adults have a hard enough time on Chuuk, let alone kids. If you're not a diver, let alone a grown up, there won't be a lot to see and do here. Parents be warned: you won't find any big stores, so make sure you have all your kiddie-related necessities before you arrive.

TOURS

People come to Chuuk to dive. On Weno, there's very little to see; what there is, you can easily do yourself. The dive shops listed on opposite run tours, sometimes to the other islands.

SLEEPING

Avoid camping, for safety reasons.

If you want to stay in the outer islands, you'd best contact the visitor information centre (p120).

Blue Lagoon Resort (Map p121; ☎ 330 2727; www.bluelagoondiveresort.com; PO Box 340, Weno; s/d from US\$125/135; ☎) This resort is Weno's only beachside hotel. Pleasantly landscaped amid a beautiful coconut grove, it has well-furnished rooms in two-storey wood buildings, each with a balcony facing the lagoon. Given the safety situation on Chuuk, this may be the best place for divers – you don't have to drive anywhere.

Truk Stop (Map p122; ☎ 330 2701; www.trukstophotel.com; PO Box 546, Weno; s/d from US\$95/105; ☎) This popular 23-room hotel has spacious, comfortable and clean rooms with two double beds, minifridges and large showers with good water pressure; in Chuuk, you must be thankful for small mercies. Choose from standard or ocean-view rooms.

Kurassa Hotel (Map p122; ☎ 330 4415; PO Box 64, Weno; kurassa@mail.fm; r US\$48; ☎) These nine one-bedroom and studio apartments are pleasant and safe, if a bit rough around the edges. All rooms have kitchen facilities, a TV and VCR, and there's a store downstairs if you get peckish.

Pacific Gardens (Map p122; ☎ 330 2606; PO Box 494, Weno; r from US\$55; ☎) This 10-room hotel

has units that feature a small separate area with a table, sink and refrigerator (but no cooking facilities), plus a small bedroom with a double and a single bed. This place is adequate; don't expect miracles. There's a restaurant and bar downstairs.

Falos Beach Resort (☎ 330 2606; tpgardenmrvb@mail.fm; PO Box 494, Weno, Falos Island; r US\$45) Located on Falos Island, these simple concrete, tin-roofed cottages have linoleum floors, electric lights and futons on wooden bases. Ask for the free-standing cottages with screened, louvered windows on all four walls to catch the breeze. The toilets and showers are outside and shared. The resort can organise a boat for you.

EATING

A Chuukese speciality is *oppot*, made by filling a pit with alternating layers of ripe, cut breadfruit and banana leaves, then covering the top with rocks and leaving it for months – even years. It smells rotten, but preserved breadfruit is highly valued and has traditionally served as an important staple, feeding islanders through long canoe journeys or during months when fresh breadfruit was not in season. You won't find it in restaurants, but if you're brave you can ask a local.

Blue Lagoon Resort (Map p121; ☎ 330 2727; mains US\$8-17; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) The ambience is A-OK here, given that you'll be enjoying terrific lagoon-side views of the Faichuks, Fefan and Tonoas. It has some Japanese staples and good steak options, plus terrific tuna dishes and various pastas.

Truk Stop Restaurant (Map p122; ☎ 330 2701; mains US\$9-18; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) This place

SLENDER STICKS OF LOVE

In the days of thatched houses, love sticks were used by males to get a date for the evening.

These slender sticks of mangrove wood were intricately notched and carved in a design unique to its owner; a young man would at some stage show his love stick to the object of his desire, so she could then recognise the carving at the appropriate time.

If all went well, the suitor would wait until the young woman had retired for the night and then push the love stick in through the side of the thatched house, entangling it in her long hair. She would be woken by his gentle tugging, feel the carving to determine who was outside and, if tempted, would sneak out into the night for a secret rendezvous.

It seems like a recipe for disaster; imagine poking the young woman in the eye or tangling the stick in her mother's hair instead. When thatched houses went out of fashion, so did love sticks.

These days, replicas make popular souvenirs.

YAPESE ETIQUETTE

Exploring Yap requires a grasp of Yapese etiquette. Once you step off the road anywhere in Yap (except for some parts of Colonia), you're on private property. Even some of the stone pathways through villages are private, and walking along them is like cutting across someone's backyard. Yapese try to avoid entering a village other than their own once the sun has set.

Officially you need to get permission and sometimes a guide to visit most villages. In reality, the Yapese will probably understand that foreigners don't know the rules, as long as you're considerate and don't overstep the bounds.

You could try exploring on your own, asking people along the way for directions and permission when appropriate. Smiles go a long way in Yap. In a village you should greet everyone you see so it doesn't look as though you're sneaking around. Be prepared to back off when it's obvious you're intruding, and be sure you always ask permission before snapping someone's picture. Yapese don't like to be stared at or to have things pointed at them, so video cameras are especially distasteful.

To the Yapese, not asking permission is an insult, but they are a very generous people and if you do ask, they'll most likely let you go nearly anywhere and see almost anything you want.

serves the island's only pizza and has a pleasant lagoon view. It's a pretty meaty menu (steaks etc), but the seafood is excellent; get a load of the lobster thermidor if they have it.

Also:

Takarajima Restaurant (Map p121; mains US\$7-28; ☺ lunch & dinner) Weno's best Japanese food.

SHOPPING

Souvenirs include items such as love sticks (see p125), hibiscus-fibre fans, wood-carvings, wooden masks, baskets, seashells, and shell jewellery.

Yumi's Gift Shop (Map p122; ☎ 330 3585; PO Box 87), opposite the airport, has a wide selection of quality handicrafts.

Sundance Tours (p124) and the Blue Lagoon Resort (p125) also sell some handicrafts.

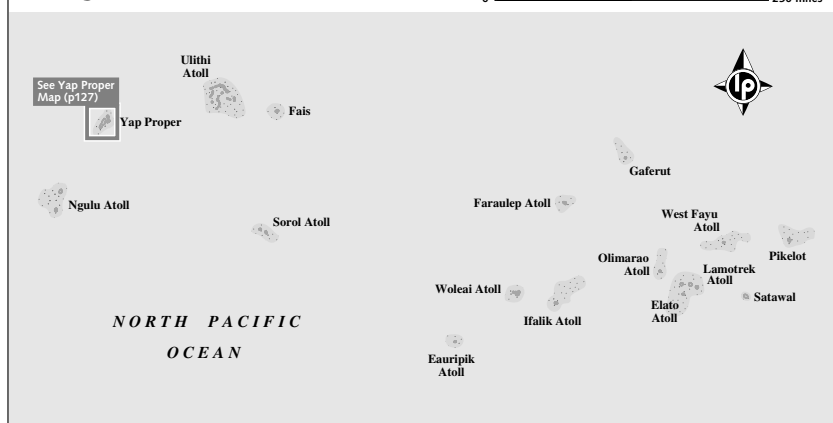
YAP

pop 11,241 / area 120 sq km

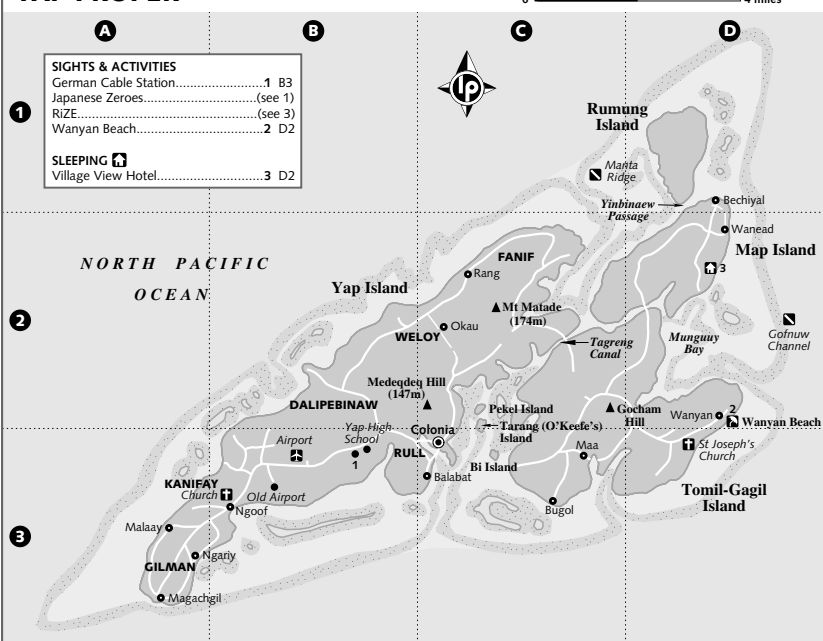
Yap, the land of giant stone money, is a wondrous place, one that will leave a deep impression on you for years to come.

This is the most traditional district in the whole of the FSM, a place where the caste system survives and village chiefs still hold as much political clout as elected public officials.

YAP STATE



YAP PROPER



It's a place where, when you step off the plane, you'll catch your first glimpse of men and boys wearing bright-coloured loincloths, or of Yapese women wearing only woven hibiscus skirts, greeting incoming passengers. And everyone, including the very official-looking customs officers, will have a cheek bulging with betel nut (see p132; apparently the dirt floors of the old airport were so deeply stained with betel-nut juice that the concrete floors of the new terminal were painted betel-nut red to cover up).

Out in the villages, connected by centuries-old stone footpaths, *fuluw* (men's houses) can be found, constructed in the elaborate, traditional style of wood, thatch, rope and bamboo.

The people love their culture and they'll love you, too, asking only that you tread with respect.

ORIENTATION

The major islands of Yap, Map and Tomil-Gagil are all tightly clustered and connected by bridges. Yap Island, with the airport, is the westernmost and largest island, with

half of Yap Proper's land area and two-thirds of its people. Rumung is separated from the rest of Yap Proper by Yinbinaew Passage and can only be reached by boat.

The island's main paved road begins at the airport, curves through Colonia, and continues through Tomil to the north-east end of Map. Most other roads on the island are packed dirt, though they're in fairly good condition.

INFORMATION

Since the Bank of Hawaii closed its doors in 2002, many businesses have stopped taking credit cards. Make sure you bring enough cash with you; there are no ATMs on Yap.

Bank of the FSM (Map p129; Colonia) Does cash advances and changes US-dollar travellers cheques.

FSM Telecommunications (Map p129; Internet per hr US\$4; ☎ 24 hr) Long-distance telephone calls can be made here.

Net Café (Map p129; Room F & G, Yap Market Square; Internet access per hr US\$4)

Post office (Map p129; Colonia) On the northern side of Chamorro Bay.

HIS MAJESTY O'KEEFE

The most colourful character of Yap's 19th-century history was David 'His Majesty' O'Keefe, a shipwrecked Irish-American who washed ashore in 1871. Near death, he was nursed back to health by the Yapese and spent the next 30 years of his life on the islands.

Where the Germans had failed in getting the Yapese to produce copra in quantity, O'Keefe saw a golden opportunity. He noted that the colourful cloth and trinkets that traders used to entice other Pacific islanders raised little curiosity among the Yapese, who stubbornly preferred traditional hibiscus clothing and grass skirts.

Realising that the enormous stone money the Yapese quarried in distant Palau offered more leverage as a medium of exchange, O'Keefe decided to get into the stone-money trade. He went off to Hong Kong to buy a Chinese junk, then returned to Yap and began making runs down to Palau to pick up newly quarried stone money. Yapese chiefs paid for the stone money with copra, and O'Keefe soon came to dominate Yap's copra trade.

O'Keefe's Irish temper and penchant for feuding with colonial administrators made him legendary among the Yapese.

In 1901 he disappeared at sea; his former home on Tarang Island, in Tomil Harbor, is now in the Register of National Historic Places, though only a couple of bricks and a stairway remain.

Public hospital (Map p129; ☎ 350 3446)

Yap visitor information centre (Map p129;

☎ 350 2298; yvb@mail.fm; PO Box 988, Colonia;

🕒 7.30-11.30am & 12.30-4.30pm)

TRANSPORT

Getting There & Away

See p135 for details of international flights to Yap.

Pacific Missionary Aviation (PMA; ☎ 350 2360) flies a nine-passenger plane to Ulithi, Fais and Woleai (from US\$172; usually Monday and Friday).

The field-trip ship *Micro Spirit* does a (approximately) 14-day trip monthly between Yap Proper and all populated outer islands. Arrange permits to disembark and book through the **Yap State Transportation Field Trip Service** (Map p129; ☎ 350 2240).

Getting Around

For car rentals try **7-D** (Map p129; ☎ 350 2566), **PBC** (Map p129; ☎ 350 2266) or the **ESA Hotel** (Map p129; ☎ 350 2139).

Yap's taxis cost up to 75c around Colonia and US\$3 to the airport.

COLONIA

pop 1100

The state capital is the only part of Yap that's the least bit modern, although it's really just a small village with a decidedly rustic feel.

Colonia wraps around **Chamorro Bay**, offering sea views most everywhere (the bay was named for the labourers from Saipan

who helped build the German's transpacific cable station).

If you've a yen for exploring, go on a walk to the stone-money bank in the nearby village of Balabat (opposite).

Note the Japanese **torii** (pillared gate) near the state legislature.

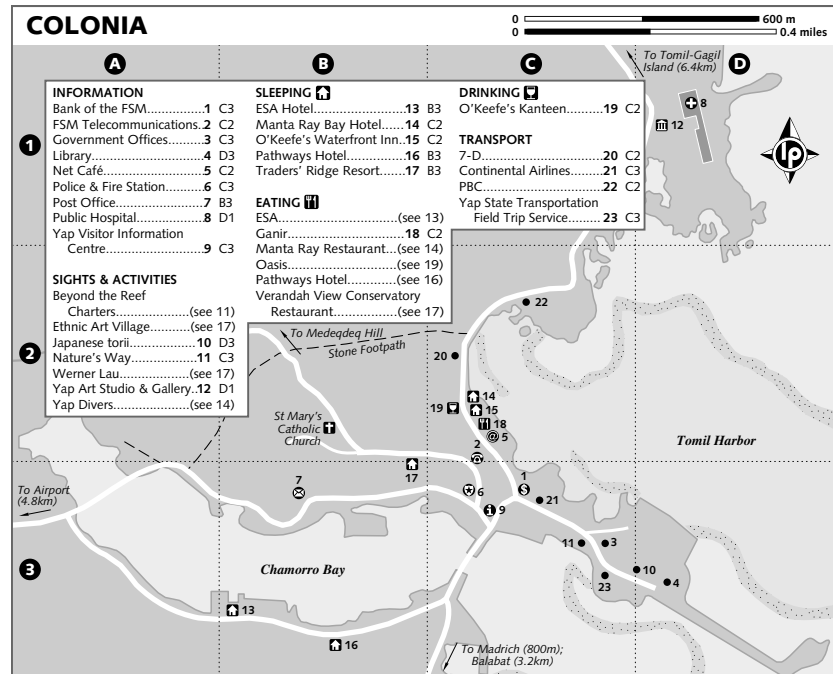
A shaded traditional **stone footpath** starts opposite the waterfront, south of the former Ocean View Hotel. When the path splits, take the left fork and you'll come out to the paved road just above the Catholic school.

Turn right and go up the road for about 6m. A second path heads down to Chamorro Bay; it's not as well-lined with stones as the first, but it does offer some glimpses of taro patches and village houses.

Ethnic Art Village

Located at the Traders' Ridge Resort, the Ethnic Art Village does a great job of celebrating and preserving indigenous art. Here, village elders have been invited to teach their craftsmanship and techniques to younger artists; research is conducted to determine the exact form of original idols and to uncover what natural pigments were used before Western contact.

Yapese artisans live in thatched homes in the village and work on their craft in an open-air shelter, hand-carving objects from materials like breadfruit and hibiscus; you can buy examples of these in the excellent gift shop. The arts village also stages Yapese dance performances (US\$50) on Sunday at



5pm in its amphitheatre, where traditional Yapese buildings have been reconstructed. You can also witness stone-money-carrying exhibitions and sample local food.

Yap Art Studio & Gallery

This terrific little **gallery** (☎ 350 4180; www.yapeseart.com; Colonia; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) showcases the work of local artists; in essence, it's an art cooperative, where you can view and buy watercolours, carvings and weavings direct from the source.

BALABAT VILLAGE

The walk to Balabat (Map p127), about 3.2km, is a convenient way to see a traditional men's house and *rai* (stone money) bank. The road starts at Colonia's petrol station near the bridge. You'll pass **Madrich**, once the site of a Spanish trading station, and continue along the waterfront to the Rull municipal office, where the road is lined with *rai*. Take the road curving to the right, and 300m along look on the left for a wide dirt road. It's just a couple of minutes down to more *rai* and a seaside *faluw*. The main

road ends at two raised stone platforms used for community gatherings.

GERMAN CABLE STATION & JAPANESE ZEROES

Beyond Colonia, it's recommended you hire a guide to get the most out of Yap; many sights are hidden away on dirt roads.

One-and-a-half kilometres east of the airport, on an unmarked dirt road leading to the left, is the old **German Cable Station**, built in 1905, that linked Shanghai through Guam and the Philippines; nearby are two **Japanese Zeroes**, their wings surprisingly intact.

OKAU VILLAGE

This village (Map p127) in Weloy has one of Yap's best *faluw* and *rai* banks at the end of a very pleasant stone footpath.

From Colonia head west towards the airport, but instead of turning left with the main paved road, take the right fork onto the wide dirt road, 1½km from the west-side bridge on Chamorro Bay. When the road forks again, bear right, continuing on the wider road. The stone pathway,

STONE MONEY

Legend has it that the ancient navigator Anagumang set sail in search of the ideal stone to be used as Yapese currency. He found it on Palau's Rock Islands, in the form of hard crystalline limestone that the Yapese then quarried into huge flat discs. Holes were carved in the centre so logs could be slipped through, and the stones were then lugged down to barges and towed by canoe 402km to Yap.

With their weighty cargo, entire expeditions were sometimes lost in storms at sea. The most valuable stones were therefore not necessarily the largest, but those that were transported at the highest cost of human lives. These stones commonly bore the names of the lost mariners.

Stone money, which the Yapese call *rai*, can range up to 3½m in diameter and weigh as much as five tonnes. The Japanese civilian government counted 13,281 coins in 1929.

Most *rai* is kept in 'banks' lined up along village pathways. The money is not moved, even when ownership changes. *Rai* remains in use today for some traditional exchanges, although the US dollar settles most transactions.

just over 7km from the airport road, starts on the right opposite a stone platform and just before two small houses and a bridge. The large **pebai**, about 10 minutes down the pathway, is built on a raised stone platform. Nearby are several thick **rai**.

WANYAN

To get to Wanyan, on the eastern side of Tomil-Gagil Island, bear left at the fork 1½km after the academy, on the road paralleling the power lines. Yap's largest piece of *rai* is on Rumung Island, but as it's closed to visitors (except for Traders' Ridge tours; see p132) you'll have to settle for number two, in the centre of Wanyan village. Past the *faluw* are two huge *rai* standing along the ocean side of the road; the piece on the left is Yap's second largest.

One of Yap's most accessible beaches is **Wanyan Beach** (Map p127), at the end of the road, with thatched picnic shelters, restrooms and showers. Swimming is best at high tide; kayaks can be rented. You'll have to pay a couple of dollars to the owner for access.

BECHIYAL

This friendly beachside village used to contain a low-key cultural centre, until Super-typhoon Sudal destroyed it in 2004. The swimming is good if you wade out for 10 minutes. Visitors are welcome to use the beach in front of the men's house, though the beaches just beyond the village are even nicer and more secluded.

Bechiyal's **faluw** survived the typhoon and is one of the island's oldest. Inside are dried turtle skulls and a carved wooden figure that

represents the *mispil*, which in times past was a woman captured from a neighbouring village and used as the *faluw* mistress.

You can still camp here (US\$5), and at the time of writing there was talk of reviving the serving of traditional meals; contact the visitor information centre (p128) for all details.

To get to Bechiyal, drive to the end of the Map road (take the left-hand fork); park and head across the log footbridge. The 1½km path passes through two traditional villages, with many *rai* along the way. Continue straight across when you intersect with another road.

OUTER ISLANDS

Yap's outer islands are home to some of the planet's most isolated people; it's believed that the islands were settled independently of Yap Proper. Most outer islanders live as they have for centuries, wearing *thu* and *lava-lavas*, living in thatched huts and subsisting on fish and farming. Some elderly men still have elaborate body tattoos.

Ulithi Atoll (Map p127) has the most land and the most people; it's also the most 'developed' of the outer islands.

A close second in land size and population, **Woleai Atoll** (Map p127) was fortified by the Japanese, and wrecked ships and planes, old tanks, bunkers, field guns, and monuments surround its islands.

Fais (Map p127) is a single island of raised limestone with a partial fringing reef, sandy beaches, cliffs and sea caves. Its women are known for their skilled weaving of *lava-lavas*.

Unless you're staying at the Ulithi Adventure Resort Inn (p133), you'll need to make a request to the **Council of Tamol** (☎ 350 2343; PO Box 42, Colonia) at least one month before visiting the outer islands. If the island's chief approves your visit, you will get an authorised pass stating your length of stay.

When you land the pass must be presented to the island chief, along with a visitor fee of US\$20. Bring cigarettes or canned food for your host family.

ACTIVITIES

Diving & Snorkelling

Yap has good diving: virgin reefs with excellent coral, vertical walls, sea caves, channel drifts, schools of grey sharks and barracuda, sea turtles, and a couple of shipwrecks. The reef off Gilman at the southern tip of Yap Proper slopes gently with extensive branching corals, huge lettuce corals and spectacular coral heads.

Yap's most novel attraction, however, is its **manta rays**; these gentle creatures, with their wingspans of up to 3.6m, often come close enough to brush you with their wingtips, swimming through the channel as divers cling to a ledge about 9m below the surface. The rays, which are cleaned by parasitic wrasses in the channel, are an awesome sight, especially when they open their wide mouths.

From December through to February, divers track rays at **Manta Ridge** in Miil Channel; in summer the rays move to **Gofnow Channel**, at the northeast end of Tomil-Gagil, an interesting dive that often has sleeping sharks.

DIVE SHOPS

Beyond the Reef Charters (Map p129; ☎ 350 3483; www.diveyap.com; PO Box 609, Yap) One-/two-tank dives US\$60/99, third tank extra US\$35; night dive US\$60; snorkelling excursion US\$45; half-/full-day fishing charter US\$99/175.

Dive Ulithi (☎ 350 2360; www.diveulithi.com; Falalop) One-tank dive US\$75; snorkelling boat tour US\$55; boat rider US\$25; kayak tours (rates on request); Falalop Island and village tour US\$25.

Nature's Way (Map p129; ☎ 350 3407; www.naturesway.fm; PO Box 238, Colonia) One-/two-tank dives including lunch US\$70/105, third tank extra US\$35; night dive US\$70; beach picnic and snorkelling by car US\$40; boat snorkelling US\$50; mangrove boat tour with snorkelling US\$70; introductory snorkelling US\$70.

RiZE (Map p127; ☎ 350 2031; Village View Hotel) One-/two-tank dives US\$60/95, third dive US\$35.

Werner Lau (Map p129; ☎ 350 6000; Traders' Ridge Resort) One-/two-tank dives US\$50/99, third tank extra US\$35; night dive US\$65.

Yap Divers (Map p129; ☎ 350 2300; Manta Ray Bay Hotel) One-/two tank dive US\$65/106, third tank extra US\$38; night dive US\$65; guided snorkelling US\$48; half-/full-day fishing from US\$270/430; half-/full-day land tour (minimum two people) US\$43/75; village cultural tour (minimum eight people) US\$55; half-/full-day kayak tour US\$60/106.

Swimming & Fishing

Yap's waters contain marlin, yellowfin tuna, barracuda and trevally. The most accessible beaches are Wanyan Beach (Map p127) in Tomil-Gagil and the beach at Bechiyal (Map p127); women should cover up on the beach. The dive shops offer fishing trips (see left).

YAP FOR CHILDREN

Kids will love Yap; it's a quirky place that will keep them wide-eyed and curious. Take them for a stroll around **Colonia** (p128), the walk-friendly capital. In town, the **Ethnic Art Village** (p128) is a good place to start, where you might be able to catch a traditional dance performance, watch a Yapese artist paint a scene of exquisite beauty, or even arrange for the little tackers to learn to dance the Yapese way. Stop off at the **Yap Art Studio & Gallery** (p129), where you'll be able to buy a T-shirt or woodcarving emblazoned with traditional designs. Try lunch at the **Manta Ray Bay Hotel** (p133); its restaurant is a traditional Indonesian *phinisi* boat moored in the harbour, and that's got to thrill any kid worth their red cordial. Later, stroll through **Balabat village** (p129) to see some stone money (tell your children it's pocket money for Yapese kids). Drive up to **Bechiyal** (opposite) to see a traditional men's house, or ask the **Traders' Ridge Resort** (see p133) to suggest a family-friendly tour of the island's cultural attractions from its extensive program.

TOURS

Guided sightseeing tours can be arranged through the hotels and the dive shops. If you want a recommendation, ask for Sebastian at Traders' Ridge (p133); he's a very knowledgeable and hospitable Yapese fellow, and

he'll deepen your understanding of the island and its people.

Traders' Ridge offers an incredible selection of tours and classes, with most monies going to the Yapese involved; it's recommended that you book the more elaborate tours in advance of your trip to Yap.

Here's just a very small selection of what's on offer:

Biking Tour (US\$55) Goes around back roads and pathways.

Forbidden Island Land and Boat Tour (US\$95)

Goes to the atoll of Rumung, which has been closed to all foreigners since the 17th century, except Traders' Ridge.

Private Village Tour (half/full day US\$65/100) Offers the chance to talk one-on-one with elders and observe daily life in Wanead Village.

Traditional Land Tour (half/full day US\$55/110) Visits a stone-money bank and a men's house.

Traditional Sailing Canoe Tour (US\$40) Accompanies five local navigators on a Yapese sailing canoe.

WWII Relics and Aviation Ruins Tour (US\$25)

SLEEPING

On Yap every speck of land is privately owned, so you'll need to obtain permission to camp from the landowner; the tourist office should be able to help. The one notable exception is Bechiyal (p130), where arrangements have been made to accommodate

campers; again, contact the tourist office for details.

Pathways Hotel (Map p129; ☎ 350 3310; www.pathways.com; s/d US\$115/125; ♻️) This ecoresort is beautiful, a collection of freestanding hillside cottages that balances modern comforts with traditional Yapese aesthetics. Each cottage is built with native materials and features pleasant sitting verandas, many with a clear view of Chamorro Bay, surrounded by a gardenlike setting. There's a wonderful restaurant and bar, too. Perfect.

Manta Ray Bay Hotel (Map p129; ☎ 350 2300; www.mantaray.com; s/d from US\$150/194; ♻️) This three-storey hotel is a favourite with divers due to the popular dive shop (see p131) on the premises. Management have gone all out to do something different with the décor: the 28 large, comfortable rooms have rattan furnishings, poster beds and marine motifs, with each room themed after different types of fish; even the bedspreads fall into line. There's an atmospheric restaurant (opposite) here.

O'Keefe's Waterfront Inn (Map p129; ☎ 350 6500; PO Box 68, Yap; www.okeefesyap.com; r US\$155; ♻️) This small, cosy, colonial-style place is right on the waterfront, with a gorgeous bar almost touching the water; it's as though you're on a houseboat. The place is full of wooden

floors, low-beamed ceilings, rocking chairs and period photographs on the walls; the cream-toned rooms (with elegant wood trim) have lots of great little touches such as native art and trinkets, and inset TVs that can be hidden behind wall paintings.

Traders' Ridge Resort (Map p129; ☎ 350 6000; www.tradersridge.com; r from US\$215; ♻️) The Ridge is an upscale place, accented in a Victorian architectural style, with rooms superbly complemented by Micronesian artworks and locally made furniture. The resort presides over the bay from its hill-top perch and features landscaped grounds with island artworks sprinkled among them; there's also a superb bar and a great restaurant (right). Even if you're not staying here, it's worth popping in; the complex is home to the excellent Ethnic Art Village (p128).

Ulithi Adventure Resort Inn (☎ 350 2360; www.diveulithi.com; Falalop Island; inland/ocean-view rooms US\$100/125; ♻️) On Falalop, this is the only hotel in the outer islands. The resort's 10 rooms are clean and comfortable, surrounded by palm trees and beach, and service is friendly and personable.

Village View Hotel (Map p127; ☎ 350 3956; www.rizedivingcentre.com; PO Box 758, Yap; r from US\$55; ♻️) These Western-style duplex units are on a pleasant and quiet (but sometimes windy) beach. It's a cheeky little getaway, although it's a long haul into town if you want to dine out.

ESA Hotel (Map p129; ☎ 350 2139; www.yapesabayview.com; s/d US\$97/105) This older motel-style place by Chamorro Bay has clean but plain rooms, with refrigerators, phones and TVs. Ask for a room with a balcony overlooking the bay; it makes all the difference.

EATING

Manta Ray Restaurant (Map p129; ☎ 350 2300; Manta Ray Bay Hotel; mains US\$14-22; ♻️ lunch & dinner) This place features teak beams, walls and floors, more nooks and crannies than you can count, and the best view. Why? Because it's actually a 100-year-old schooner – the *SV Mnuw* – which was sailed from Indonesia to Yap to be permanently moored in the bay and converted into a terrific restaurant. You can have tasty pizza and burgers here, but there are also Asian local dishes such as steamed mangrove crab and 'Diver's Dream' – grilled fish with lemon-butter sauce.

Pathways Hotel (Map p129; ☎ 350 3310; Pathways Hotel; ♻️ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This beautiful, open-air courtyard, built in the Yapese style (like the hotel), makes a nice setting for any meal. Local seafood is a speciality, and the place has an addictive atmosphere of bonhomie.

Veranda View Conservatory Restaurant (Map p129; ☎ 350 6000; Traders' Ridge Resort; ♻️ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This place boasts the 'only Yapese chef on Yap', and the food is indeed unique. Set among the leafy, atmospheric grounds of Traders' Ridge Resort, here you can try local favourites like coconut *seviche* and taro-leaf soup. The restaurant is located on the site of the former Japanese command post and has a terrific view of Chamorro Bay.

Oasis (Map p129; Colonia; lunches US\$3-7; ♻️ breakfast & lunch) This popular place sits literally on top of O'Keefe's Kanteen, with a fine view of the harbour. The blackened sashimi is a real winner and there are good sandwiches and rice dishes.

Also:

ESA (Map p129; ☎ 350 2139; ♻️ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Adequate Japanese-style food and a good waterfront setting.

Ganir (Map p129; Colonia; mains US\$7-10; ♻️ lunch & dinner) Japanese-style dishes in an upstairs, open-air space.

DRINKING

O'Keefe's Kanteen (Map p129; ☎ 350 4534) This is a fantastic little period bar, built on the historic site of an 1874 canteen owned by His Majesty himself, David O'Keefe (see p128). It's an atmospheric, low-ceilinged cove and has indoor and outdoor seating; it even sells the famous book about O'Keefe (see p102) and there's live music some nights.

The best hotels have simply awesome bars: Traders' Ridge (left), perched on a hill; Pathways (opposite), surrounded by greenery and traditional Yapese architecture; and Manta Ray (opposite), on an Indonesian schooner (mind that narrow gangplank when drunk).

SHOPPING

Yap has fine native handicrafts. *Lava-lava* skirts, hand-woven from cotton or hibiscus and banana-tree fibres, can make attractive wall hangings; also consider handbags or betel-nut pouches.

BETEL NUT

Expatriates (and dentists) regard betel-nut chewing as rather disgusting, but in Yap everyone chews *buw*, as betel nut (the seed of the areca palm) is called. The Yapese split the nut open while it's green, then chew it with crushed coral lime and pepper leaves. The three components produce a mild intoxication that lasts about 10 minutes. Sometimes tobacco, or tobacco soaked in vodka, is added. The process produces masses of vivid red saliva (the very first European explorers were horrified, believing the entire Yapese race to be mortally sick and coughing up blood), staining the teeth red and eventually causing them to go black; the lime is highly caustic and can (after many years of use) cause serious mouth ulcers and cancer in some cases.

Seeing a foreigner indulging brings broad smiles to the faces of locals, so if you're up for it, buy a bag from the local store; your teeth won't rot after just a few. Take the husked seed between your back teeth and crack it near the stem end. Prise it open and pluck the nut out. Chew the nut in the back of your mouth to one side. Your chewing technique will largely determine how high you fly, and you may be underwhelmed by your first try. Watch how others do it, ask questions, and be warned: until you're well practised, the voluminous red spit is likely to run down your chin and stain your clothes

Betel nut is also popular in Palau; in the Solomon Islands, where it's known as *bia blong Solomon* (Solomons' beer); across Southeast Asia; and on the Indian subcontinent. Old timers say that even ghosts chew it. When outrigger canoes would stop for no obvious reason in the middle of a lagoon, the sailor would prepare a betel-nut mixture, wrap it in extra leaves and tie it up tightly with many knots. He would then throw it overboard and sail away, while the ghost who'd been holding up his canoe was kept busy untying knots.

You can buy crafts directly from the artists at the Ethnic Art Village (p128) or the Yap Art Studio & Gallery (p129).

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Add 5% hotel tax to Kosrae's accommodation rates, 6% to Pohnpei's, and 10% to Chuuk's and Yap's. Camping is not customary as most land is privately owned; see the respective states for exceptions. Some budget places may not accept credit cards, so make sure you have alternative financial arrangements. Most hotels will provide free airport transfers if you call ahead.

ACTIVITIES

All four islands have sensational diving; some divers prefer Kosrae and Pohnpei, away from the crowds of Chuuk and Yap. For detailed information on diving possibilities in the FSM, see p75. Surfing is also taking off in Kosrae (see p108) and Pohnpei (see p117).

Snorkellers will find good reefs on all islands. Fishing and kayaking are possible on most islands.

BUSINESS HOURS

Business hours are from around 8am to 4.30pm on weekdays; banking hours are typically from 10am to 3pm Monday to Thursday and 10am to 5pm on Friday.

CHILDREN

The main FSM islands are good for kids, Weno in Chuuk being the possible exception. See the respective states for details.

PRACTICALITIES

- There's no TV station in the FSM.
- Videos are in NTSC format.
- The electricity supply is 110/120V AC, 60Hz; plugs are US style with two flat blades. Power outages are frequent on Yap; don't leave laptops unattended.
- The FSM uses the imperial system of measurement. See the Quick Reference page for conversions.

HOW MUCH?

- **750mL bottle of Smirnoff vodka:** US\$7
- **Internet access:** US\$4 per hour
- **Cup of sakau:** US\$2
- **Car hire:** from US\$40 per day
- **Fish dish:** US\$15

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **Gallon of petrol:** US\$4
- **1L bottled water:** US\$1
- **Can of Budweiser beer:** 60c
- **Souvenir T-shirt:** US\$15
- **Packet of betel nut:** US\$2

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Federated States of Micronesia Embassies & Consulates Abroad

Fiji (☎ 679-304 180)

Guam (☎ 671-646 9154)

Japan (☎ 81-33-585 5456)

USA Hawaii (☎ 808-836 4775); **Washington** (☎ 202-223 4383)

Embassies in the Federated States of Micronesia

Australia (Map p111; ☎ 320 5448; Pohnpei)

USA (Map p111; ☎ 320 2187; Pohnpei)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

All the islands celebrate Constitution Day on 10 May and Independence Day on 3 November; each state also has its own national day. Kosrae's **Liberation Day** (8 September) features singing, dancing and sporting contests, including canoe racing. All islands celebrate Christmas with gusto and flair, Kosrae in particular. Kosrae also holds an annual **Festival of Arts Week** in September and the **Kosrae State Fair** in November.

Yap's big traditional celebrations are called *mitmit*. These are all-out feasts accompanied by gift-giving, singing and dancing. One village hosts a *mitmit* for another village to reciprocate for one it received in previous years. The completion of a major village project, such as a new community house, is also a time for major festivities in Yap.

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.kosrae.com Official Kosrae site.

www.pohnpeiheaven.com A Pohnpei tribute site run by Alex Zuccarelli, who refers to himself as an 'aspiring human being'.

www.visit-fsm.org Official FSM site.

MONEY

The US dollar is the currency throughout the FSM. For exchange rates, see the Quick Reference page. Pohnpei and Chuuk each have one ATM. Credit cards are accepted at most top-end and midrange hotels and many dive shops, but some budget places may not accept them.

TIME

Chuuk and Yap are 10 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Pohnpei and Kosrae are 11 hours ahead of GMT.

VISAS

Passports are not required of US citizens, but it's a good idea to carry one anyway; travellers have been held up without one. Each of the states has its own immigration process so you automatically get a new entry permit, good for up to 30 days, each time you fly into a new district centre. Entry permits can be extended through the immigration offices for a total stay of up to 90 days, or up to 365 days for US citizens.

TRANSPORT IN THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Continental Airlines Kosrae (☎ 370 3024); Pohnpei (☎ 320 2424); Chuuk (☎ 330 2424); Yap (☎ 350 2127)
The only international airline servicing the FSM.

ISLAND-HOPPING

Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae are stopovers on Continental's island-hopper ticket. Yap is between Guam and Palau on Continental's flight route; to get there from other FSM islands, you must stop in Guam.

Sea

Yachties note: you must obtain clearance at an official port of entry for each state that you visit. Getting clearance for Kosrae does not allow you free movement within Pohnpei or Chuuk.

Ports of entry are Lelu and Okat Harbors in Kosrae, Kolonia in Pohnpei, Weno anchorage in Chuuk, and Tomil Harbor and Ulithi anchorage in Yap.

GETTING AROUND

Air & Boat

Yap and Pohnpei both have local carriers that fly to the outer islands. State boats also operate there, as well as in Chuuk; see the respective states for further details.

DEPARTURE TAX

Departure taxes are US\$10 from Pohnpei, US\$15 from Chuuk and US\$10 from Kosrae. Yap has no departure tax.

Car

Your home driving licence will be good for 30 days in each state. All islands have car-hire agencies; prices start at around US\$35 to US\$40 per day with unlimited mileage. Drive on the right-hand side of the road.

Local Transport

TAXI

Chuuk and Pohnpei have excellent shared taxi systems; Kosrae and Yap have small private taxis.

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