



COUNTRY FACTS COOK ISLANDS



The Cook Islands consist of 15 islands scattered over some 2 million square kilometers of the Pacific Ocean. They lie virtually in the centre of the Polynesian Triangle flanked to the west by the Kingdom of Tonga and Samoa and to the east by Tahiti and French Polynesia. The islands are the same distance South of the equator as Hawaii is North.

Currency

The Cook Islands unit of currency is the New Zealand Dollar, supplemented by Cook Island dollars and coinage minted for local use. The local coins and notes are not negotiable outside the Cook Islands. ANZ and Westpac Banks in Avarua are open 9:00am to 3:00pm Monday to Friday. In addition, visitors can change travelers cheques and principal currencies at larger stores, hotels and motels. Banking facilities are available at the airport on arrival and one hour prior to departure of international flights. Many of the hotels, motels, restaurants and duty free stores accept Visa, Mastercard, Diners, Bankcard and American Express.

Electricity & Water

Voltage is 220 DC/50 cycle. In some cases however, a 2-pin adapter may be required. Some hotels and motels have provisions for 110-volt AC electric razors.

The public water supply is not treated or chlorinated, however a lot of the properties now have in house filtration systems – ask at the time of check-in. Bottled drinking water is available from the local shops for those who wish to purchase.

**Shopping**

There are several duty free shops in Rarotonga. All large stores offer an array of goods at competitive prices. Bargaining is not the rule with shopping in Rarotonga. Cook Islands' natural and unique (cultured) black pearls make superb souvenirs. Shopping hours are usually from 8:00am to 4:00pm Monday to Friday and 8:00am to 12:00 noon Saturdays

Tipping

All taxes are included in prices. Tipping is not expected and is contrary to Cook Islands Custom.

Transportation

The Cooks Corner bus operates ½ hourly services around Rarotonga during the day. Taxis are available, but expensive. Rental cars, motorscooters and bicycles are available for rent from a number of shops and hotels. Drivers may use their home countries driver's license to rent a car, but they are required to obtain a Cook Islands Drivers license to drive a motorscooter. The license can be purchased from the Police Station in Avarua on presentation of own license. Driving is on the left side of the road.

Climate

The Cook Islands enjoy a pleasantly warm and sunny climate all year round. June through August are the cooler months. November through to March is the hottest season, with some heavier rain. 20 - 28 degrees Celsius.

Clothing

Although the dress code is informal, swim-wear should not be worn when visiting town or villages. Light clothing, with a light jacket for the occasional cooler evening, and perhaps a light raincoat for emergency use during the "wet season". A respectable standard of dress is required when attending church services. Nude or topless sunbathing is considered offensive.

Medical & Health

Dental and medical services are available 24 hours. Rarotonga has a modern well equipped hospital with overseas-trained staff and a pharmacy. There are no poisonous insects or animals in the islands, although non-malarial mosquitos can be worrisome in the inland areas, insect repellent is recommended. Vaccinations are not necessary unless arriving from an infected area.

Customs

No duty is levied on clothing or personal effects (including sports equipment). In addition, each visitor may bring the following items, free of duty, into the Cook Islands: 200 cigarettes or up to ½ pound (1 kg) of tobacco or up to 50 cigars, 2 litres of spirit or wine or 4 1/2 litres of beer.

Goods with total value of up to NZ\$250.00 are not open to duties, however goods in excess of NZ\$250.00 are liable to duty.

Telecommunications

International Telephone, Facsimile, E-mail, Internet connections and services are available 24 hours from the telecommunications office (Telecom Cook Islands) in the main township of Avarua. Most accommodation properties have IDD facilities. There are also Cyber Cafes and computer stores on the island that offer internet services throughout the week including Sundays. GSM cellular mobile services are available on Rarotonga and Aitutaki only. Mail and telegrams are available from the Post Office, open Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm.

**Passport and Visa**

Canadian passport holders do not require a visa provided they have proof of onward passage for stays of not more than 31 days. Extension permits are usually granted for visitors wanting to stay over 31 days.

Canadian Consulates

There are no government offices located in the Cook Islands. However, if necessary you can contact the Canadian High Commission Office in Wellington, New Zealand. The telephone number is 644-473-9577.