

Palau (9-17 May 2026) Murray Thompson

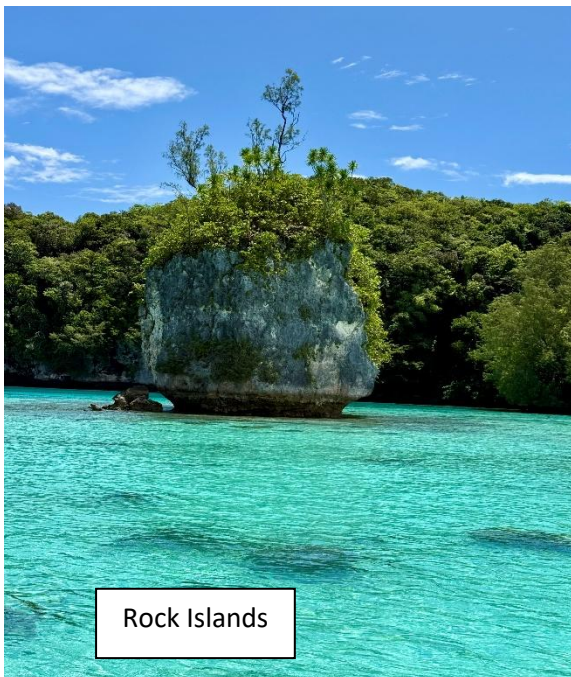
Palau is not a country that comes to mind when thinking of the top mammal watching destinations. And this report will confirm that suspicion. (indeed I don't think anyone has bothered to report on this forum in the past).

However for a week's holiday in one of the smallest countries on earth – there is a lot to do!

A Micronesian country of 500 islands but under 18,000 people, it sits north of New Guinea and east of the Philippines. It's clean, safe, great range of restaurants, locals are very welcoming, easy to get around and geared for tourists. I attended for a conference and the scuba diving; which is exceptional.

We stayed in Koror, the capital and only sizeable town. Most of our time was spent diving reef drop offs and Japanese World War Two wrecks. I had hoped to see some marine mammals, however no such luck. Spinner dolphins and melon headed whales are regularly spotted and the local museum informed me Bryde's Whale are seen seasonally.

There are only two terrestrial native mammal species in Palau; the Palau Flying Fox and the Palauan subspecies of the Polynesian Sheath Tailed Bat.



Rock Islands

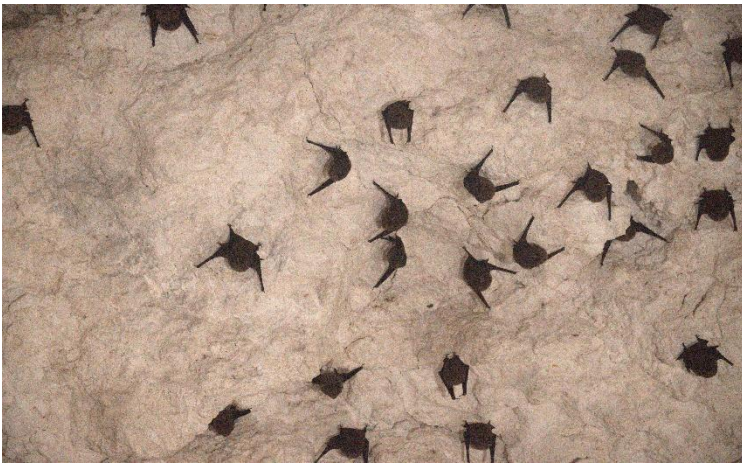
the reminders of war, with bunkers, artillery, armoured vehicles wrecks and much ordnance still lying around. We found two hand grenades on the beach and a Japanese helmet in the jungle.

In the Japanese made 1000 man cave, we finally found the sheath tailed bats. A small colony in one of the many passageways. Mission accomplished!



A popular dish: Palau Flying Fox

I searched for the sheath tails in a few local caves and old Japanese bunkers around Koror but to no avail. The Palau Flying Fox is increasingly rare due to hunting, its roosting sites are now mostly on hard to get to uninhabited islands. We hired a car one day and drove around the main island Babeldaob. At the Ngardmau waterfall in the afternoon, I saw one Palau Flying Fox flying overhead. They can also be seen at dusk in the Rock Islands, or as a regular on the menu in Koror restaurants. On another day, we ventured to Peleliu, a small island an hour boat ride to the south. In 1944, the US Marines landed to take the Japanese held airfield. Over two thousand US troops were killed in the two-month battle. All 11,000 Japanese defenders were killed apart from the 30 odd soldiers who hid in caves for several years, surrendering in 1947. The island is full of



Polynesian Sheath Tailed Bats



1000 Man Cave, Peleliu



Palau Tree Snake



Bennett's Long Tailed Monitor



Ngardmau waterfall