

# CULTURAL FACTS

- Guam, an island and unincorporated territory of the United States in the North Pacific Ocean, is the largest, most populous, and southernmost of the Mariana Islands. The Chamoru is the collective name given to the people who live in Guam and people who live on some of the other islands of Micronesia in the Pacific Ocean.
- The island was first visited by the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan on March 6, 1521, while sailing for the King of Spain.
- Native Guamanians, ethnically called Chamoru, are of basically Malayo-Indonesian descent with a considerable mixture of Spanish, Filipino, Mexican, and other European and Asian ancestries.
- The early society established by the Chamoru thrived because of advanced skills in hunting, horticulture, and fishing. They were skilled craftsmen who specialized in pottery and weaving and were excellent seamen.
- Guam has been a United States territory since the end of WWII. This means that the people of Guam have U.S. citizenship and a non-voting delegate in Congress. In other words, the Chamoru cannot vote for the U.S. President and their delegate has no authority in policy making or in political decisions. The US government, in turn has limited influence on the local Chamoru administration.
- “Where America’s day begins.” Being located right on the International Dateline, Guam is the first place where the sun rises on US soil. Guam is 14 hours ahead of the US East Coast. This means that when the sun sets in Guam it has yet to rise in most of the US mainland.
- The dominant language in Guam is Chamoru, the language of the island’s native people.
- The Guam kingfisher, Rota white-eye, and the Guam rail are the island's endemic bird species, meaning they're found nowhere else on Earth. Known to Chamorus as the ko'ko', the Guam rail is the territory's national bird.
- Malojloj Fiesta is one of the most popular festivals on the island. It is held in May, particularly in Inarajan. This three-day long event commemorates San Isidro, the patron saint, through traditional events, water buffalo racing and eating contests.

<https://www.encoreguam.com/10-things-most-people-dont-know-about-guam/>

<https://thefactfile.org/guam-facts/>

<https://www.visitguam.com/chamorro-culture/>

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- Music is an integral aspect of an island lifestyle, and performances using traditional instruments, such as the belembaotuyan, are highlights of cultural presentations. The belembaotuyan, made from a hollow gourd and strung with a taut wire and pressed against one's bare stomach, creates a melodic sound enjoyed by all.



**The Belembaotuyan**



- The Kantan Chamorita style of singing has been a favorite form of entertainment for generations. Additionally, it has been used to lighten long hours of group work activity, such as weaving, corn husking, and net fishing. One singer would begin the familiar four-line chant, referring romantically or teasingly in the verse to another person in the group. The challenged person would then take up the tune and the song might continue in this fashion with different singers for hours.
- The economy of the country is supported by tourism and the United States Armed Forces.
- Tourism is the most prominent component of the economy, with more than a million visitors arriving per year. There are several luxury hotels along Tumon Bay, which has been highly developed as a tourist area. An international airport links Guam with other Pacific islands, Asia, and Hawaii and the continental United States.
- The people of Guam are very religious and 85% of the population are Catholic. This may be attributed to the 300 years the Spanish colonized Guam, among other countries in the region.