

# Microstates of the World

This course offers participants with a wide range of interests the chance to explore nations that are often overlooked.

We have chosen to define a microstate as a UN member nation having a population of less than 1 million:

- Europe: Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, San Marino, Vatican City.
- Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines.
- Africa: Cape Verde, Djibouti, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles,
- Asia: Brunei, Maldives, Bhutan
- South Pacific: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.
- North Pacific: Marshall Islands.
- South America: Belize, Guyana, Suriname

We chose this definition because each member state has an equal vote in the UN General Assembly regardless of its physical size, population, GDP or form of government. Each vote is a powerful bargaining chip that these countries have learned to use to help establish their relevance in the modern world and to further their countries political, economic, social goals.

For presentations, participants may choose to focus on an individual country or on a cluster of historically or culturally related nations. Whether you are an armchair traveler, a nature enthusiast, a history buff, a political junky or a passionate environmentalist there are microstates worth exploring. The number of participants in the seminar and their personal interests will determine the overall scope and length of the seminar.

## **Microstates of the World - Resources for Topic Selection**

Here are a few videos and articles to give you an idea of the variety of topics that you and your fellow participants could choose to explore in this seminar. Potential topics may address almost any subject such as history, tourism, the arts, politics and the environment. Although Wiki and the ever-present AI summaries offer broad and generally accurate overviews of almost anything, searches with specific phrases like “What’s unique about the Maldives” can yield a much more interesting set of potential topics. Attached are some sample topics.

### **For the armchair traveler:**

[Rick Steves Little Europe: Five Micro Countries](#) - a video tourist guide to Vatican City, San Marino, Liechtenstein, Monaco and Andorra, highlighting their rich histories and quirky adaptations to the modern world. Click on the image below to open.



**<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/in-this-european-microstate-adventurers-contribute-to-science>**

**How** two adventure travelers combined their love of travel with an EarthWatch project in Andorra to study the effects of climate change on the ecology of the Alps.

**<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/paid-content-sustainable-travel-monaco>** From Monaco's tourism website, a self promoting article about their sustainable tourism.

**<https://www.atlasobscura.com/things-to-do/brunei>**

On the [AtlasObscura.com](https://www.atlasobscura.com) web page you can search virtually any country to find some of its interesting or unique features.

**<https://www.sapiens.org/biology/samoan-tattoo/>**

The history, culture and art of Samoan body tattoos.

## **For those interested in history, the environment and geopolitics**

**<https://uniset.ca/microstates2/>**

**[The Condition of Europes Curious Microstates.pdf](#)**

An easily read overview of how political skill, resilience and luck enabled Vatican City, Andorra, Monaco, Liechtenstein and San Marino to survive political conflicts and how geography and lack of natural resources forced these countries to find alternate ways to survive in the modern world.

**[https://www.e-ir.info/2020/03/17/revisiting-the-united-nations-and-the-micro-state-problem/#google\\_vignette](https://www.e-ir.info/2020/03/17/revisiting-the-united-nations-and-the-micro-state-problem/#google_vignette)** An excellent 5 page article about the processes by which microstates were admitted into the UN and the controversies that have arisen. A worthwhile read for anyone interested in geopolitics.

**<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/05/03/learning/Malta-Geography-Quiz.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>**

A fun but perhaps humbling 5 question quiz on how much you know about Malta. Perhaps you will want to know more.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/30/world/asia/taiwans-president-pacific-islands-china.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>

Taiwan's recent efforts to hold on to the UN votes of its Pacific island allies.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/17/climate/islands-climate-change-un-bonn.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>

Although a bit dated this article gives an excellent overview of the impact of climate and climate change on small island nations

An 8 minute video from Reuters on US-China competition for presence in Palau as the country's social problems escalate. Click on the image below to open.



## Topic Suggestions - Just a few

You are free to present a comprehensive overview of just one microstate, to focus on one aspect of that country, or to focus on a region or group of countries in relation to a topic that interests you.

Treasures of the European microstates

Monaco, Palau, and Seychelles: Their leadership in marine conservation,

Tax havens: Where are they and who needs them?

Foodie adventures in the microstates of the world

The extreme obesity rates in island microstates world wide

Art of Oceania: influence on artists of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Micronesian jazz and Pacific reggae

Bhutan's philosophy of Gross National Happiness

Pacific Islands in WW2 and the evolution of their allegiances.

Polyamorous geopolitics - diplomatic wooing of the micro states.

Nauru - the consequences of environmental exploitation

UN initiatives and projects in the microstates - costs and benefits

Climate change - effects on the health and welfare of island nations and the steps they are taking to address it.

China's investments in the Bahamas and other Caribbean nations