



Where in the world are: Ifni,  
the Maldivé Islands and  
Zil Elwagne Sesel ?  
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This month we have a mix of “dead” countries and a country that is very much alive.

Let's start with a country from the past, namely Ifni. Ifni was an enclave in southern Morocco on the Atlantic Coast. It was 580 square miles in size and was a Spanish possession. This possession was ceded to Spain in 1860, but not occupied until 1934. On June 30, 1969 Spain turned Ifni back to Morocco. During the time of Spanish occupation the capital of Sidi Ifni was also the administrative capital for Spanish West Africa. Stamps were initially issued in 1941 and took the form of stamps of Spain overprinted in red or blue with “CERRICORIO DE INFI”. These stamps were followed by both additional overprinted issues noting “Territorio de Ifni” and stamps issued specifically for Ifni. Starting in the 1950s and continuing into the late 1960s a variety of stamps depicting local flora and fauna were issued. The array of stamps issued included commemorative stamps (154 stamps), semi-postals (58 stamps), airmail (26 stamps) and Special Delivery stamps (2 stamps overprinted “URGENTE”). All told a total of 240 stamps were issued for this country. In 1969 when Ifni was returned to Morocco, the stamps of Morocco replaced Ifni stamps for use as postage. Stamps from Ifni remain common in worldwide mixtures of stamps.





The Maldive Islands are an active stamp issuing country. The Republic of the Maldives is composed of a group of islands scattered across the Indian Ocean at the equator off the southern tip of India. Marco Polo described these islands as “...Flower of the Indies”. There are some 1,190 of these islands, all of which rarely reach above 2 meters and are spread over an area of 1,000,000 square kilometers. As noted in a travel article “the sea forms over 99% of the Maldives. Only 0.331 percent or 115 square miles, of its 47,740 square miles is land. Of this land a mere 199 out of at least 1,190 islands are inhabited.” The islands are grouped into 26 natural atolls, but for administrative purposes have been divided into 19 atolls with the island of Male’ an entity of its own forming the 20<sup>th</sup> division. These islands have a total population of about 280,391.

The Portuguese captured the Maldives in 1558. The Portuguese ruled the country for 15 years. Sultan Mohamed Boduthakurufaanu then came to power and established a sultanate that would last 800 years from 1153 AD-1953. The Maldives came under British protection in 1887 and was attached to the Ceylon colony until were closely associated with Great Britain until 1948. During 1948-64 the islands were a British Protectorate. The islands became a Republic in 1953. This lasted for less than a year, after which the Sultanate was reestablished on August 21, 1953. In 1959 a group of southern atolls seceded and declared themselves the Republic of Suvadhuva. These islands became completely independent of Great Britain in July 26, 1965. This same year the Maldivian Islands became a full member of the United Nations. In 1968, the 800 year old sultanate was abolished and a republic was established. A second Republic was declared on November 11, 1968. From this date to today this country has remained a fully independent republic. In 1976, the Republic of the Maldivian Islands associated itself with a group of non-aligned states. The current President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom was first elected in 1978 and has successfully been confirmed in this office for several additional terms. On November 3, 1988 there was a failed coup attempt by Tamil separatists. This

coup was suppressed when the President asked for foreign assistance and 1,600 Indian parachutists landed on the main island.



This country is warm all year round and has become a haven for divers who like to explore the shallow crystal clear lagoons enclosed by coral reefs that are characteristic of many of the islands.



Stamps of the Maldive Islands have been produced since 1906. The first stamps were stamps of Ceylon overprinted “MALDIVES”. While a British Protectorate about 300 commemorative stamps were issued. Since the formation of the Republic of the Maldives this country has been a

prolific producer of postage stamps. Many of these stamps are produced for the world market and include many topicals. While the Maldives has issued over 2,000 stamps since independence, the country is not economically developed and is one of the world's poorest nations. No special issue stamps, for example: air mail, postage due, semi-postals, etc are listed as being issued for this country. Again, stamps issued by the Republic of the Maldives occur frequently in worldwide lots of stamps as well as in many topical collections.

Finally, we come to Zil Elwagne Sesel. These are an isolated group of 25 islands north of Malagasy and the Comoro Islands, west of the Seychelles and Mauritius, off the east coast of Africa. These islands were formally part of the British Indian Ocean Territories between 1968 to 1976. After 1976 these islands used the postage stamps of the Seychelles. In 1980, stamps began to appear with various inscriptions/overprints including Zil Elogine Sesel (1980-1982), Zil Elwagne Sesel (1982-1984) and Zil Elwannyen Sesel 1885-1992). The stamp issuing status of these islands is currently inactive. The islands included in this group are Aldabra, Farquhar and Des Roches. The Scott Catalogue lists these stamps after the Seychelles. All told there are a total of 191 stamps that were issued between 1980 and 1992. Stamps issued for these islands include several British Commonwealth Common Design series commemorating events like: the Queen Mother's 85<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup> birthdays and those of Elizabeth and Phillip, Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne, etc. The stamps issued by these islands are quite pretty and with the exceptions of omnibus issues all reflect local events, flora and fauna in a variety of colors. While the stamps are quite attractive, it is important to note that these islands have an estimated population of 3,000.

So now you know where Ifni, the Republic of the Maldive Islands and Zil Elwannyen Sesel....Zil Elogine Sesel .....or Zil Elwagne Sesel is located.....just in case someone may ask!



