



Australia-Oceania :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands (territory of Australia)

Introduction :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Background:

There are 27 coral islands in the group. Captain William KEELING discovered the islands in 1609, but they remained uninhabited until the 19th century. From the 1820s to 1978, members of the CLUNIE-ROSS family controlled the islands and the copra produced from local coconuts. Annexed by the UK in 1857, the Cocos Islands were transferred to the Australian Government in 1955. Apart from North Keeling Island, which lies 30 kilometers north of the main group, the islands form a horseshoe-shaped atoll surrounding a lagoon. North Keeling Island was declared a national park in 1995 and is administered by Parks Australia. The population on the two inhabited islands generally is split between the ethnic Europeans on West Island and the ethnic Malays on Home Island.

Geography :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Location:

Southeastern Asia, group of islands in the Indian Ocean, southwest of Indonesia, about halfway between Australia and Sri Lanka

Geographic coordinates:

12 30 S, 96 50 E

Map references:

Oceania

Area:

total: 14 sq km

country comparison to the world: 241

land: 14 sq km

water: 0 sq km

note: includes the two main islands of West Island and Home Island

Area - comparative:

about 24 times the size of The Mall in Washington, DC

Land boundaries:

0 km

Coastline:

26 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 12 nm

exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm

Climate:

tropical with high humidity, moderated by the southeast trade winds for about nine months of the year

Terrain:

flat, low-lying coral atolls

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Indian Ocean 0 m

highest point: unnamed location 5 m

Natural resources:

fish

Land use:

arable land: 0%

permanent crops: 0%

other: 100% (2011)

Irrigated land:

NA

Natural hazards:

cyclone season is October to April

Environment - current issues:

freshwater resources are limited to rainwater accumulations in natural underground reservoirs

Geography - note:

islands are thickly covered with coconut palms and other vegetation; site of a World War I naval battle in November 1914 between the Australian light cruiser HMAS Sydney and the German raider SMS Emden; after being heavily damaged in the engagement, the Emden was beached by her captain on North Keeling Island

People and Society :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Nationality:

noun: Cocos Islander(s)

adjective: Cocos Islander

Ethnic groups:

Europeans, Cocos Malays

Languages:

Malay (Cocos dialect), English

Religions:

Sunni Muslim 80%, other 20% (2002 est.)

Population:

596 (July 2014 est.)

country comparison to the world: 239

Population growth rate:

0% (2014 est.)

country comparison to the world: 196

Infant mortality rate:

total: NA

male: NA

female: NA

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: NA

male: NA

female: NA

Total fertility rate:

NA (2014 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

NA

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:

NA

HIV/AIDS - deaths:

NA

Literacy:

NA

Government :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Country name:

conventional long form: Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands

conventional short form: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Dependency status:

non-self governing territory of Australia; administered from Canberra by the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Government type:

NA

Capital:

name: West Island

geographic coordinates: 12 10 S, 96 50 E

time difference: UTC+6.5 (11.5 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

Administrative divisions:

none (territory of Australia)

Independence:

none (territory of Australia)

National holiday:

Australia Day, 26 January (1788)

Constitution:

23 November 1955 (Cocos (Keeling) Islands Act 1955); amended many times, last in 2010 (2010)

Legal system:

common law based on the Australian model

Suffrage:

18 years of age

Executive branch:

chief of state: Queen ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952); represented by the Australian governor general

head of government: Administrator (nonresident) Jon STANHOPE (since 5 October 2012)

cabinet: NA

(For more information visit the [World Leaders website](#).)

elections: the monarchy is hereditary; governor general appointed by the monarch on the recommendation of the Australian prime minister; administrator appointed by the governor general of Australia for a two-year term and represents the monarch and Australia

Legislative branch:

unicameral Cocos (Keeling) Islands Shire Council (7 seats)

elections: held every two years with half the members standing for election; last held in October 2011 (next to be held in October 2013)

Judicial branch:

highest court(s): under the terms of the Territorial Law Reform Act 1992, Western Australia provides court services as needed for the island including the Supreme Court and subordinate courts (District Court, Magistrate Court, Family Court, Children's Court, and Coroners' Court)

judge selection and term of office: NA

subordinate courts: NA

Political parties and leaders:

none

Political pressure groups and leaders:

The Cocos Islands Youth Support Centre

International organization participation:

none

Diplomatic representation in the US:

none (territory of Australia)

Diplomatic representation from the US:

none (territory of Australia)

Flag description:

the flag of Australia is used

National anthem:

note: as a territory of Australia, "Advance Australia Fair" remains official as the national anthem, while "God Save the Queen" serves as the royal anthem (see Australia)

Economy :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Economy - overview:

Coconuts, grown throughout the islands, are the sole cash crop. Small local gardens and fishing contribute to the food supply, but additional food and most other necessities must be imported from Australia. There is a small tourist industry.

GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$NA

GDP - real growth rate:

1% (2003)

country comparison to the world: 174

Agriculture - products:

vegetables, bananas, pawpaws, coconuts

Industries:

copra products, tourism

Labor force:

NA

Labor force - by occupation:

note: the Cocos Islands Cooperative Society Ltd. employs construction workers, stevedores, and lighterage workers; tourism is the other main source of employment

Unemployment rate:

60% (2000 est.)

country comparison to the world: 198

Budget:

revenues: \$NA

expenditures: \$NA

Fiscal year:

1 July - 30 June

Exports:

\$NA

Exports - commodities:

copra

Imports:

\$NA

Imports - commodities:

foodstuffs

Exchange rates:

Australian dollars (AUD) per US dollar -

1.031 (2013)

0.9658 (2012)

1.0902 (2010)

1.2822 (2009)

1.2059 (2008)

Communications :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Telephone system:

general assessment: telephone service is part of the Australian network; an operational local mobile-cellular network available; wireless Internet connectivity available

domestic: NA

international: country code - 61; telephone, telex, and facsimile communications with Australia and elsewhere via satellite; satellite earth station - 1 (Intelsat) (2001)

Broadcast media:

1 local radio station staffed by community volunteers; satellite broadcasts of several Australian radio and TV stations available (2009)

Internet country code:

.cc

Internet hosts:

42,820 (2012)

country comparison to the world: 99

Transportation :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Airports:

1 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 214

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 1

2,438 to 3,047 m: 1 (2013)

Roadways:

total: 22 km

country comparison to the world: 221

paved: 10 km

unpaved: 12 km (2007)

Ports and terminals:

major seaport(s): Port Refuge

Military :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Military - note:

defense is the responsibility of Australia; the territory has a five-person police force

Transnational Issues :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Disputes - international:

none