



## 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

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##### 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 2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 239

##### Population growth rate:

0% (2013 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

##### HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

NA

##### HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:

NA

##### HIV/AIDS - deaths:

NA

##### Literacy:

NA

#### Government :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

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##### 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:

Cocos (Keeling) Islands Act 1955 (23 November 1955); amended by Territories Law Reform Act 1992

##### 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)

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**Economy :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands**

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**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:** 162

**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:** 197

**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 -

0.9658 (2012)

0.9695 (2011)

1.0902 (2010)

1.2822 (2009)

1.2059 (2008)

**Communications :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands**

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**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**

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**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**

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**Military - note:**

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

**Transnational Issues :: Cocos (Keeling) Islands**

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**Disputes - international:**

none