

Poster: Christmas Island

Region

Indian Ocean Territories

Summary

Christmas Island is 2,650 kilometres north-west of Perth, Western Australia and is part of the Indian Ocean Territories (IOTs).

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Christmas Island is 2,650 km north-west of Perth, Western Australia and is part of the Indian Ocean Territories (IOT's). The marine environment is classified as tropical, with water temperatures varying from 25-30°C. A total of 592 species of fish have been recorded at Christmas Island.

FLYING FISH COVE

One of only ten or so actual beaches on the island, Flying Fish Cove is the centre of life and economy. A well developed fringing reef in shallow water slopes gradually to about 100 m before the 'drop-off', which reaches depths up to 5,000 m within just 200 m of the shore. The cove is easily accessible for snorkellers, divers, boaters and swimmers to enjoy the island's reef species. It is also central to the island's phosphate mining activities, where the large cargo ships pick up their load of phosphate for export.

THE DALES AND HUGH'S WATERFALL

With eight dales in total, this area is one of the few places on the island with permanently flowing water, although only Hugh's Waterfall flows year-round. The area is an important habitat for the island's blue crab species.

PHOSPHATE QUARRIES

The potential for phosphate mining was first recognised in the late 1800s, when phosphate deposits were found on the island. These high phosphate levels originated from guano (bird droppings) deposited over thousands of years. The British Phosphate Commission controlled mining activities on the island through the first half of the 1900s. Today the island's economy is currently based on phosphate mining and tourism.

Greta Beach

Accessed from the top of a cliff by a steep staircase, this small beach lies in the path of an ocean current that transports large amounts of marine debris and deposits it on the beach. Greta Beach is also a nesting place for turtles that regularly come onto the beach at night to lay and bury their eggs. Locals are continuously collecting bags of rubbish from the beach in an attempt to prevent the debris re-entering the ocean.

NATIONAL PARK

The National Park (declared in 1980, with extensions made in 1986 and 1989) covers 65% of island. The National Park has a high conservation value due to the number of endemic bird, crab and plant species. It is particularly important to the 80,000 seabirds who nest there annually and the millions of Christmas Island red crabs, which live inland on the island between their annual migrations.

THE BLOWHOLES

Large swells striking the southern coast of the island find sea water spraying high into the air through rugged calcarenite blowholes. The Blowholes are a popular fishing spot for some locals.

ROAD CLOSED
RED CRAB MIGRATION
NO ENTRY BY VEHICLES
BEYOND THIS POINT

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