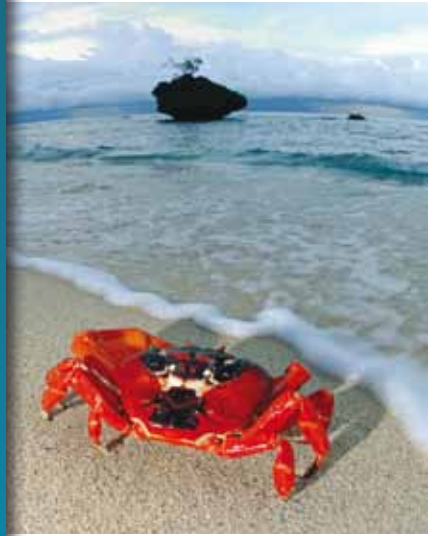


Welcome to
**Christmas
Island**
Visitor Guide



Australian Government
Director of National Parks



Welcome to Christmas Island

Christmas Island is a natural wonder — a remote tropical island famous for its unique red crabs and their spectacular annual migration from the rainforest to the sea. It is also one of the world's truly magnificent seabird breeding sites — a birdwatcher's paradise.

Two thirds of the island is national park. Majestic rainforests, bountiful marine life and stunning land and seascapes make it a nature lover's dream.

You'll find a range of inspirational nature-based activities here, from scuba diving, snorkelling and fishing to forest and coastal walks. Take time to explore the fascinating Chinese, Malay and early European heritage and enjoy some wonderful Asian and Western cuisine.

Information



Christmas Island Tourism Association and Visitor Information Centre

Gaze Road, Settlement
Tel: + 61 (0)8 9164 8382
Email: cita@christmas.net.au
www.christmas.net.au



Christmas Island National Park

Park headquarters: Drumsite
Tel : +61 (0)8 9164 8700
Email: info@environment.gov.au
www.parksaustralia.gov.au/christmas



Christmas Island Police (Australian Federal Police)

Emergency Tel: 000
Enquiries Tel: +61 (0)8 9164 8444



Hospital and ambulance

The Indian Ocean Territories Health Services
Tel: +61 (0)8 9164 8333
Ambulance Tel: 000

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Territory Day park lookout over Flying Fish Cove photo: ©Michael Seebeck

About Christmas Island



This Australian territory lies far out in the Indian Ocean, 2,600 kilometres northwest of Perth and 500 kilometres south of the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. The island is some 135 square kilometres in area, with 73 kilometres of rugged limestone coastline fringed by a narrow coral reef that drops away steeply, sometimes vertically, to the ocean depths. Christmas Island National Park covers two thirds of the island and includes a spectacular and environmentally significant marine area.

The locals

Much of our island's appeal lies in its rich mix of cultures. Depending on the timing of your visit, it may coincide with one of the many cultural celebrations that occur throughout the year.

A population of some 2000 people includes many Chinese and Malay Australians as well as people from mainland Australia.

English is the official language but many people also speak Bahasa Malay or one or more Chinese dialects.

The Malay community is Muslim, worshipping at the Mosque in the Kampong at Flying Fish Cove. Members of the Chinese community follow a variety of religious beliefs including Buddhism, Christianity and Confucianism. There are a number of temples, shrines and Christian churches around the island.

Climate

Christmas Island has a tropical equatorial climate, with wet and dry seasons. It's warm all year round, so pack light! The wet season extends from around December to April – so bring a rain jacket.

Temperatures vary little from month to month - an average high of around 28°C in April and an average low of around 22°C in August. Humidity ranges from 80 to 90 per cent year-round but is generally lowest during the middle of the year.

Currency

Australian currency is legal tender. There is a branch of the Westpac Bank on the island.

Visitor Information Centre

The Christmas Island Tourism Association (CITA) operates a Visitor Information Centre opposite the supermarket in Gaze Road in Settlement. Make this your first stop for information on activities, facilities and special events.

Here you'll find a gift shop, internet café, a booking service, and friendly staff who will do what it takes to ensure you have a great holiday.

Flights

Contact the Visitor Information Centre for the latest flight information or visit:

www.christmas.net.au/getting-here/flights.html

A short flight away are the stunning Cocos Keeling Islands. Why not extend your trip and explore these tranquil coral atolls?

Accommodation

Christmas Island offers a choice of accommodation ranging from boutique hotel rooms and luxury self contained accommodation to lodge style properties. You will enjoy ocean views from many properties and experience the personalised service that comes only with smaller operations.

CITA can provide you with further information and arrange bookings – or you can view the accommodation options at: www.christmas.net.au/accommodation/accommodation.html

Tours

Tour operators offer a range of tours and recreational opportunities on land and water. Dive charter operators will help you discover the underwater wonders of the island's fringing coral reef and the precipitous drop-off. Fishing charters are available with experienced local fishermen as guides. Land tours offer a guided introduction to the island's culture, history and Christmas Island National Park. Contact the Visitor Information Centre for details on tour operations and prices.

Eating and shopping

Restaurants offer a variety of cuisines showcasing the cultural mix that is Christmas Island. You can also pick up souvenirs, local craft, clothing, fishing gear, snorkelling equipment and general merchandise, usually at near duty-free prices. Stores are located at the Kampong, Poon Saan, Drumsite, and at Temple Court and The Barracks on Gaze Road in Settlement.

There are several picnic and barbecue venues around the island where you may cook for yourself or take a hamper. Supplies may be purchased at local stores or supermarkets. Trading hours vary - contact the Visitor Information Centre for up to date information.



Christmas Island Visitor centre photo: © CITA



Lion Dance photo: © CITA



Malay drummers photo: © Kee Seng Foo

Phone and internet access

There is STD and international access to the Australian mainland. A public telephone is located at the Post Office in Settlement.

A Telstra 2G GSM mobile phone service operates on the island, but there are currently no data services. An internet café is available at the Visitor Information Centre and many hotels have WIFI access for their guests. WIFI hotspots are also available in other areas of town. Please ask the Visitor Information Centre for further details. Global roaming for phone and text services is available for international carriers with roaming agreements in place with Telstra.

Getting around

A network of roads and tracks provides access to many places on the island. Other places are reached by marked walking trails. See the map on pages 10 - 11 and a guide to walks on pages 24 - 27.

Many roads are 4WD only and many sections are steep and narrow and become slippery when wet. Some island roads are closed during the red crab migration. For your own safety and to protect crabs, particularly robber crabs and the red crabs during their migration, please drive slowly on the island's roads.

Do not drive into mining fields and be aware that heavy mining machinery also uses the roads.

Hire cars

2WDs and 4WDs are available for hire from a number of companies. For detailed information contact the Visitor Information Centre.

Yachts

The Port of Christmas Island and the community welcome visiting yachts mooring at Flying Fish Cove. For further information, contact the Christmas Island Tourism Association, or call in at the Visitor Information Centre.

Christmas Island cultural events

With its diverse eclectic cultural mix, there always seems to be a celebration of some description occurring on Christmas Island. The whole community joins in many events and the celebrations are vibrant and colourful affairs. Visitors are always welcome to join in public festivities.

In addition to the usual Australian public holidays, cultural events include the Muslim festival Hari Raya Puasa, marking the end of the month-long Ramadan fast; Hari Raya Haji, the festival of sacrifice; and Maulidurrasul celebrating the birth of Mohammad. Vesak Day is the Buddhists' holy day and the Deepavali celebration marks the Hindu Festival of Light. There are a host of Chinese celebrations including Chinese New Year; Hungry Ghost Festival (held on the 14th day of the seventh lunar month to appease the hungry ghosts that are unleashed from hell); and the Mooncake Festival, held on the 15th day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar when the moon is at its brightest.

The birthdays of Chinese temple gods are also celebrated at the respective temples around the island. Please respect temples as places of worship. Actual dates for these celebrations vary from year to year, so call into the Visitor Information Centre for further information.

History

Behind the laid-back multicultural ambience of Christmas Island today lies a fascinating and sometimes turbulent history.

It was the discovery of phosphate in 1888 which was to guide the island's destiny for the next century. It's a story of two men, George Clunies Ross and John Murray, and their quest to reap the rewards of phosphate with an imported workforce of Chinese, Malays and Sikhs, who often endured appalling conditions. The signs remain today of the island's WWII history including a restored gun emplacement. You can also see signs of the Japanese invasion and occupation, when islanders and allied submarines successfully sabotaged the mine effort and hundreds of islanders were then shipped to Japanese prisoner of war camps in Indonesia.

Britain took possession of the Island in the name of Queen Victoria in 1888, but in 1946 it was placed under the jurisdiction of the New Colony of Singapore. In 1958, Britain transferred sovereignty to Australia, and the island was made an Australian Territory.



photo: © CITA



Crab migration 1915 photo: © CITA



Early mine workers photo: © CITA

Christmas Island's history

25 December 1643	Captain William Mynors on the East India Company vessel, the Royal Mary, sees and names the island on Christmas Day.
1688	Crew of Cygnet make the first recorded landing (probably at the Dales), sent by English navigator William Dampier - they bring back water, timber and robber crabs.
1857	Crew of vessel Amethyst tries to explore the island, but are hampered by inland cliffs and dense jungle.
1887	A party from British naval vessel HMS Egeria reach the summit of what is now Murray Hill, finding phosphate as predicted by Scottish naturalist, Dr John Murray, and in a nearly pure form.
6 June 1888	Great Britain annexes Christmas Island at urging of John Murray.
1888	George Clunies-Ross, owner of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands sends his brother Andrew and a small party of Cocos Malay workers to form a settlement at Flying Fish Cove to pre-empt any other claim to the Island's resources.
1891	Britain offers rivals Murray and Clunies Ross a joint phosphate lease for 99 years.
1897	The rival claimants are induced to form the Christmas Island Phosphate Company.
1898	200 Chinese labourers, eight European managers and five Sikh policemen arrive on island to make up workforce, supplemented by a small number of Malays.
1900	First major shipment of phosphate.
1900 -1904	550 die from beri-beri, most of them Chinese.
1908	C.W. Andrews of the British Museum conducts a comprehensive study of the island's natural history, following on from his earlier study in 1898.
1942	Japanese attack Norwegian phosphate ship in Flying Fish Cove; 50 Asian and Australian families evacuated to Perth.
March 1942 -1945	900 Japanese troops invade and occupy Christmas Island, imprisoning remaining Europeans and hunting 1000 Malay and Chinese workers in the jungle. Islander sabotage and allied submarines lead to suspension of mining. In 1943, half the population is sent to prison camps in Indonesia when food runs low.
1949	Australia and New Zealand buy the Christmas Island Phosphate company and Christmas Island is administered by the colony of Singapore.
1950s	Population expands, with labour from Singapore, Malaya and Cocos and supervisor from Australia.
1 October 1958	On Territory Day, Christmas Island becomes an Australian territory after a payment of £2.8 million.
1970s	Union of Christmas Island Workers formed to improve living and working conditions.
1977	First Government Conservator appointed after conflicts between mining and conservation.
1980	The first National Park declared over Egeria Point area.
1986 & 1989	Christmas Island National Park extended.
2006	A wave of unauthorised boat arrivals seeking asylum in Australia leads the Australian government to open an immigration reception and processing centre on a former phosphate lease in the island's north west.

Christmas Island National Park

For nature lovers, Christmas Island National Park provides fantastic opportunities to observe unique plants and animals in their natural habitats. The park covers 85 square kilometres – about two-thirds of the island.

As an isolated oceanic island, distant from other land masses, Christmas Island is home to a high proportion of endemic species – found nowhere else in the world. Several are endangered. The park protects significant ecosystems including much of the island's uniquely structured rainforests and two wetlands of international importance, the Dales and Hosnies Springs.

In and around the national park you'll find a host of native sea and forest birds, unique fish, and land crabs – including tens of millions of red crabs, famous throughout the world for their spectacular annual breeding migration.

For more information see:

www.parksaustralia.gov.au/christmas

Geological origins

Christmas Island is the peak of a basalt volcanic seamount which rose steeply from the ocean floor about 60 million years ago. The highest point of the island is Murray Hill, which rises to 361m above sea level.

The island's emergence is a result of a series of geological uplifts over 10 or so million years. At each stage layers of coral reefs built up over the basalt core, leaving today an almost continuous limestone cap. The ocean eroded cliffs at each uplift, forming the stepped terraces and inland cliffs of the island's central plateau.

Evidence of the island's volcanic origins can be seen at The Dales and at Dolly Beach — where the underlying volcanic basalt is exposed.

Plants

The influences of warm temperatures, high rainfall, isolation, fauna, soil depths and types, and geological history have fused to develop Christmas Island's unique plant life.

The island is home to 242 native plant species, including 16 endemic species found nowhere else in the world. About half the island's plants are not found anywhere else in Australia.



Rain forest photo: Wendy Vis



Tree roots photo: © CITA



Fern *Tectaria devexa* photo: © Christmas Island National Park

Major vegetation types

On the island's central plateau and terraces where soils are deep you'll find stunning evergreen tall rainforest, with a closed uneven canopy around 40 m in height. Some trees emerge up to 10 m above the canopy and it's here that the endemic seabird Abbott's booby nests. The trees are prolific with ferns and orchids, and on the ground you'll see stands of young palms, ferns and lilies.

The shallower soils of the slopes and terraces down to the coast - and some plateau areas - support semi-deciduous forest, with smaller trees (15-30 m) and thicker patches of young palms. Land crabs - particularly tens of millions of red crabs - feed on understorey plants, giving the forest its bare understorey.

Deciduous scrub survives on the steep slopes and inland cliffs with very little soil. Here you'll find deciduous trees, scrambling scrub and many vines. On the more exposed areas between the scrub and coastal cliffs are patches of herbland, with prostrate herbs, sedges and grasses.

Birds

Christmas Island is one of the world's truly spectacular tropical seabird rookeries. It's not just the number and variety of seabirds or their magnificent splendour that make the island so remarkable, but also their sheer visibility.

Around 80,000 seabirds nest here annually, with 23 breeding or resident species. Birds can be seen and heard everywhere on the island, at just about any time of the day.

With little effort bird watchers can easily tick off a full list of residents in a busy week or a more relaxed fortnight — although the elusive Christmas Island hawk owl keeps many coming back.

More than 100 vagrant and migratory bird species have been recorded here, including eight breeding seabird species and one subspecies. The most numerous is the wide-ranging red-footed booby, which nests in colonies in trees on many parts of the coastal shore terraces. You may see the endangered Christmas Island frigatebird soaring above Settlement — it's the world's rarest frigatebird and nests only on the island. The golden form of the white-tailed tropic bird is an endemic subspecies unique to Christmas Island. Known locally as the golden bosunbird, this stunning bird is graceful in flight and has been adopted as the island's fauna emblem.

The evergreen tall rainforests provide the world's last remaining nesting habitat for the endangered seabird, Abbott's booby — listen for its harsh guttural call. These birds nest exclusively in the branches of the trees that emerge above the forest canopy from which they fly out daily to their ocean feeding grounds.

The rainforests are also alive with a variety of birds — including seven endemic species, the Christmas Island hawk owl, thrush, goshawk, emerald dove, imperial pigeon, glossy swiftlet and white eye, four of which are listed as threatened species.

Listen for the inquisitive Christmas Island thrush whose melodious evening song lends a wonderful musical quality to the tropical, palm-fringed sunsets. The Christmas Island imperial pigeon is another characteristic sound of the forest — listen for its deep, booming call as it forages amongst the forest canopy for ripe fruit.

The island's birds are very approachable, making a birding trip to Christmas Island an unforgettable experience.



↑ Male frigatebird photo: © Christmas Island National Park
↓ Abbott's Booby photo: © CITA



Golden Bosun photo: © Ian Montgomery



Red footed Booby photo: © Alex Cearns



Guest researcher Mark Holdsworth holding a goshawk photo: © CITA



Please don't feed the birds.

Wild birds find their own natural foods like insects, fish and small animals. Eating other things can make them sick and dependent on people for food.

Brown Booby photo: © Ingo Arndt



For more info on birds ask for our bird brochure or download our free Christmas Island Birds app from the iTunes store.



Bird'n'Nature Week

Join researchers and natural history experts in September for a week-long immersion in Christmas Island's wildlife! A host of wildlife activities is on offer each year. You may have an opportunity to work with guides to study the nesting biology and foraging ecology of Christmas Island frigatebirds and red-tailed tropicbirds. Or perhaps you can take part in a Christmas Island hawk owl survey or map the territory of the Island thrush. On offer are seabird identification workshops and nightly seminars showcasing seabird research, the status of the endemic landbirds, and the island's marine and terrestrial ecology.

Contact the Visitor Information Centre for further details — and if you can't visit in September, ask to be put in touch with experienced bird watching guides.

Crabs

Christmas Island is home to an amazing abundance and diversity of land crabs, not matched anywhere else in the world. More than 20 terrestrial and semi-terrestrial crab species have been found on the island. These include the tens of millions of endemic red crabs, the endemic blue crabs that inhabit wetlands and the large robber crabs which you will often see in the forests and on the island's roads.

Road to recovery for robber crabs

From 2010 to 2012, more than 2,000 robber crabs were killed by vehicles on island roads. National Park staff drive the roads regularly to locate the carcasses of these gentle giants as part of a study of the frequency and distribution of robber crab road kills. They record the date, GPS coordinates and details such as sex and size, and paint a fluorescent pink circle with a cross to mark the fatality. It's a reminder to all road users to slow down and take care when driving.

You can help to avoid robber crab deaths. Please don't attempt to drive over the crabs. If you see a robber crab on the road, check for other traffic and slow down, and if and when safe to do so, drive around them.



Robber crab photo: © Inger Vandyke



Robber crab photo: © Max Orchard

Did you know?

The extraordinary robber crabs are the biggest land crustaceans on earth. Christmas Island has the world's largest and best protected population of these gentle giants it is a major robber crab sanctuary.

Robber crabs have exceptional climbing abilities. They earn the name robber crab as they will obsessively pick up and cart off any foreign items they may come across and are well known for stealing shiny objects such as pots and silverware from camps. Robber crabs are slow growing and there is strong evidence that they live to be more than 50 to 70 years old.



Blue crab photo: © Max Orchard



Red hermit crab photo: © Max Orchard



Yellow eyed crab photo: © Max Orchard



Grapsus crab photo: © Max Orchard



Little Nipper crab photo: © Max Orchard



Smooth handed ghost crab photo: © Max Orchard

Red crabs

Tens of millions of red land crabs live on the island. They are the island's keystone species, because they play a vital role recycling nutrients and shaping and maintaining the structure of the rainforests.

Each year at the beginning of the wet season (usually during October to November) most adult red crabs begin a remarkable migration to the coast to breed. It is one of the world's natural spectacles, attracting national and international visitors alike. During the peak migration periods, it's possible to walk amongst a moving sea of tens of thousands of red crabs - and if you're lucky enough to time your visit right, you may witness the females releasing their eggs into the sea (spawning) in the early morning.

Where to view the migration

Drumsite, Flying Fish Cove, Ethel Beach and Greta Beach are good places to see the migration. Flying Fish Cove and Ethel Beach are also good places to watch female crabs spawn.

The Blowholes and Dales are magnificent places to view the migration after the crabs have made their way down to the shore terraces. The lower sections of the Dales and Blowholes roads are closed when there are large numbers of crabs on the road - but for those who are prepared to walk the distance, you will be rewarded by seeing thousands of crabs burrowing in the shore terrace forest. The walk is about 1.5 km return at the Dales and between 2- 4 km return at the Blowholes, depending on which of the two gates is closed for the migration.

Look after our red crabs!

Every year hundreds of thousands of red crabs are killed during their breeding migration. We're doing our best to protect them by installing special crab crossings and bridges on some roads to allow them to cross the road without encountering traffic. We also need to close some roads inside the park and we work with the local council to manage traffic and roads outside the park.

Please help us reduce red crab deaths by obeying road closure and speed signs. Slow down and drive around the crabs if it's safe to do so. During the migration, red crabs are mostly active early to mid morning and late afternoon until dark - unless it is overcast and raining, when they will move all day. If you can, avoid driving at these times. If you must drive during these times, try to clear red crabs off the road (carefully with a leaf rake) provided it is safe to do so.



Red crab photo: © Max Orchard



Red crab migration photo: © Max Orchard



Red crab spawning photo: © Ingo Arndt



Red crabs at dawn photo: © Ingo Arndt



photo: © Christmas Island National Park



photo: © Tracy Wilson

Marine life

Christmas Island's narrow fringing reef supports bountiful marine life, including 88 coral species and more than 600 species of fish. It's an underwater wonderland for divers, with clear warm waters, coral reefs and spectacular wall dives. Soft corals, feather stars and gorgonian corals grow along vast walls which plunge into a seemingly bottomless abyss.

The fish community is distinctive because the island is a meeting place for Indian and Pacific Ocean fish species – it's one of the few locations in the world where you'll see Indian and Pacific Ocean fish swimming side by side. Some of these species interbreed to produce hybrids. Christmas Island has more hybrid fish than anywhere else in the world, making it a marine hybridisation zone of international significance.

In addition to the hundreds of species of tropical fish, dolphins inhabit the island's waters and whale sharks regularly visit during the wet season. Whale sharks generally first appear when the red crabs are spawning at the start of the wet season — they converge to supplement their plankton diet with crab larvae.

Locations such as Flying Fish Cove, Ethel Beach, Dolly Beach and West White Beach offer scuba divers and snorkellers a rewarding marine experience. At Flying Fish Cove and Ethel Beach shore diving is possible depending on the time of the year. There is excellent fishing, with sailfish, tuna and wahoo among some of the fish to be caught. You'll find boat ramps at Flying Fish Cove and Ethel Beach.

For more information – pick up our Fish brochure or download from www.parksaustralia.gov.au/christmas.

Please take care

During stormy weather, beaches are prone to large waves, strong rips and undertows. No beach on the island is patrolled by lifesavers. Please use commonsense when swimming, scuba diving, snorkelling or wading at any beach on the island. Flying Fish Cove is considered the best and safest beach for these activities.



Batfish photo: © Udo Van Dongen



Hugh's Dale waterfall photo: © CITA



Coral reef photo: © Justin Gilligan



Whaleshark photo: © Linda Cash



Turtles

At high tide under the cover of night green turtles may come ashore to lay eggs at Greta and Dolly beaches. They use their hind flippers to excavate a chamber in the sand where they may lay more than 100 eggs. After 60 days or so turtle hatchlings emerge and scramble down to the sea. If you are lucky you may also see turtles while scuba diving or snorkelling at Flying Fish Cove.

Wonderful wetlands

Christmas Island has two listed Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention: the Dales and Hosnies Spring. Both of these are within the national park.

The Dales is a picturesque series of seven watercourses, three with permanent springs and permanent flowing water and four intermittent streams. Here you will find a diverse community of flora and fauna species. At Hugh's Dale, and in sections of Anderson Dale, you'll see tall stands of splendid Tahitian Chestnuts (*Inocarpus fagifer*), ribbon ferns growing in trees and endemic plants such as the arenga palm (*Arenga listeri*) and Ridley's orchid (*Brachypeza archytus*). The Dales is significant habitat for endemic blue crabs, unique to the freshwater wetlands of Christmas Island, as well as red and robber crabs and endemic land birds.

Hosnies Spring is an entire mangrove ecosystem growing in a freshwater spring 37 metres above sea level. The mangroves are the largest of their species ever seen with canopy heights 30-40 metres tall, and the stand is estimated to have persisted at the site for around 120,000 years.

National park staff at work

With its endemic species, unique rainforests and wetlands, and intact marine habitats, Christmas Island's natural environments are of international significance. National Park staff work with researchers, government agencies, the local council and the island community to protect this fantastic natural environment for future generations.

Weeds

Like many oceanic islands, Christmas Island has many exotic plants, often accidentally introduced by ship and sometimes deliberately by settlers. You may see island residents collecting introduced food plants such as chilli, lime, papaya and pumpkin which are sometimes found in the island's forests.

One quarter of the island's native vegetation has been cleared since settlement, making it easier for introduced plants to spread. Thankfully most of these species are not a threat to the island's native species or intact rainforests.

Most introduced species have not yet invaded undisturbed rainforest vegetation – but managing weeds like Siam weed and false curry bush is a priority for national park staff to protect the habitats of native plants and animals.

Rehabilitating the rainforest

Invasive species and human land use have impacted on the island's landscape and its ecosystems. In some areas, settlement and phosphate mining have removed the original tall evergreen rainforest - nesting habitat for the Abbott's booby.

To help restore the island's rainforests, the national park is planting thousands of native trees on abandoned minefields adjacent to Abbott's booby habitat. The good news is that native species such as red and robber crabs and forest birds are using these areas - and over time we hope to see an increase in Abbott's booby populations.

This work is funded by a conservation levy paid by Christmas Island Phosphates.



Re planting photo: © Christmas Island National Park



Abbott's Booby photo: © Christmas Island National Park



photo: © Christmas Island National Park

Did you know?

Crazy ants are one of the world's most invasive species. They were introduced to Christmas Island somewhere between 1915 and 1934. They form high density colonies called 'super-colonies', which threaten the island's iconic red crabs and the health of the rainforest.

National park staff and researchers are leading the world in the effort to control these pests. They survey and map the ants spread and periodically undertake aerial baiting of supercolonies. Aerial baiting of crazy ants was conducted in 2002, 2009 and 2011 and every two years staff conduct the island wide survey to map crazy ants 'super-colonies' and estimate red crab populations. Latrobe University is working with park staff to develop a way to control the scale insects which provide the ants major food source. If scale insects can be controlled this may reduce crazy ant populations.




Crazy ants photo: © Christmas Island National Park

Did you know?

Feral cats and rats are a threat to native species around the world – but especially on oceanic islands like Christmas Island. Here cats are known to prey on native reptiles, ground nesting seabirds including the golden bosun flying foxes and forest birds. Rats eat the eggs of native wildlife particularly seabirds and forest birds. Control of cats and rats is an ongoing challenge for the park and the shire.



Golden Bosun photo: © Ivan Choong

-  Two Wheel Drive
-  Four Wheel Drive
-  Easy walk
(easy access or boardwalk)
-  Easy - moderate walk
(low uneven terrain)
-  Moderate - experienced walk
(steep terrain)

Walks

There are a number of scenic drives leading to a series of walks in and outside the national park. Walking tracks range from short well developed tracks, such as to Hugh's Dale, to some longer, less developed and more rugged tracks, such as to West White Beach. All of these tracks are marked with international standard reflective directional arrows.

Inside the national park

Margaret Knoll Lookout

  100 m | 1 min each way

A short drive through plateau forest leads to a short walk of about 50 m from the car park and a short climb up a series of steps leads to Margaret Knoll lookout. The lookout provides dramatic panoramic views of the land and sea scapes of the east coast. Located at the edge of a high inland cliff, it's one of the better sites to observe seabirds including frigatebirds, red footed and brown boobies and the golden bosun. Christmas Island flying foxes may also be observed from here in the late afternoon and early evening.





Margaret Knoll lookout photo: © CITA



Dolly Beach photo: © Allison Millcock

Dolly Beach

  1 km | 1 hr each way | 4WD and walking access

From the car park, this is a leisurely walk of just over 1 km mostly on a boardwalk, through shore terrace forest to Dolly Beach. It is an isolated and picturesque sandy beach with a coral reef and a freshwater stream. Robber crabs inhabit the area above the beach and turtles nest all year round here. Camping is permitted here under certain conditions but please contact Christmas Island National Park on 08 9164 8700 if you wish to camp. Please do not disturb the animals or their nests.

The Blowholes



   2WD part way only

The vehicle track to the Blowholes passes through stunning tall rainforest and you'll usually see large numbers of red crabs. At the Blowholes, you will find an elevated walkway at the car park with viewing platforms on the coastal terraces close to the sea cliff edge. Spectacular blowholes spray seawater high into the air when large swells pound against the shore cliffs and there are panoramic views of the rugged southern coastline. For your safety please remain on the viewing platform and do not attempt to go near the cliff edge or fish from it.



The Blowholes photo: Wendy Vis

West White Beach walking trail


  1.5 km | 1 hr each way

This 1.5 km marked trail meanders down through tall plateau and terrace rainforest. It is a moderately difficult walk and includes a short descent down a steep cliff using a rope towards the end of the walk. Walkers are advised to wear sturdy footwear and to carry drinking water. The beach has a stunning coral reef off the shore, with views of the north coast. A great place for lunch.



West White Beach photo: © Erica Harrison

Martin Point walk

  400 m | 3 min each way

Martin Point is located in the Dales area. A short walk of 400m from the car park leads to a viewing platform on the edge of the sea cliff, providing excellent views along the western coast — great for photographers! It is a peaceful place to watch the sun set over the sea and waves breaking over the fringing reef and shore platforms. Red-footed boobies roost and nest in the trees above and you may see brown boobies nesting on the sea cliffs. There is a picnic table on the viewing platform. Take care when driving in - there are generally red, blue and robber crabs on the track.



Martin Point photo: © Ingo Arndt

Perpendicular Wall walking trail

  10 km | 2 hr each way

The Perpendicular Wall trail is a long but flat wilderness walk starting at Martin Point car park. You'll pass through coastal terrace forests with large numbers of red crabs and seabirds, including frigatebirds and red footed boobies. This trail is fringed by spectacular inland cliffs and rugged coastline. When you reach Perpendicular Wall you will be rewarded with spectacular panoramic views of the island's northern coastline. Take plenty of water and don't forget to take your lunch!



Perpendicular wall photo: © Julie Graham



Tahitian Chestnut Photo ©Holger Rumpff

The Dales walking trails

   2WD part way only



The Dales is one of Christmas Island's iconic sites and one of the few places with permanent flowing water and stunning wet areas, providing significant habitat for endemic blue crabs and impressive stands of Tahitian chestnut trees. The drive through the Dales leads through rainforest to a scenic and tranquil area, which has two walking trails starting from the Dales 4WD car park. The first is mostly a boardwalk leading to Hugh's Dale Waterfall which is 1 km (each way) from the car park. Signage along the trail offers information on the island's plants and animals.

For the adventurous, a second trail leads on from Hugh's Dale for about 800 m to Anderson's Dale, a small gorge with a small stream that flows to the sea. If you venture to Anderson's Dale please keep away from the shoreline and be wary of sea conditions as large waves are common along this coast.

Hugh's Dale Waterfall

  1.5 km | 30 min each way

Anderson's Dale

  3.6 km | 1 hr each way



Waterfall photo: ©CITA

Outside the national park

Territory Day Park nature trail

  1 km | 1 hr each way

This walking trail leads from Territory Day Park to Taj Jin House. The trail gives you a chance to explore and experience Christmas Island's unique rainforests as well as visit historical sites at Taj Jin House.

At the Territory Day Park there are picnic, barbecue and playground facilities and a lookout which offers spectacular views over Flying Fish Cove.

Golf course lookout

  1 km | 10 min each way

A short but rugged and steep walk from a radio tower at the phosphate hill area of the island's north east. It leads down to a cliff perched above the golf course, passing a historic Chinese cemetery on the way. The site provides spectacular views of the island's north east coast and is a great place to watch red footed boobies, frigatebirds and golden bosons as they soar past you. Please keep away from the cliff edge.



Territory Day Park lookout photo: ©Tierney



Golf course lookout photo: © CITA

Greta Beach

  300 m | 15 min each way

A short walk of about 300 m from a car park followed by a climb down a steep staircase at the top of a sea cliff leads to Greta Beach, located on the east coast. There is a viewing site at the top of the staircase that provides views over the beach and to the sea if you do not wish to walk down the staircase.

Turtles nest all year round on this beach. High numbers of red crabs spawn here during the annual migration and a short section of the vehicle track may be closed during the migration. Please do not disturb the animals or their nests.

Other places of interest

Flying Fish Cove

An easily accessible swimming, snorkelling and diving location. There are picnic facilities, barbecues, public toilets and a sandy beach. The island's main boat launching ramp is located here.

Tai Jin House

Located just up the hill beyond Flying Fish Cove, this is the original home of the Resident Magistrate, and later the Administrator of the Island – it's affectionately known locally as "Buck House". The expansive gardens are used for community events and provide excellent views over Flying Fish Cove.

A little way past Tai Jin House is the navy's restored 1941 gun emplacement and buildings from WWII.

A small museum is located at Tai Jin House. Contact the Visitor Information Centre for opening hours.

The Grotto

Approximately five minutes drive from Settlement located just before the entrance to the golf course, this cave with a sea and fresh water pool is refreshing on hot days or a romantic spot with candles at night.

Christmas Island Golf Club

The nine hole course and clubhouse is located in a scenic setting on the north-east coast and visitors are welcome. Clubs can be hired at the Visitor Information Centre.

South Point (2WD access)

The site of extensive phosphate mining, this spot offers an expansive view over the Smithson's Bight from the cliff top at the South Point temple. It is a great place to visit around sunset. Frigatebirds and boobies may be seen soaring below in the wind. There are two Chinese temples in the area which visitors are welcome to visit, but please respect them as places of worship. The now unused South Point railway station is an interesting historical site with a view over the southern coastline.



Greta Beach photo: Wendy Vis



Flying Fish Cove photo: ©Tan Hoek Hui



Tai Jin House photo: © CITA



The Grotto photo: ©Michael Seebeck

Suggested itineraries

Day 1

Morning

Walking Tour of Settlement, taking in the Christmas Island Exhibition at Tai Jin House, and the Historical Trail (supporting brochures available at the Visitor Information Centre).

Afternoon

Drive to the Blowholes via the North South Baseline, then the East West Baseline. Continue to Hugh's Dale finishing at Martin Point for a spectacular sunset.



Day 2

Morning

Drive to Territory Day Park, and complete the Territory Day Park Nature Trail – consider extending the walk to include the Smith Point Walking Trail.

Afternoon

Drive to the Grotto and Mar Chor Nui Nui Temple, finish the afternoon with a snorkel and barbecue at Flying Fish Cove.



Day 3

Full day

Drive to Greta and Dolly Beaches, enjoying the trek through the Rainforest to Dolly – pack a picnic lunch. Return via Margaret Knoll.



Add a day

Day 4

Morning

Drive to Lily Beach, and walk along the Boardwalk to Ethel Beach.

Take your swimmers and enjoy a paddle in the shallows.

Afternoon

Drive to South Point, taking in the historic railway station, temple and stay for the sunset.



Add a day

Day 5

Morning

Enjoy some birdwatching from the Golf Course Lookout.

Afternoon

Drive to the Dales and walk to Anderson's Dale, via Hugh's Dale.

Finish the afternoon with a snorkel at Flying Fish Cove.



Add a day

Day 6

Full day

Pack a picnic lunch, then drive to West White Beach, and walk the nature trail to the coast – and depending on sea conditions enjoy a snorkel.



Add two or more days:

Add some sports – play golf, go scuba diving, go deep sea fishing, go snorkelling.



Safety Info: don't risk your life

Please take extra care when you're visiting natural areas – we want you to have a great time and return home safely.



It is easy to become lost in the rainforest so keep to walking tracks and roads.



Walk with another person and tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.



Carry plenty of drinking water



When bushwalking wear sturdy shoes, a hat, sunscreen and loose and light breathable clothing.



The sea cliffs and inland cliffs on Christmas Island can be very treacherous so please keep away from cliff edges and do not venture on to rock platforms on the shoreline



Please use commonsense when swimming or wading at any beach – they can be subject to large waves and swell, strong rips and undertows. No beach on the island is patrolled by lifesavers. Swimming from beaches is only recommended at Flying Fish Cove under calm sea conditions



Obey all safety directions, notices and warning signs.



Some roads in and out of the national park are 4WD only and many sections are steep and narrow and become slippery when wet. Drive carefully and slowly. Take extra care when driving during wet periods, during the red crab migration or when robber crabs are out on roads and tracks.

Protecting the national park

The national park is established and managed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The Act and its Regulations set out rules for what can and can't be done in the national park.

So to help protect the park please:

- Keep to vehicle roads and tracks and walking tracks
- Camping is not allowed in the national park except at Dolly Beach, which requires a walk from the car park of about 1.5 km each way. If you wish to camp at Dolly Beach please contact national park Headquarters on Ph: 08 9164 8700
- Do not feed or disturb wildlife
- Do not light fires
- Do not spear fish in the park. The national park boundary extends 50 m from the low water mark of the land areas of the park.
- All land crabs on Christmas Island are protected so please drive safely to avoid killing crabs. It is an offence to recklessly or deliberately kill crabs or interfere with wildlife.

For further information about the island's natural environment see

www.environment.gov.au/parks/christmas/index.html