

DIVE ADVENTURES

Cocos (Keeling) & Christmas Islands



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CHRISTMAS ISLAND & COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

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Cocos (Keeling) Islands - Indian Ocean

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands are Australia's best kept secret and one of the last, undeveloped tropical island groups, in the world. Comprising of twenty seven coral islands forming two atolls, the isolated cluster is located in the middle of the Indian Ocean, approximately 2750km north-west of Perth W.A. The northern atoll, North Keeling, is a single uninhabited island. The main atoll is a horseshoe chain of islands encircling a lagoon. This atoll contains five major islands, including the only inhabited islands of the group, Home Island and West Island.



Photo - Karen Willshaw

The Environment:

Far removed from the hustle and bustle of mainland Australia, these palm clad, tropical islands surrounded by aquamarine waters, clear blue skies and white sandy beaches, create the idyllic setting for the holiday experience of a lifetime. This pristine, island paradise is further enhanced by the number of activities on offer. Awesome marine life, pristine, gardens of hard and soft corals, warm waters with excellent visibility offering some of the best diving and snorkelling in the world. Direction Island, just a short boat ride from the main island, is a must for all water sport enthusiasts. It is an uninhabited paradise with white sandy beaches and swaying palm trees. The south-



Photo - Karen Willshaw

east trade winds experienced during July to October offer ideal conditions for wind surfers, kite surfers and surfboard riders, Q-Station Bay gives surfers a consistent left-hand break. Nature lovers will be attracted to North Keeling it is covered in untouched, native forest it is home to a rich diversity of nesting seabirds.

The protected shipwreck of the German raider, SMS Emden, lies offshore in a watery grave after its encounter with the Australian cruiser HMAS Sydney in 1914. Diving is permitted November to April.

The Climate : Cocos enjoys a balmy, tropical climate throughout the year. Temperatures rarely exceed 32C or fall below 20C. Tropical cyclone season runs from 1 November to 30 April, during this time you may encounter sultry weather and light winds. The remainder of the year is dominated by the south east trade winds.

Cultural History: Discovered in 1609 by Captain William Keeling the islands were virtually uninhabited until 1827 when the Clunies-Ross family took sole possession of the islands. The Cocos-Malay community trace their ancestral roots back to Africa, China, Java, Borneo and Malacca. They have lived here since their ancestors arrival in 1826, to work on the then flourishing copra plantations. In 1974 the Australian government purchased interests in the territory and in 1984 the Cocos community chose, in an act of Self Determination to integrate with Australia.



Photo - Karen Willshaw

Cocos offers a variety of accommodation from motel style rooms, units, villas to self catering bungalows and homesteads.

The Cocos Beach Motel is located in the centre of West Island within easy walking distance to all local amenities. The motel offers 28 ocean side or park side motel units. Many of the rooms have direct views to the Indian Ocean.

Facilities include: Private en-suite, air conditioning, ceiling fan, telephone, TV, bar fridge, complimentary tea & coffee making facilities. Adjoining rooms are available for families.



Cocos Castaway Villas & Units are beautifully refurbished self contained beachside villa's. Local amenities are a short two minute walk away.



Ideal for couples, families and small groups.

Facilities Include: private outdoor decking area, en-suite facilities, air conditioning, ceiling fans, TV, clock radio,

fully equipped kitchen containing microwave, fridge, eskies, picnic baskets and a washing machine. All linen including beach towels is provided. Complimentary push bikes and BBQ area are available.

Cocos Cottages offer three fully self-contained architecturally designed, open-plan cottages, with all the comforts of home. The cottages overlook the golf course and lagoon and are just a short walk to town and local amenities and just a 5 minute walk to the beach. Each cottage can accommodate up to 4 guests.



Facilities Include: 1 queen and 2 single beds, fan cooled rooms, open Balinese style bathroom, fully self contained kitchen, fridge, microwave, cook top, all linen provided, washing machine, CD player, undercover deck for outdoor dining and communal BBQ area.

The **Cocos Village Bungalows** is a beautifully appointed resort style complex just across the road from the Indian Ocean.

The resort features ten, individually designed, tropical holiday bungalows and studio apartments creatively incorporated in the private gardens. Each bungalow features open plan design large, stylish bedroom and bathroom, well appointed kitchens, wide decks, cooling high vented ceilings and flow through louvres enabling guests to enjoy the warm tropical surroundings.

Facilities Include: a fully self contained kitchen, private ensuite - bathroom, TV, eskies provided. Full equipped guests commercial laundry, outdoor dining and entertaining BBQ ponds. Air conditioned bungalows available.



Diving The Cocos (Keeling) Islands - Indian Ocean

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands is a water lovers paradise boasting some of the most amazing diving and snorkelling in the world. With its uncrowded dive sites, myriad of marine life and spectacular pristine gardens of hard and soft corals its easy to see why.



Photo - Karen Willshaw

Combine this with fantastic visibility (average - 25 metres) and warm waters (26°-29°C) and you have the perfect diving conditions. The waters around the coral atoll are abundant with pelagics. Sharks are seen regularly as are schools of giant Barracuda, Big-Eye Trevally (Jacks), Dog-Tooth Tuna and Rainbow Runners, to name just a few of the fantastic varieties of fish to be seen.



Photo - Karen Willshaw

Whilst diving or snorkelling you may be paid a visit by gentle dolphins, turtles or majestic manta rays, or even an illusive, lone dugong, affectionately known as Kat. These beautiful marine creatures are here all year round.

Over 100 species of hard corals have been recorded along with beautiful soft leather corals, spiky tree corals and gardens of gorgonian fans. Mantas often join the divers, coming up the walls or soaring above, playing in the bubbles. Not to be forgotten is the smaller, more colourful marine life: butterfly fish, damselfish, parrotfish, wrasse including the majestic Napoleon fish and angelfish, nudibranchs, morays and octopus; the diversity of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands is really amazing. There are over 25 regularly visited dive sites, each unique in its own special way. The terrain of the atoll allows divers of all experience levels to enjoy these sites.

Some of the most popular dive sites are as follows;



The Cabbage Patch Enter the world of beautiful green and gold cabbage shaped coral. Thousands of tiny anthias and chromis hover just above the coral. The pristine dive site is considered by many as a must do dive!
Fan Wall is a spectacular steep wall dropping to 30 metres before it falls away to great depths. Gorgonian Fans cling to the sides of the walls, swaying in the gentle current. If you keep a close eye out into the blue, grey reef sharks often cruise by. This is also a spot frequented by manta rays.

Pulu Keeling National Park is some 14km north of the southern atoll and can be visited during the calmer summer months. Dive where few have been before - an experience of a lifetime, excellent drop-offs, fantastic fish life and pristine corals. Pulu Keeling is also the resting place of the infamous German Raider, SMS Emden. Trips to Pulu Keeling are totally weather dependent and subject to permit conditions, supervised by Parks Australia North.



Garden of Eden - Be prepared for big pelagics. Sharks, tuna, rainbow runners and barracuda, as they usually congregate along the wall. Big eye trevally usually come in for a closer look surrounding the divers. Also the site has unbelievable forests of gorgonian fans.



Photo - Karen Willshaw

Two Caves - This is the site of an illegal Sri Lankan boat that was sunk as a dive site. It has enticed a school of bat fish that call it home, along with other smaller fish. "Kat" the dugong is often seen here along with Manta's and sharks. Over the drop off are two small caves where sleeping white tips are often found.

Rose Wall - Cascading down the wall to about 50 metres is this rosy coloured hard coral. Smaller fish love it - a sanctuary for them to dart into as divers drift past. Coming back up, the scenery changes to a mixture of plates and leather corals. Schools of Surgeonfish and Parrotfish often graze here, rising in a wave of colour to sink back down into the corals to feed.



Christmas Island - Indian Ocean

Christmas Island is Cocos (Keeling) Islands closest neighbour. Located 2300 km north - west of Perth, W.A. and 900 km east of the Cocos Islands, Christmas Island is a tiny speck in the vast Indian



Photo - Phil Cash

Ocean. The islands close proximity to South East Asia and the Equator has resulted in a diverse range of flora and fauna.

The Environment:

A nature lover's delight, the island is made up of 63% national park that supports a wide

range of unique and unusual species and habitats. Walking and driving tracks lead to many lookouts, beaches and freshwater waterfalls. Shallow waters with a fringing reef surround the island, before plunging dramatically 5000m into the depths of the Java Trench. Caves honeycomb the limestone cliffs at sea level. These different marine environments provide a visual feast for snorkellers and divers alike.

The Island's flora has developed largely due to the warm temperatures, high rainfall and isolation. There are approximately 460 plant species, of which 213 are native plant species, 17 of these natives are endemic to Christmas Island. The Island is a focal point for sea birds of various species. Eight species of sea birds nest on the Island, these include the endangered Abbotts Booby and the Christmas Island Frigatebirds.



Photo - Liridal Cash

The island is also home to 120 million red crabs. At the beginning of the wet season (October / November) most of the adult red crabs begin a spectacular migration. They move on mass from the forest to the coast to breed and release their eggs into the sea. The baby crabs return to the forest approximately 1 month later. This migration has been described by ecologists as one of the wonders of the natural world and is one of Christmas' Islands claim to fame amongst naturalists. The main migration commences on the plateau and can last up to 18 days. The annual spectacle attracts national and international visitors.



Photo - Glen Cowans

Cultural History :

Like many remote ocean islands, Christmas Island's population is made up of a blended mix of migrants. Throughout the late 1800's a selection of workers from China, Singapore, Malaysia and Cocos Keeling Islands were brought in to work the phosphate mines and industries of Christmas Island. This cultural mix remained on the Island throughout the British, Singaporean and Japanese administrations. In 1958 Australia took over the administration of the Island. Today all islanders are permanent Australian residents with a cultural diversity resulting in an amazing adaptation of religions and ideas.

Climate: Christmas island experiences a tropical equatorial climate with wet & dry seasons. The wet season is from December to April when the Island comes under the influence of the north west monsoons. During the rest of the year, the south east trade winds bring slightly lower temperatures and humidity with much less rain. The average daily temperature is 25C and the average humidity is 80%.

Accommodation:

The Sunset offers stunning views of the Indian Ocean. The hotel is centrally located in the settlement and is only a short stroll to the local shops, cafes and the Golden Buson Tavern. There are three room categories to choose from.

The Superior Oceanview and Oceanview rooms offer guests spectacular views of the Indian ocean as well as the amazing Christmas Island sunsets from the private balcony.



Photo - Phil Cash

Standard rooms have access to the ocean view from the poolside area. Each room offers private en-suite facilities, air conditioning and ceiling fan, workstation, telephone, internet access, television, mini fridge, complimentary tea / coffee making facilities.

Adjoining rooms are available for families, and rollaway beds are available on request.

The VQ3 Lodge

is located in the settlement only 50metres away from The Sunset. The lodge has been recently upgraded. All rooms have private en-suite facilities, air conditioning and ceiling fan, workstation, telephone, internet access, television, mini



fridge, complimentary tea & coffee making facilities. There are a number of room categories available, standard , superior-ocean view and if you are looking for a little luxury, the presidential spa suite. In addition to these facilities, the lodge offers a communal guest kitchen. All guest are welcome to use the swimming pool at The Sunset.



Photo - Glen Cowans

Diving Christmas Island - Indian Ocean

Christmas Island is the tip of an ancient volcanic mountain rising 3000m from the depths of the ocean floor. Close to the shore lies a coral reef, which extends to the edge of the spectacular drop off into the Java Trench. With visibility often reaching 50m, divers can clearly see into the depths and admire the magnificent drop offs and the amazing forest of fan corals.



Photo - Lyn Cleary

As the Island is surrounded by deep water, it attracts a large array of pelagics including tuna, trevally, white tip reef sharks, maori wrasse and occasionally the hammerhead sharks. The Island boasts endless kilometres of spectacular wall diving, pristine corals, a myriad of tropical fish, dolphins, crystal clear warm waters and sea caves. For those wanting a little adventure, why not discover the Sea Caves of Christmas, where the wave action has eroded the limestone cliffs, numerous caves have formed, providing exhilarating diving. Inside Thundercliff cave, divers can surface into a huge air filled dome, which is adorned with beautiful stalagmite and stalactite formations.



Photo - Linda Cash

From November through to April the world's biggest fish, the whale sharks visits the island and are often seen in large numbers. Underwater their massive bulk is a breathtaking sight. If a diver remains stationary these gentle

giants of the deep often circle several times and can get so close that one may need to move aside to let them pass by. Being a plankton feeder their arrival coincides with the spawning of the red crab eggs. The larval stage of the crab provides a ready food source for the whale sharks. This is an experience not to be missed. There are only a few locations in the world that can offer this magnificent experience.

Some of the more popular dive sites: With over 40 dive sites available, no two are the same. The variety of diving available is unusual on such a small island.

West White Beach is one of the largest beaches on the island. It is home to the island's best hard coral reef. There are acres of pristine coral including tabletops up to 3 metres in diameter, masses of Porite heads, Staghorn and many other varieties. They provide a home for the myriad of colourful tropical fish. A photographers delight, this shallow reef with its scattered white sand patches creates a well lit spot for taking that perfect image.



Pig Rock despite being the most distant dive site, Pig Rock is well worth the 45 minute boat ride which takes in the picturesque northern and western coastlines. The rock itself protrudes from the cliff and closely resembles a pig's head. Starting on a protruding coral platform in 10 metres the wall plummets to approximately 80 metres. The sheer wall is covered with invertebrate growth and giant gorgonian fan corals, which recede into the depths. Further along the wall towards Egeria Point the current becomes stronger and the wall ends abruptly. This is an ideal location to watch the world go by. When the current is running barracuda, tuna, sharks and schools of colourful fusiliers can all be seen cruising past the point. With visibility often exceeding 40-50 metres, it is a dive you will never forget.



Photo - Glen Cowans



Thundercliff Cave is a dive site **not to be missed**. Where wave action has eroded the limestone cliffs many caves have formed. The cave itself is extremely large. Inside you could easily fit three double-decker buses. On entering the cave the blue light from the entrance creates awesome silhouettes. Further back live thousands of schooling bullseye fish, which dart back and forth. Its definitely a photographers dream. For most of the dive you can ascend into a huge air filled dome which is adorned with beautiful stalactite and stalagmite formations and limestone flows. Just to add to the excitement, you can remove your dive gear and start exploring the cave on foot. The formations are nothing but spectacular. This dive is a must and is suitable for experienced and novice divers.

Egeria Point is a very exposed dive site located on the south-westerly corner of the Island. Here the fringing reef slopes and extends far out to where the dive starts at around 20m. Slightly off a little ledge a richly overgrown pinnacle ascends from the deep up to 25m. Frequent encounters with grey reef sharks, resting white tip sharks, barracuda, wahoo and large schools of reef fish can be expected.



Getting there and some helpful information



General Information :

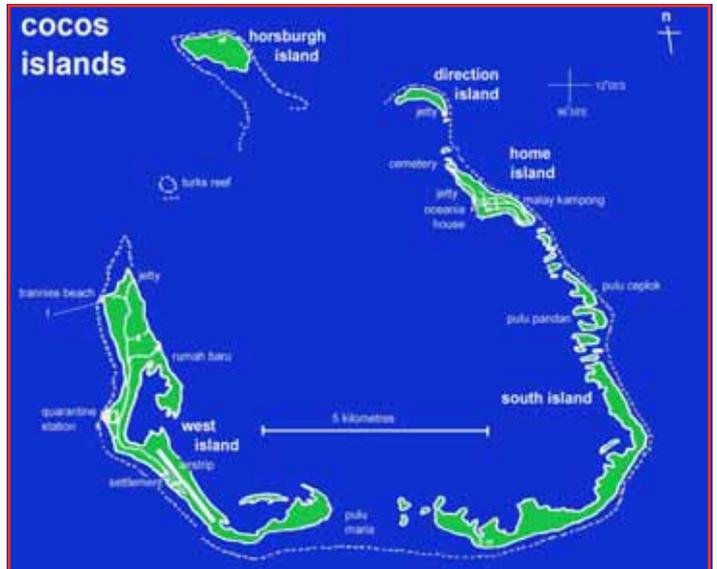
Language : English is the official language. Malay, Cocos Malay and a variety of Chinese dialects are also spoken.

Electricity: Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island operates on 240 Volt

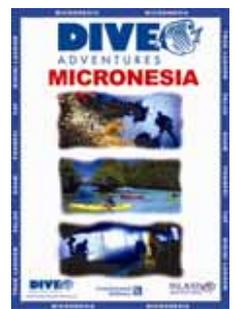
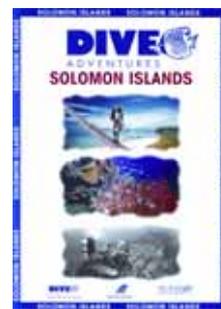
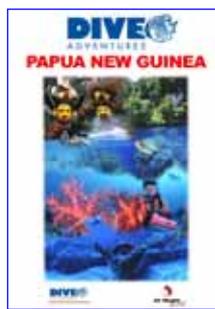
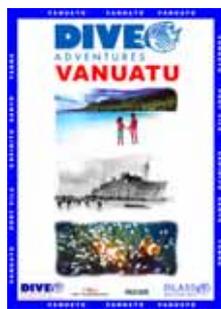
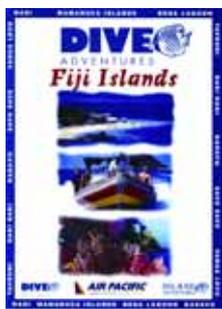
Currency: Australian Dollar is used throughout both Islands.

Passport / Visa requirements: Cocos Keeling Islands and Christmas Island are considered an International destination for Australian customs and quarantine. All Australian citizens should bring their passports. (Photographic ID is accepted and is an alternative form of ID) No Visa is required for Australian citizens.

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island are serviced from Perth (international terminal) twice a week by National Jet Systems. These flights are operated by a modern, 4 engine jetliner - the Avro RJ70. A hot meal service is provided on all flights with a selection of tea, coffee and soft drinks, alcohol can be purchased at Duty Free prices. A baggage allowance of 20kg's checked in plus 5kg's cabin baggage applies. (Normal international duty free allowances apply). There are also regular flights to Christmas Island ex. Indonesia.



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