



## Christmas Island – It's Not at the North Pole

Christmas Island covers 135 square kilometres and lies far out in the Indian Ocean, 2,600 kilometres northwest of Perth and 500 kilometres south of the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. It rises steeply from the sea floor and a series of terraces surrounds an irregular plateau, with the lower terrace cliffs steeper and higher than the upper terraces. The highest point of the island is Murray Hill, which rises to 361 m above sea level.

Christmas Island is the peak of a basalt volcanic seamount which rose steeply 5,000 metres from the ocean floor about 60 million years ago. 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 stepped terraces and inland cliffs of the island's central plateau. The eighty-five square kilometres Christmas Island National Park makes up almost two thirds of the island.



The first European to sight the island was Richard Rowe of the *Thomas* in 1615. The island was later named on Christmas Day (25 December) 1643 by Captain William Mynors. The human settlement of Christmas Island had its origins in 1887, when a small party of British explorers made their way through dense jungle and collected rock specimens of almost pure phosphate of lime. The discovery of phosphate guided the island's destiny for the next century.

### Landscape features

The island has geologically significant subterranean cave systems, including anchialine cave systems (a subterranean water body with connections to the ocean), which provide habitat for endemic fauna, and its geological features are significant for illustrating geological and evolutionary processes. Anchialine cave systems occur at only one other known locality in Australia. The soils of Christmas Island are derived from two sources - limestone (terra rossa soils) or basaltic extrusive rocks (krasnozem soils). The island's 73 km coastline is an almost continuous sea cliff ranging in height up to 20 metres. At 13 places, breaks in the cliff give way to shallow bays and small sand and coral beaches. The largest of these bays forms the island's port at Flying Fish Cove.



# Twelve Days of Christmas

1

6

F	R	E	N	C	H	H	E	N	S	W	A	N	S	V
E	S	G	K	M	G	S	R	E	M	M	U	R	D	G
S	D	O	A	H	D	N	G	P	M	G	C	Q	M	J
E	R	L	B	N	I	D	I	Q	P	I	P	E	R	S
E	O	D	F	P	I	P	N	Y	I	M	X	C	B	G
G	L	E	L	R	I	K	D	W	A	D	N	H	U	N
N	D	N	T	N	M	A	I	D	S	L	N	R	E	I
G	P	R	G	M	I	L	K	I	N	G	D	I	H	M
Y	A	I	F	U	Z	T	W	O	M	L	O	S	M	M
P	E	N	T	Q	G	N	I	P	A	E	L	T	E	U
J	V	G	S	W	I	M	M	I	N	G	D	M	N	R
I	L	S	D	R	I	B	G	N	I	L	L	A	C	D
U	E	T	U	R	T	L	E	D	O	V	E	S	Y	P
U	W	B	N	O	O	S	Q	Y	T	X	P	C	F	S
N	T	V	O	M	U	Y	E	E	R	T	R	A	E	P

12

10

2

4

3



11

CALLING BIRDS  
CHRISTMAS  
DAYS  
DRUMMERS  
DRUMMING  
FRENCH HENS  
GEESE

GOLDEN RINGS  
LAYING  
LEAPING  
LORDS  
MAIDS  
MILKING  
PARTRIDGE

PEAR TREE  
PIPERS  
PIPING  
SWANS  
SWIMMING  
TURTLE DOVES  
TWELVE

8

9

7

5

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