



## Africa :: Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha (overseas territory of the UK)

### Introduction :: Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha

#### Background:

Saint Helena is a British Overseas Territory consisting of Saint Helena and Ascension Islands, and the island group of Tristan da Cunha.

**Saint Helena:** Uninhabited when first discovered by the Portuguese in 1502, Saint Helena was garrisoned by the British during the 17th century. It acquired fame as the place of Napoleon BONAPARTE's exile from 1815 until his death in 1821, but its importance as a port of call declined after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. During the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa, several thousand Boer prisoners were confined on the island between 1900 and 1903.

**Ascension Island:** This barren and uninhabited island was discovered and named by the Portuguese in 1503. The British garrisoned the island in 1815 to prevent a rescue of Napoleon from Saint Helena. It served as a provisioning station for the Royal Navy's West Africa Squadron on anti-slavery patrol. The island remained under Admiralty control until 1922, when it became a dependency of Saint Helena. During World War II, the UK permitted the US to construct an airfield on Ascension in support of transatlantic flights to Africa and anti-submarine operations in the South Atlantic. In the 1960s the island became an important space tracking station for the US. In 1982, Ascension was an essential staging area for British forces during the Falklands War. It remains a critical refueling point in the air-bridge from the UK to the South Atlantic.

**Tristan da Cunha:** The island group consists of the islands of Tristan da Cunha, Nightingale, Inaccessible, and Gough. Tristan da Cunha is named after its Portuguese discoverer (1506); it was garrisoned by the British in 1816 to prevent any attempt to rescue Napoleon from Saint Helena. Gough and Inaccessible

Islands have been designated World Heritage Sites. South Africa leases a site for a meteorological station on Gough Island.

## Geography :: **Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha**

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### **Location:**

islands in the South Atlantic Ocean, about midway between South America and Africa; Ascension Island lies 700 nm northwest of Saint Helena; Tristan da Cunha lies 2,300 nm southwest of Saint Helena

### **Geographic coordinates:**

**Saint Helena:** 15 57 S, 5 42 W

**Ascension Island:** 7 57 S, 14 22 W

**Tristan da Cunha island group:** 37 15 S, 12 30 W

### **Map references:**

Africa

### **Area:**

**total:** 308 sq km

**country comparison to the world:** 209

**land:** Saint Helena Island 122 sq km; Ascension Island 88 sq km; Tristan da Cunha island group 98 sq km

**water:** 0 sq km

### **Area - comparative:**

slightly more than twice the size of Washington, DC

### **Land boundaries:**

0 km

### **Coastline:**

**Saint Helena:** 60 km

**Ascension Island:** NA

**Tristan da Cunha:** 40 km

### **Maritime claims:**

**territorial sea:** 12 nm

**exclusive fishing zone:** 200 nm

### **Climate:**

**Saint Helena:** tropical marine; mild, tempered by trade winds

**Ascension Island:** tropical marine; mild, semi-arid

**Tristan da Cunha:** temperate marine; mild, tempered by trade winds (tends to be cooler than Saint Helena)

### **Terrain:**

the islands of this group result from volcanic activity associated with the Atlantic Mid-Ocean Ridge

**Saint Helena:** rugged, volcanic; small scattered plateaus and plains

**Ascension:** surface covered by lava flows and cinder cones of 44 dormant volcanoes; ground rises to the east

**Tristan da Cunha:** sheer cliffs line the coastline of the nearly circular island; the flanks of the central volcanic peak are deeply dissected; narrow coastal plain lies between The Peak and the coastal cliffs

### **Elevation extremes:**

**lowest point:** Atlantic Ocean 0 m

**highest point:** Queen Mary's Peak on Tristan da Cunha 2,060 m; Green Mountain on Ascension Island 859 m; Mount Actaeon on Saint Helena Island 818 m

#### Natural resources:

fish, lobster

#### Land use:

**arable land:** 10.26%

**permanent crops:** 0%

**other:** 89.74% (2011)

#### Irrigated land:

NA

#### Natural hazards:

active volcanism on Tristan da Cunha

**volcanism:** the island volcanoes of Tristan da Cunha (elev. 2,060 m) and Nightingale Island (elev. 365 m) experience volcanic activity; Tristan da Cunha erupted in 1962 and Nightingale in 2004

#### Environment - current issues:

NA

#### Geography - note:

Saint Helena harbors at least 40 species of plants unknown elsewhere in the world; Ascension is a breeding ground for sea turtles and sooty terns; Queen Mary's Peak on Tristan da Cunha is the highest island mountain in the South Atlantic and a prominent landmark on the sea lanes around southern Africa

### People and Society :: Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha

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#### Nationality:

**noun:** Saint Helenian(s)

**adjective:** Saint Helenian

**note:** referred to locally as "Saints"

#### Ethnic groups:

African descent 50%, white 25%, Chinese 25%

#### Languages:

English

#### Religions:

Protestant (Anglican (majority), Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventist), Roman Catholic

#### Population:

7,754 (July 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 228

**note:** only Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha islands are inhabited

#### Age structure:

**0-14 years:** 17.2% (male 679/female 653)  
**15-24 years:** 11.7% (male 464/female 447)  
**25-54 years:** 45.6% (male 1,750/female 1,787)  
**55-64 years:** 12.2% (male 506/female 443)  
**65 years and over:** 13.2% (male 520/female 505) (2013 est.)

#### **Median age:**

**total:** 40 years  
**male:** 40 years  
**female:** 39.9 years (2013 est.)

#### **Population growth rate:**

0.3% (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 168

#### **Birth rate:**

10.19 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 192

#### **Death rate:**

7.22 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 125

#### **Net migration rate:**

0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 102

#### **Urbanization:**

**urban population:** 39.5% of total population (2011)  
**rate of urbanization:** -0.87% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

#### **Major urban areas - population:**

JAMESTOWN (capital) 1,000 (2009)

#### **Sex ratio:**

**at birth:** 1.05 male(s)/female  
**0-14 years:** 1.04 male(s)/female  
**15-24 years:** 1.04 male(s)/female  
**25-54 years:** 0.98 male(s)/female  
**55-64 years:** 1.17 male(s)/female  
**65 years and over:** 1.01 male(s)/female  
**total population:** 1.02 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

#### **Infant mortality rate:**

**total:** 15.25 deaths/1,000 live births  
**country comparison to the world:** 109  
**male:** 17.97 deaths/1,000 live births  
**female:** 12.38 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

#### **Life expectancy at birth:**

**total population:** 79.06 years  
**country comparison to the world:** 46  
**male:** 76.13 years  
**female:** 82.14 years (2013 est.)

**Total fertility rate:**

1.57 children born/woman (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 181

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

NA

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

NA

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:**

NA

**Education expenditures:**

NA

**Literacy:**

**definition:** age 20 and over can read and write  
**total population:** 97%  
**male:** 97%  
**female:** 98% (1987 est.)

**Government:: Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha**

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**Country name:**

**conventional long form:** Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha  
**conventional short form:** none

**Dependency status:**

overseas territory of the UK

**Government type:**

NA

**Capital:**

**name:** Jamestown  
**geographic coordinates:** 15 56 S, 5 43 W  
**time difference:** UTC 0 (5 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

**Administrative divisions:**

3 administrative areas; Ascension, Saint Helena, Tristan da Cunha

**Independence:**

none (overseas territory of the UK)

**National holiday:**

Birthday of Queen ELIZABETH II, second Saturday in June (1926)

**Constitution:**

the Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha Constitution Order 2009, effective 1 September 2009

**Legal system:**

English common law and local statutes

**Suffrage:**

18 years of age

**Executive branch:**

**chief of state:** Queen ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952)

**head of government:** Governor Mark CAPES (since 29 October 2011)

*note:* the constitution order provides for an administrator for Ascension and Tristan da Cunha appointed by the governor

**Administrator Ascension Island:** Colin WELLS (since 27 October 2011)

**Administrator Tristan da Cunha:** Sean BURNS (since 15 September 2010)

**cabinet:** Executive Council consists of the governor, 3 ex-officio officers, and 5 elected members of the Legislative Council

(For more information visit the **World Leaders website** [↗](#))

**elections:** none; the monarchy is hereditary; governor appointed by the monarch

**Legislative branch:**

unicameral Legislative Council (17 seats, including a speaker and deputy speaker, 12 elected, and three ex-officio members; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms)

*note:* the Constitution Order provides for separate Island Councils for both Ascension and Tristan da Cunha

**elections:** last held on 4 November 2009 (next to be held in November 2013)

**election results:** percent of vote - NA; seats - independents 12

**Judicial branch:**

**highest court(s):** Court of Appeal (consists of the court president and 2 justices); Supreme Court (consists of the chief justice - a non-resident - and NA judges)

note - appeals beyond the Court of Appeal are heard by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (in London)

**judge selection and term of office:** court judges' appointments and tenures NA

**subordinate courts:** Magistrate's Court; Small Claims Court; Juvenile Court

**Political parties and leaders:**

none

**Political pressure groups and leaders:**

**other:** private sector; unions

**International organization participation:**

UPU

**Diplomatic representation in the US:**

none (overseas territory of the UK)

**Diplomatic representation from the US:**

none (overseas territory of the UK)

**Flag description:**

blue with the flag of the UK in the upper hoist-side quadrant and the Saint Helenian shield centered on the outer half of the flag; the upper third of the shield depicts a white plover (wire bird) on a yellow field; the remainder of the shield depicts a rocky coastline on the left, offshore is a three-masted sailing ship with sails furled but flying an English flag

#### **National symbol(s):**

Saint Helena plover (bird)

#### **National anthem:**

**note:** as a territory of the UK, "God Save the Queen" is official (see United Kingdom)

▶ [PLAY ANTHEM](#)

### **Economy:: Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha**

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#### **Economy - overview:**

The economy depends largely on financial assistance from the UK, which amounted to about \$27 million in FY06/07 or more than twice the level of annual budgetary revenues. The local population earns income from fishing, raising livestock, and sales of handicrafts. Because there are few jobs, 25% of the work force has left to seek employment on Ascension Island, on the Falklands, and in the UK.

#### **GDP (purchasing power parity):**

\$31.1 million (FY09/10 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 227

#### **GDP (official exchange rate):**

\$NA

#### **GDP - real growth rate:**

NA%

#### **GDP - per capita (PPP):**

\$7,800 (FY09/10 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 135

#### **GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**

**agriculture:** NA%

**industry:** NA%

**services:** NA%

#### **Agriculture - products:**

coffee, corn, potatoes, vegetables; fish, lobster; livestock; timber

#### **Industries:**

construction, crafts (furniture, lacework, fancy woodwork), fishing, philatelic sales

#### **Industrial production growth rate:**

NA%

#### **Labor force:**

2,486 (1998 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 228

#### **Labor force - by occupation:**

**agriculture:** 6%  
**industry:** 48%  
**services:** 46% (1987 est.)

**Unemployment rate:**

14% (1998 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 137

**Population below poverty line:**

NA%

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

**lowest 10%:** NA%

**highest 10%:** NA%

**Budget:**

**revenues:** \$10.36 million

**expenditures:** \$25.46 million

*note:* revenue data reflect locally raised revenues only; the budget deficit is resolved by grant aid from the UK (FY06/07 est.)

**Fiscal year:**

1 April - 31 March

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

4% (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 123

**Exports:**

\$19 million (2004 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 206

**Exports - commodities:**

fish (frozen, canned, and salt-dried skipjack, tuna), coffee, handicrafts

**Imports:**

\$20.53 million (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 219

**Imports - commodities:**

food, beverages, tobacco, fuel oils, animal feed, building materials, motor vehicles and parts, machinery and parts

**Debt - external:**

\$NA

**Exchange rates:**

Saint Helenian pounds (SHP) per US dollar -

0.6307 (2012)

0.6236 (2011)

0.6472 (2010)

0.6175 (2009)

0.5302 (2008)

**Energy:: Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha**

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**Electricity - production:**

8 million kWh (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 214

**Electricity - consumption:**

7.44 million kWh (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 214

**Electricity - exports:**

0 kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 127

**Electricity - imports:**

0 kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 130

**Electricity - installed generating capacity:**

4,000 kW (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 207

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:**

100% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 37

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 174

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 197

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 184

**Crude oil - production:**

0 bbl/day (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 185

**Crude oil - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 180

**Crude oil - imports:**

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 119

**Crude oil - proved reserves:**

0 bbl (1 January 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 184

**Refined petroleum products - production:**

0 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 129

**Refined petroleum products - consumption:**

100 bbl/day (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 210

**Refined petroleum products - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 130

**Refined petroleum products - imports:**

66.05 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 206

**Natural gas - production:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 187

**Natural gas - consumption:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 191

**Natural gas - exports:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 176

**Natural gas - imports:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 127

**Natural gas - proved reserves:**

0 cu m (1 January 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 189

**Carbon dioxide emissions from  
consumption of energy:**

15,060 Mt (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 208

**Communications:: Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha**

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**Telephones - main lines in use:**

3,000 (2011)

**country comparison to the world:** 215

**Telephone system:**

**general assessment:** can communicate worldwide

**domestic:** automatic digital network

**international:** country code (Saint Helena) - 290, (Ascension Island) - 247; international direct dialing; satellite voice and data communications; satellite earth stations - 5 (Ascension Island - 4, Saint Helena - 1) (2010)

#### **Broadcast media:**

St. Helena has no local TV station; 2 local radio stations, one of which is relayed to Ascension Island; satellite TV stations rebroadcast terrestrially; Ascension Island has no local TV station but has 1 local radio station and receives relays of broadcasts from 1 radio station on St. Helena; broadcasts from the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) are available, as well as TV services for the US military; Tristan da Cunha has 1 local radio station and receives BFBS TV and radio broadcasts (2007)

#### **Internet country code:**

.sh; note - Ascension Island assigned .ac

#### **Internet hosts:**

6,729 (2012)

**country comparison to the world:** 141

#### **Internet users:**

900 (2009)

**country comparison to the world:** 215

#### **Communications - note:**

South Africa maintains a meteorological station on Gough Island

### **Transportation :: Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha**

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#### **Airports:**

1 (2013)

**country comparison to the world:** 232

#### **Airports - with paved runways:**

**total:** 1

**over 3,047 m:** 1 (2013)

#### **Roadways:**

**total:** 198 km (Saint Helena 138 km, Ascension 40 km, Tristan da Cunha 20 km)

**country comparison to the world:** 209

**paved:** 168 km (Saint Helena 118 km, Ascension 40 km, Tristan da Cunha 10 km)

**unpaved:** 30 km (Saint Helena 20 km, Tristan da Cunha 10 km) (2002)

#### **Ports and terminals:**

**Saint Helena:** Jamestown

**Ascension Island:** Georgetown

**Tristan da Cunha:** Calshot Harbor (Edinburgh)

#### **Transportation - note:**

there is no air connection to Saint Helena or Tristan da Cunha; construction on the new international airport for Saint Helena began in 2012 with an estimated completion date of late 2015 or early 2016; the new airport will have a runway of 1,550 m capable of handling B737/A319 size aircraft

## Military :: Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha

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### Manpower fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 1,565

females age 16-49: 1,579 (2010 est.)

### Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:

male: 49

female: 48 (2010 est.)

### Military - note:

defense is the responsibility of the UK

## Transnational Issues :: Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha

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### Disputes - international:

none