

Andaman and Nicobar Islands

The **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, one of the seven union territories of India, are a group of islands at the juncture of the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea

The territory is 150 km (93 mi) north of Aceh in Indonesia and separated from Thailand and Myanmar (Burma) by the Andaman Sea. It comprises two island groups, the Andaman Islands and the Nicobar Islands, separated by the 10°N parallel, with the Andamans to the north of this latitude, and the Nicobars to the south (or by 179 km). The Andaman Sea lies to the east and the Bay of Bengal to the west.

The territory's capital is the Andamanese town of Port Blair. The total land area of these islands is approximately 8,249 km² (3,185 sq mi). The capital of Nicobar Islands is Car Nicobar. The islands host the Andaman and Nicobar Command, the only tri-service geographical command of the Indian Armed Forces

The Andaman Islands are home to the Sentinelese people, an uncontacted people. The Sentinelese are the only people currently known to not have reached further than a Paleolithic level of technology^[6]

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The Sisters (Andaman)

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Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Union territory

Andaman Islands in India
 सत्यमेव जयते Government of Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Seal of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Location of Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India
Coordinates (Port Blair): 11.68°N 92.77°E﻿ / ﻿
Country  India
Established 1 November 1956
Capital and largest city Port Blair
Districts 3
Government • Lieutenant Governor Admiral Devendra Kumar Joshi (Retired) • Chief Anindo Majumdar IAS

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History

First inhabitants

The earliest archaeological evidence documents some 2,200 years. However genetic and cultural studies suggest that the indigenous Andamanese people may have been isolated from other populations during the Middle Paleolithic, which ended 30,000 years ago.^[7] Since that time, the Andamanese have diversified into linguistically and culturally distinct, territorial groups.

The Nicobar Islands appear to have been populated by people of various backgrounds. By the time of European contact, the indigenous inhabitants had coalesced into the Nicobarese people, speaking a Mon-Khmer language; and the Shompen, whose language is of uncertain affiliation. Both are unrelated to the Andamanese, but being closely related to the Austroasiatic languages in mainland Southeast Asia.

Chola empire period

Rajendra Chola I (1014 to 1042 AD), used the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as a strategic naval base to launch an expedition against the Sriwijaya Empire (Indonesia). The Cholas called the island Ma-Nakkavaram ("great open/naked land"), found in the Thanjavur inscription of 1050 AD. European traveller Marco Polo (12th–13th century) also referred to this island as 'Necuverann' and a corrupted form of the Tamil name Nakkavaram would have led to the modern name Nicobar during the British colonial period.^[8]

Danish colonial period and British Rule

The history of organized European colonization on the islands began when settlers from the Danish East India Company arrived in the Nicobar Islands on 12 December 1755. On 1 January 1756, the Nicobar Islands were made a Danish colony, first named New Denmark,^[9] and later (December 1756) Frederick's Islands (*Frederikshøerne*). During 1754–1756 they were administrated from Tranquebar (in continental Danish India). The islands were repeatedly abandoned due to outbreaks of malaria between 14 April 1759 and 19 August 1768, from 1787 to 1807/05, 1814 to 1831, 1830 to 1834 and gradually from 1848 for good.^[9]

From 1 June 1778 to 1784, Austria mistakenly assumed that Denmark had abandoned its claims to the Nicobar Islands and attempted to establish a colony on them,^[10] renaming them **Theresia Islands**.^[9]

In 1789 the British set up a naval base and penal colony on Chatham Island next to Great Andaman, where now lies the town of Port Blair. Two years later the colony was moved to Port Cornwallis on Great Andaman, but it was abandoned in 1796 due to disease.

Denmark's presence in the territory ended formally on 16 October 1868 when it sold the rights to the Nicobar Islands to Britain,^[10] which made them part of British India in 1869.

Secretary	
 • MP	Bishnu Pada Ray (BJP)
 • Lok Sabha constituencies	1
Area ^[1]	
 • Total	8,250 km ² (3,190 sq mi)
Area rank	28th
Population (2012) ^[2]	
 • Total	380,520
 • Density	46/km ² (120/sq mi)
Languages ^[3]	
 • Official	Hindi, English ^[4]
 • Languages spoken	Bengali, Hindi, Tamil, Nicobarese, Malayalam Other languages include Odia, Telugu, Marathi, and English^[5]
Time zone	IST (UTC+05:30)
ISO 3166 code	IN-AN
HDI	▲ 0.778 (High)
Website	www.andaman.gov.in

State symbols of Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Animal	Dugong
Bird	Andaman Wood Pigeon
Tree	Andaman Padauk



Andaman Cellular Jail

In 1858 the British again established a colony at Port Blair, which proved to be more permanent. The primary purpose was to set up a penal colony criminal convicts from the Indian subcontinent. The colony came to include the infamous Cellular Jail.

In 1872 the Andaman and Nicobar islands were united under a single chief commissioner at Port Blair

World War II

During World War II, the islands were practically under Japanese control, only nominally under the authority of the Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind of Subhash Chandra Bose. Bose visited the islands during the war, and renamed them as "Shaheed-dweep" (Martyr Island) and "Swaraj-dweep" (Self-rule Island).

General Loganathan, of the Indian National Army was made the Governor of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. On 22 February 1944 he along with four INA officers—Major Mansoor Ali Alvi, Sub. Lt. Md. Iqbal, Lt. Suba Singh and stenographer Srinivasan—arrived at Lambaline Airport in Port Blair. On 21 March 1944 the Headquarters of the Civil Administration was established near the Gurudwara at Aberdeen Bazaar. On 2 October 1944, Col. Loganathan handed over the charge to Maj. Alvi and left Port Blair, never to return.^[11] The islands were reoccupied by British and Indian troops of the 116th Indian Infantry Brigade on 7 October 1945, to whom the remaining Japanese garrison surrendered.

Post independence

During the independence of both India (1947) and Burma (1948), the departing British announced their intention to resettle all Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Burmese on these islands to form their own nation, although this never materialised. It became part of India in 1950 and was declared as a union territory of the nation in 1956.^[12]

India has been developing defence facilities on the islands since the 1980s. The islands now have a key position in India's strategic role in the Bay of Bengal and the Malacca Strait.^[13]

2004 tsunami

On 26 December 2004 the coasts of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were devastated by a 10 m (33 ft) high tsunami following the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake. More than 2,000 people lost their lives, more than 4,000 children were orphaned or suffered the loss of one parent, and a minimum of 40,000 people were rendered homeless. More than 46,000 people were injured.^[14] The worst affected Nicobar islands were Katchal and Indira Point; the latter subsided 4.25 metres (13.9 feet) and was partially submerged in the ocean. The lighthouse at Indira Point was damaged but has been repaired since then. The territory lost a large amount of area which is now submerged. The territory which was at 8,073 km² (3,117 sq mi) is now at 7,950 km² (3,070 sq mi).^[15]

While locals and tourist of the islands suffered the greatest casualties from the tsunami, most of the aboriginal people survived because oral traditions passed down from generations ago warned them to evacuate from large waves that follow large earthquakes.^[16]

Geography

There are 572 islands ^[17] in the territory having an area of 8,249 km² (3,185 sq mi). Of these, about 38 are permanently inhabited. The islands extend from 6° to 14° North latitudes and from 92° to 94° East longitudes. The Andamans are separated from the Nicobar group by a channel (the Ten Degree Channel) some 150 km (93 mi) wide. The highest point is located in North Andaman Island



Japanese military delegation salute Lieutenant Colonel Nathu Singh, commanding officer of the Rajput Regiment, following their surrender of the Islands, 1945

(Saddle Peak at 732 m (2,402 ft)). The Andaman group has 325 islands which cover an area of 6,170 km² (2,382 sq mi) while the Nicobar group has only 247 islands with an area of 1,765 km² (681 sq mi).^{[12]:33}

The capital of the union territory, Port Blair, is located 1,255 km (780 mi) from Kolkata, 1,200 km (750 mi) from Visakhapatnam and 1,190 km (740 mi) from Chennai.^{[12]:33} The northernmost point of the Andaman and Nicobars group is 901 km (560 mi) away from the mouth of the Hooghly River and 190 km (120 mi) from Myanmar. Indira Point at 6°45′10″N and 93°49′36″E at the southern tip of the southernmost island, Great Nicobar, is the southernmost point of India and lies only 150 km (93 mi) from Sumatra in Indonesia. The only volcano in India, Barren Island, is located in Andaman and Nicobar. It is an active volcano and erupted in 2017.

Flora

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands have a tropical rainforest canopy, made of a mixed flora with elements from Indian, Myanmar, Malaysian and endemic floral strains. So far, about 2,200 varieties of plants have been recorded, out of which 200 are endemic and 1,300 do not occur in mainland India.

The South Andaman forests have a profuse growth of epiphytic vegetation, mostly ferns and orchids. The Middle Andamans harbours mostly moist deciduous forests. North Andamans is characterised by the wet evergreen type, with plenty of woody climbers. The North Nicobar Islands (including Car Nicobar and Battimalv) are marked by the complete absence of evergreen forests, while such forests form the dominant vegetation in the central and southern islands of the Nicobar group. Grasslands occur only in the Nicobars, and while deciduous forests are common in the Andamans, they are almost absent in the Nicobars. The present forest coverage is claimed to be 86.2% of the total land area.

This atypical forest coverage is made up of twelve types, namely:

1. Giant evergreen forest
2. Andamans tropical evergreen forest
3. Southern hilltop tropical evergreen forest
4. Cane brakes
5. Wet bamboo brakes
6. Andamans semi-evergreen forest
7. Andamans moist deciduous forest
8. Andamans secondary moist deciduous forest
9. Littoral forest
10. Mangrove forest
11. Brackish water mixed forest
12. Submontane forest

Fauna

This tropical rain forest, despite its isolation from adjacent land masses, is surprisingly rich with a diversity of animal life.

About 50 varieties of forest mammals are found to occur in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Some are endemic, including the Andaman wild boar. Rodents are the largest group with 26 species, followed by 14 species of bat. Among the larger mammals there are two endemic varieties of wild boar, *Sus scrofa andamanensis* from Andaman and *Sus scrofa nicobaricus* from Nicobar, which are



Barren Island in the Andaman Islands



Map of Andaman and Nicobar Islands with an extra detailed area around Port Blair

protected by the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 (Sch I). Saltwater crocodile is also found in abundance. The State Animal of Andaman is the dugong, also known as the sea cow, which can be found in Little Andaman. Around 1962 there was an attempt to introduce the leopard, which was unsuccessful because of unsuitable habitat. These were ill-considered moves as exotic introductions can cause havoc to island flora and fauna.



Ross Island, Andaman

About 270 species of birds are found in the territory; 14 of them are endemic, the majority to the Nicobar island group. The islands' many caves are nesting grounds for the edible-nest swiftlet, whose nests are prized in China for bird's nest soup.^[18]

The territory is home to about 225 species of butterflies and moths. Ten species are endemic to these Islands. Mount Harriet National Park is one of the richest areas of butterfly and moth diversity on these islands.

The islands are well known for prized shellfish, especially from the genera Turbo, Trochus, Murex and Nautilus. Earliest recorded commercial exploitation began during 1929. Many cottage industries produce a range of decorative shell items. Giant clams, green mussels and oysters support edible shellfishery. The shells of scallops, clams, and cockle are burnt in kilns to produce edible lime.

There are 96 wildlife sanctuaries, nine national parks and one biosphere reserve in these islands.^[19]

Demographics

As of 2011 Census of India, the population of the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands was 379,944, of which 202,330 (53.25%) were male and 177,614 (46.75%) were female. The sex ratio was 878 females per 1,000 males.^[21] Only 10% of the population lived in Nicobar islands.

The areas and populations (at the 2001 and 2011 Censuses) of the three districts^[22] are:

Name	Area (km ²)	Population Census 2001	Population Census 2011	Capital
<u>Nicobar Islands</u>	1,765	42,068	36,842	<u>Car Nicobar</u>
<u>North and Middle Andaman</u>	3,536	105,613	105,597	<u>Mayabunder</u>
<u>South Andaman</u>	2,640	208,471	238,142	<u>Port Blair</u>
Totals	7,950	356,152	380,581	

Population growth		
Census	Pop.	%±
1951	31,000	—
1961	64,000	106.5%
1971	115,000	79.7%
1981	189,000	64.3%
1991	281,000	48.7%
2001	356,000	26.7%
2011	380,000	6.7%
Source:Census of India ^[20]		

Hindi and English are the official languages of the islands.^[3] Bengali is the dominant and most spoken language, with 26% of the population speaking Bengali. The other major languages spoken in the islands are Bengali (26%) Hindi (18.23%), Tamil (17.68%), Telugu (12.81%), Malayalam (8.11%) and Nicobarese (8.05%) according to 2001 Census of India.^[3] Other minor spoken languages are Kurukh/Oraon, Munda and Kharia. Andaman Creole Hindi is widely used as a trade language in the Andamans.

There remain approximately 400–450 indigenous Andamanese in the Andaman islands, the Jarawa and Sentinelese in particular maintaining a steadfast independence and refusing most attempts at contact. In the Nicobar Islands, the indigenous people are the Nicobarese, or Nicobari, living throughout many of the islands, and the Shompen, restricted to the hinterland of Great Nicobar. More than 2,000 people belonging to the Karen tribe live in the Mayabunder tehsil of North Andaman district, almost all of whom are Christians. Despite their tribal origins, the Karen of Andamans have Other Backward Class (OBC) status in the Andamans.

Religion

The majority of people of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are Hindus (69.44%), with Christians forming a large minority of 21.7% of the population, according to the 2011 census of India. There is a small but significant Muslim (8.51%) minority.

Administration

In 1874, the British had placed the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in one administrative territory headed by a Chief Commissioner as its judicial administrator. On 1 August 1974, the Nicobar islands were hived off into another revenue district with district headquarters at Car Nicobar under a Deputy Commissioner. In 1982, the post of Lieutenant Governor was created who replaced the Chief Commissioner as the head of administration. Subsequently, a "Pradesh council" with Counselors as representatives of the people was constituted to advise the Lieutenant Governor.^[12] The Islands sends one representative to Lok Sabha from its Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Lok Sabha constituency).

Administrative divisions

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands is divided into three districts. Each district is further divided into sub-divisions and taluks:

North and Middle Andaman

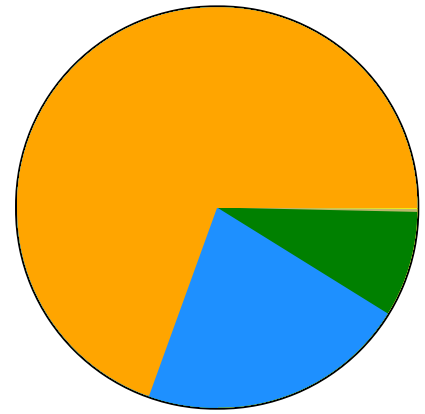
- Headquarters: Mayabunder
- Diglipur Sub-Division
 - Diglipur taluk
- Mayabunder Sub-Division
 - Mayabunder taluk
 - Rangat taluk

South Andaman

- Headquarters: Port Blair
- Port Blair Sub-Division
 - Port Blair taluk
 - Ferrargunj taluk
 - Jirkatang taluk (native Jarawa reservation)
- Ritchie's Archipelago Sub-Division
 - Ritchie's Archipelago taluka (Havelock Island)
- Little Andaman Sub-Division
 - Little Andaman taluka (Hut Bay)

Nicobar

- Headquarters: Car Nicobar
- Car Nicobar Sub-Division
 - Car Nicobar taluk
- Nancowrie Sub-Division
 - Nancowrie taluk
 - Kamorta taluk
 - Teressa taluk
 - Katchal taluk



Religion in Andaman and Nicobar (2011)^[23]



- Great Nicobar Sub-Division
 - Great Nicobar taluk (Campbell Bay)
 - Little Nicobar taluk

Economy

Agriculture

A total of 48,675 hectares (120,280 acres) of land is used for agriculture purposes. Paddy, the main food crop, is mostly cultivated in Andaman group of islands, whereas coconut and arecanut are the cash crops of Nicobar group of islands. Field crops, namely pulses, oilseeds and vegetables are grown, followed by paddy during Rabi season. Different kinds of fruits such as mango, sapota, orange, banana, papaya, pineapple and root crops are grown on hilly land owned by farmers. Spices such as pepper, clove, nutmeg, and cinnamon are grown under a multi-tier cropping system. Rubber, red oil, palm, noni and cashew are grown on a limited scale in these islands.

Industry

There are 1,374 registered small-scale, village and handicraft units. Two units are export-oriented in the line of fish processing activity. Apart from this, there are shell and wood based handicraft units. There are also four medium-sized industrial units. SSI units are engaged in the production of polythene bags, PVC conduit pipes and fittings, paints and varnished, fibre glass and mini flour mills, soft drinks and beverages, etc. Small scale and handicraft units are also engaged in shell crafts, bakery products, rice milling, furniture making, etc.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation has spread its wings in the field of tourism, fisheries, industries and industrial financing and functions as authorised agents for Alliance Air/Jet Airways. The Islands have become a tourist destination, due to the draw of their largely unspoiled virgin beaches and waters.^[24]

Tourism

Andaman and Nicobar Islands are developing into a major tourism hub with exotic-looking beaches and pristine islands having equally exotic names, wonderful opportunities for adventure sports like snorkelling and sea-walking.^[25]

In Port Blair, the main places to visit are the Cellular Jail, Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park, Andaman Water sports complex, Chatham Saw Mill, Mini Zoo, Corbyn's cove, Chidiya Tapu, Wandoor Beach, Forest Museum, Anthropological Museum, Fisheries Museum, Naval Museum (Samudrika), Ross Island and Viper Island. Other places include Havelock island famous for Radhanagar Beach, Neil Island for Scuba diving/snorkelling, Cinque island, Saddle peak, Mt Harriet and Mud Volcano. The southern group (Nicobar islands) is mostly inaccessible to tourists.

Indian tourists do not require a permit to visit the Andaman islands but if they wish to visit any tribal areas they need a special permit from the Deputy Commissioner, Port Blair. Permits are required for foreign nationals. For foreign nationals arriving



Little Andaman Island seen by Spot satellite.



Ross Island a couple of days before the tsunami of December 2004.



A statue of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar at Cellular Jail.

by air, these are granted upon arrival at Port Blair

According to official estimates, the flow of tourists doubled to nearly 300,000 in 2012 from 130,000 in 2008–09. The Radha Nagar beach of Andamans was chosen as Asia’s best Beach in 2004.^[25]

Macro-economic trend

This is a chart of trend of gross state domestic product (GSDP) of Andaman and Nicobar Islands at market prices, estimated by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementationwith figures in millions of Indian rupees.^[26]

Year	GSDP (millions of ₹)
1985	590
1990	1,100
1995	4,000
2000	7,750
2005	10,560
2010	16,130

Andaman and Nicobar Islands' gross state domestic product for 2004 was estimated at \$354 million in current prices.

Power generation

With Japanese assistance, Southern Andaman Island will now have a 15-Megawatt Diesel power plant. This would be the first foreign investment of any kind allowed at this strategically significant island chain. This is believed to be an Indo-Japanese strategic initiative to strengthen civilian infrastructure in the vicinity of the Strait of Malacca – a strategically important choke-point for the Chinese oil supply^{[27][28]}

The Sisters (Andaman)

The Sisters are small uninhabited islands in the Andaman Archipelago, at the northern side of the Duncan Passage, about 6 km (3.2 nmi) southeast of Passage Island and 18 km (9.7 nmi) north of North Brother: East Sister Island (Andaman) and West Sister Island (Andaman). The islands are about 250 metres (820 feet) apart, connected by a coral reef. They are covered by forests, and hav rocky shores except for a beach on the NW side of East SisterThey belong to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Territory of India.

Before the British established a colony on the Andaman, the Sister islands were visited occasionally by the Onge people of Little Andaman Island for fishing. They may have been a waystation for their temporary settlement of Rutland Island between 1890 and 1930. The islands have been a wildlife refuge since 1987, with 0.36 square km of area.

See also

- Effect of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake on India
- Endemic birds of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- 2014 Andaman boat disaster
- Coral reefs in India

Notes

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External links

- [Census of India, Provisional Population Totals](#)
 - [Andaman and Nicobar Administration Website](#)
 - [Andaman and Nicobar Islands](#) at Curlie (based on [DMOZ](#))
 -  [Andaman and Nicobar Islands](#) travel guide from Wikivoyage
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