

Ascension

Overview:

Ascension Island is a dependency of the island of St. Helena, an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom located in the South Atlantic.

Territory:

The highest elevation on Ascension Island is 858.6 m.

Location:

Ascension Island is located 1,120 km (696 mi.) northwest of St Helena, among the most isolated inhabited locations in the world.

Latitude and Longitude:

5 43 West, 15 56 South (St. Helena). Ascension Island is located 1,120 km (696 mi.) northwest of St Helena

Time Zone:

GMT

Total Land Area:

90

EEZ:

0

Climate:

Ascension averages 20-31° Celsius at sea level, with the weather on Green Mountain approximately 10° Celsius lower. It experiences showers throughout the year, with heavier rains occurring January through April.

Natural Resources:

Fish, coffee

ECONOMY:

Total GDP:	
2007	5,540,000.00 USD

Per Capita GDP:	
2007	5,540.00 USD

% of GDP per Sector:		
Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

% of Population Employed by Sector		
Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

External Aid/Remittances:

Ascension Island is economically self-sufficient, and does not receive external aid.

Growth:

Labour Force:

Unemployment	
Year:	Unemployment Rate (% of pop.)

Industry:

Construction, crafts, fishing

Niche Industry:

Premium coffee

Tourism:

The lack of outside investment in the island remains a going concern. A major stumbling block is that transportation to St Helena remains extremely difficult. While many islands focus energy on the tourism sector, the prospect of St Helena becoming a major destination is quite unlikely due to the difficulty of transportation – in 2003 only 2,959 tourists landed on its shores. One solution often bandied about is that of establishing an airport, a cause led by the St Helena Leisure Corporation (SHELCO). An independent research and development company focused solely on bringing an airport to the island, it has spent over £2 million on studies since 1999. The government has followed suit with its own studies and consultations, but to date there is little tangible progress

Imports and Exports:	
Tot. Value of Imports	0.00 ()
From Eu:	
Import Partners (EU:)	
Partners Outside EU:	
Import Partners:	
Tot. Value of Exports	()
To Eu:	
Export Partners:	
Partners Outside EU::	
Export Partners:	
Main Imports:	
Main Exports:	



TRANSPORTATION/ACCESS

External:

Number of Airports: 1

Ascension Island has an airstrip under the control of United States Space Command. Runway is 3,054 x 46 m (10,019 x 150 ft). Military flights between Brize Norton (Oxford, UK) and Ascension Island occur 6-7 times/month, and 20 seats are reserved on each flight for civilians. These flights are booked through Andrew Weir Shipping, Ltd.

Number of Main Ports:

RMS St Helena, a 7,000 tonne, vessel with room for 125 passengers is the major contact with the outside world. The ship visits St Helena and Ascension Island six times a year.

Internal:

Air

Road:

Ascension Island 40 km paved roadways. Car rentals also available from Tourist Office on Ascension Island. No public transit.

Sea:

Other Forms of Transportation:

Economic Zones:

Maritime claims: 12 nautical miles. Exclusive fishing zone: 200 nautical miles.

Energy Policy:

Year	Total Energy Production (Mwh)	Type			Total Energy Consumption (Mwh)	Sector				
		Thermic (Mwh)	Geothermic (Mwh)	Other (Mwh)		Domestic (Mwh)	Commercial (Mwh)	Public Service (Mwh)	Industry (Mwh)	Public Lighting (Mwh)



Official Currency:

St. Helenian pound (SHP)

Banking and Insurance:

Number of Banks and Credit Unions:

Number of Agricultural Credit Unions:

Number of Insurance Companies:

The Bank of Saint Helena, created April 2004. Has two branches, one in Jamestown, and one on Ascension Island. Both provided limited services. For example, the branch on Ascension Island does not have cheque withdrawal facilities, so customers can only withdraw cash. It only accepts cash deposits, and does not process credit cards.

Financial Services:

A wide range of insurance products are available from Solomon & Company, by way of their longstanding relationship with Royal and SunAlliance.

Communications/E-Commerce:

While the delivery of mail is limited to the infrequent schedule of visiting ships, it has full telecommunications capabilities and internet access through the Cable & Wireless company. Ascension Island has a weekly newspaper. Ascension Island is a major coaxial submarine cable relay point.

Public Ownership:

The government is a major force in the St Helena economy. Of the 2,139 employed in 1999-2000, 1,334, or 62%, worked for the government. The

dominant company on the island, Solomon and Company, has 62.5% of its shares held by the government. This company is involved in such diverse areas as livestock farming, electrical and refrigerator services, a variety of retail outlets, fuel services, and auto shop, as well as insurance and shipping agent services. The government is in the process of privatizing Solomon and Company, and the company aims to be publicly owned within 5 years. Many other businesses are subsidised by the government. Given its isolation and the lack of skilled workers, it is very difficult to attract investment. The St Helena Business Development Agency, a quasi-autonomous NGO, was established in 1995 in order to promote local commercial development.

Land Use:

Freehold – private land, ownership transferable Ascension Island has 2 endemic bird and 5 endemic plant species. There is a proposal to turn Green Mountain into Ascension’s first National Park. Visitors must gain permission from the respective Administrators prior to entering either Tristan da Cunha or Ascension Island; in order to do so they must provide proof of medical insurance that covers medical evacuations, as well as proof of ample finances while visiting, and proof of a return ticket off-island.

Agriculture/Forestry:

St Helena is reliant on food imports from United Kingdom and South Africa. Residents of Tristan da Cunha grow much of their own food, although each family is limited to 2 cows and 7 sheep in order to conserve the limited grazing land.

Marine Activity:

Fishing:

Exclusive fishing zone: 200 nautical miles.

Marine Life:

Maritime claims: 12 nautical miles.

Critical Issues:

Jobs do not tend to pay well on the island of St Helena. Consequently staff attrition is a major problem in both public and private sectors as many locals leave posts, even skilled ones, for better-paying menial jobs elsewhere. A variety of other issues include: lack of jobs, lack of outside investment, a need for improved external transportation, inadequate harbours and anchorages.

JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES

Capital:

Jamestown, St. Helena

Political System:

Parliamentary democracy. No ministerial system. Supreme authority resides in the Queen, and is exercised on her behalf in St Helena by the Governor, on advice and assistance of the Executive and Legislative Councils. UK is responsible for international affairs, foreign representation, and defence of Falkland Islands. St Helena’s government consists of two branches, the legislative and the executive. Legislative Council: includes three ex officio members (the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary, and the non-voting Attorney General), twelve members that are elected by the population every four years, and the Speaker, who is elected by the Legislative Council. The Speaker, who is charged with maintaining order of business, does not vote unless there is a tie. The purpose of the Legislative Council, according to constitution, is limited to passing legislation. However, they also handle questions and motions. It also meets regularly to brief Councillors and to hear their views. Executive Council: consists of the same three ex officio members as Legislative Council, and five members nominated and elected by the Legislative Council. The Governor is obliged to consult Executive Council and must act on their advice except when exercising executive authority over the Dependencies (Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha) or in the administration of public service. Each of the five elected members of Executive Council chair a Council Committee. As there is no ministerial system, Council Committees regulate and manage government business. The five major departments of St Helena (Agriculture and Natural Resources, Education, Employment and Social Service, Public Health, Public Works and Services) all report to a Council Committee. Council Committees are not responsible for running departments on a day-to-day basis; rather, they set policy, which must be implemented by public officers. The Council Committees are composed of a mix of elected members and public officers. Governor of St Helena: appoints an Administrator to represent him in each of the dependencies. On Tristan da Cunha the Administrator acts as head of government, but must act upon the advice of the 11 member Island Council. 8 of the Councillors are elected via general election, the other 3 Councillors are appointed. Since November 2002, the Administrator of Ascension Island has been head of a local council. Chief Secretary: is Governor’s major policy advisor, responsible for conduct of government business. Office of the Chief Secretary is headed by Deputy Secretary. It advises and supports Chief Secretary. Office of the Chief Secretary also advises and provides support to Executive Council, Legislative Council, various government departments, potential investors, private sector, general public, and the Statutory Boards and Committees. Justice System: 3 levels of courts preside in St Helena – the Magistrates Court, the Supreme Court, and the Court of Appeal. There is also a procedure to appeal to the Privy Council of England and Wales. On Ascension Island cases are handled promptly, with the police inspector standing as the public prosecutor and the defendant usually represented by a lay person. Cases are heard by two justices of the peace, sitting with the Chief Magistrate (which is one of the Administrator’s various roles). More serious cases and appeals heard by the Circuit Judge when he is in St Helena every 6 months. On Tristan da Cunha the Administrator also acts as the Magistrate when the need arises.

Political Parties:

Political Parties: As there are no political parties on St Helena. Candidates run as independents. Elections: St Helena’s 12 Legislative Councillors elected every 4 years. The 8 elected councillors on Tristan da Cunha are selected in a general election held every 3 years.

Important Legislation:

British Overseas Territories Act, 26 February 2002 Restored British citizenship rights to citizens of British Overseas Territories. Consequently allows right of entry and to work in Britain. Wideawake Agreement, 1 October 2003 Agreement between United Kingdom and United States opening Wideawake Airfield on Ascension Island to civilian charter traffic. Previously only military traffic permitted. The Charter: In 1673 King Charles II issued a Royal Charter granting full benefits of British citizenship to citizens of St Helena.

Principal Taxes:

Income tax: there is a tax-free allowance of £2,000. There are 2 bands: 17% on the first £3,000 of chargeable income, and 27% above this. Companies are taxed at a flat rate of 30%.

Associated Power:

United Kingdom

Citizenship:

As St Helena is a UK Overseas Territory, its citizens have full rights of British citizenship. Citizenship Commission: Under the 1673 Royal Charter, the residents of St Helena were granted full rights of British citizenship. This right began to wither with The Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962, which removed their right to abode in the United Kingdom, although they were still termed citizens of the United Kingdom and colonies. This process culminated in the 1981 British Nationality Act, which removed the previously held rights for all citizens in British Dependent Territories. As such, St Helena’s residents were no longer able to live or seek work in Britain. This is a matter of grave concern on St Helena because of its high level of unemployment. The only place its residents had free entry to seek work in was the Falkland Islands. In 1992 the Synod of the Anglican Church on St Helena passed a resolution to support the “restoration of full rights of citizenship of those British subjects who are Saint Helenian.” The Bishop’s Commission, charged with researching the history of St Helena’s citizenship, was formed to further this cause. Findings were compiled into a booklet

and presented to the Bishop at a special church service 3 March 1996. The group was subsequently re-designated the Citizenship Commission and included wider spectrum of interested parties. Had 13 members, including Speaker and two elected members of Legislative Council. More recently, a UK-based branch has formed. Was self-financed through popular support of locals. Based argument on guarantee of full citizenship in 1673 Royal Charter. In 1999 UK government published White Paper on the Overseas Territories. Recognized Commission's work, and promised full British citizenship would be granted to any Dependent Territory citizens that desired it. This was followed by the 2002 British Overseas Territories Act, which granted the people of St Helena the rights of full British citizenship, including the right to live and work there.

Paradiplomacy:

International representation handled by Britain.

HUMAN RESOURCES

St Helena: 4,186 (2003) 5,157 (1998) 5,270 (1994) Ascension Island: 1,018 (2003) Tristan da Cunha: 276 (2003) Population (by age): <15: 1,399 15-64: 5,298 >65: 718 (2004)

Island	Area (km sq.)	Population	% of Total Population
Ascension	90	1,000	100%
Ascension	90	1,000	100%

Population:	
Year	Resident Population

Age of Population:	0-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65 and up
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Migration:

Net Migration: The St Helena population is rapidly decreasing, while its dependencies stay relatively the same.

Crude Birth Rate:	
2004	12.68%

Life Expedctancy:

77.76 years

Crude Death Rate:	
2004	6.47%

Ethnicity:

British, African, Asian

Class Division:

n/a

Languages:

English

Religion:

Anglican (majority), Baha'i, Baptist, Jehovah's Witness, New Apostolic, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist

Literacy:

97% (1998)

Education System:

On Ascension Island education is provided for all children between the ages of 5-16; likewise, nursery school is provided for those as young as 3. These services are provided at the Two Boats School. A new plan allows select students from Ascension to Attend Chichester College in the UK for free. There are also plans underway to expand the scope of free education from 3-18.

Total Pre-schools:()	
Total Primary Schools	
First Level:	
Second Level:	
Third Level:	
Total Secondary Schools:	
Total Professional Schools	
Universities:	



Number of Schools per Island:											
		Pre-school		Elementary			High-school		Prof.	University	
		Pub	Priv	1	2	3	Pub	Priv		Pub	Priv

Students Enrolled:					
Year:	Pre-School	Elementary	High-school	Prof.	University

Teachers							
Year	Pre-School	Elementary			High-School	Prof.	University
		1	2	3			

Medical Services:

There is a separate health care system in the two dependencies of St. Helena. Both provide free health care to their residents. Ascension Island has a 15 bed hospital with 2 doctors. Medical evacuations are made to the United Kingdom by RAF when services/diagnosis are unavailable, with the medical expense covered by the employer or insurance.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

History:

Ascension Island became a dependency of Saint Helena in 1922. Discovered by a Portuguese mariner in 1502, the St. Helena was used as a virtual station on return passage from East India by Portuguese, Dutch and English sailors. Formally claimed by the Dutch in 1633, their plans to fortify the island were never acted upon. In 1658 the East India Company of England decided to fortify and settle St Helena. Arrived following year with 400 men, including soldiers and planters, aiming to develop St Helena as a permanent base for supplying passing ships. First settled by Europeans (primarily British), their numbers were augmented by slaves from Madagascar, East Indies, and China. Formally granted to East India Company in 1673, and its ownership continued until 1834, when the island became a Crown colony. Historically, Saint Helena's economy has been closely linked to the shipping industry, providing supplies to ships as they passed by. For example, in 1860 1,044 ships stopped on the island. The invention of steam engines, and later the creation of Suez Canal, led to a dramatic halt in visitations to the island. Consequently the St Helena economy collapsed. The flax industry emerged as a leading employer on St Helena beginning the early 1900s, but this collapsed in the second half of the twentieth century. Since then the island economy has been largely reliant on aid from the United Kingdom.

Referenda:

n/a

Recent Significant Events:

The St Helena economy is highly dependent on aid from the United Kingdom, which accounts for approximately one-third of its annual budget and the vast majority of its investment capital. When this subsidy began to drop in the 1990s, this led the island government, which is its dominant employer, to cut back. Consequently, by 1997 the unemployment rate reached 20%. This situation was aggravated by the residents' inability to live or seek employment in the United Kingdom, due to the erosion of rights for citizens of Overseas Territories that began with the Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962 and culminating with the 1981 British Nationality Act. Unable to find work at home or to search in the UK, the alternative of finding work in the Falkland Islands and Ascension Island attracted many Saints. As a result of a substantial lobby (see Citizenship Commission for further details), in 2002 St Helena's residents were once again granted the right to live and work in the UK. Today, approximately one-third of Saints are employed overseas. This has had a major impact on the island economy, and is the major influence on why the unemployment rate has levelled off.

Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

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Ascension Island Government <http://www.ascension-island.gov.ac/aig/ascension-island-links.htm> 26th March 2008

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