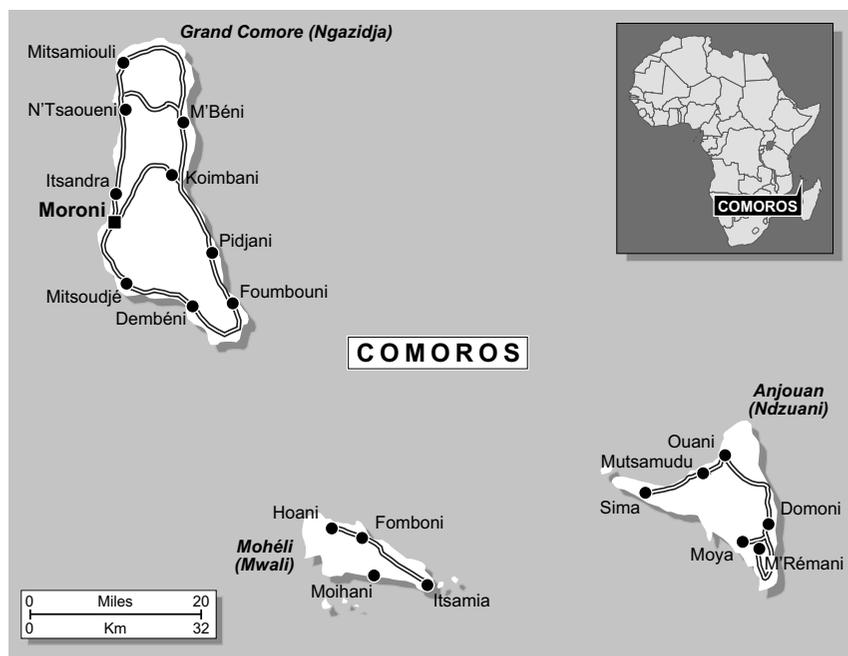


Comoros



Although the Comoros is a small archipelago measuring just 2,171 square km (including Mayotte), natural resources constitute a major potential for the Comorian economy. Good average rainfall (1,500–8,000mm) provides surface water and groundwater to develop hydroelectric power. There is also sufficient solar radiation to run thermal and photovoltaic power stations, as well as geothermal reservoirs around the Karthala and La Grille volcanoes that can also generate energy.

The *African Economic Outlook 2013* (AEO), published jointly by the African Development Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, reports that Comoros also enjoys a rich natural heritage and bio-diversity, which it could potentially use as part of an ambitious, environmentally friendly tourism strategy. Such a strategy could combine top-quality infrastructure with small ecotourism units based on the model adopted by English-speaking East African countries such as Kenya and Tanzania (mainland and Zanzibar).

Agriculture and fishing

Comoros' soils are fragile and subject to erosion while extensive farming has resulted in poor land use. Nevertheless agriculture (livestock and fisheries) is the main contributor to the economy. The country is one of the world's leading producers of several cash crops including ylang-ylang (50 tonnes in 2011), bourbon vanilla (40 tonnes in 2011) and cloves (4,500 tonnes in 2011). Because cash-crop prices fluctuate so much, with no stabilisation mechanisms, Comorian farmers have gradually turned to the more profitable food crops instead.

Agriculture in the Comoros consists of small, traditionally run family farms. Productivity is extremely low because farmers use outdated technologies, lack training, do not have access to credit and because the limited public resources available are not used efficiently. There is no land registry and land management is dictated by individual rather than collective interests, which holds back land consolidation, the first step towards modernisation and development of a commercial focus.

KEY FACTS

Official name: Udzima wa Komori (L'Union des Comores) (The Union of the Comoros) (from Jan 2002)

Head of State: President Ikiliou Dhoinine (from 26 May 2011)

Head of government: President Ikiliou Dhoinine (from 26 May 2011)

Ruling party: Union-Presidential Movement (MP-Union) (Presidential Movement-Union) (from 24 Dec 2009)

Area: 2,171 square km

Population: 694,000 (2012)*

Capital: Moroni

Official language: Arabic and French

Currency: Comoros franc (Cf) = 100 centimes

Exchange rate: Cf371.27 per US\$ (Jul 2013); (pegged Cf491.97 per euro)

GDP per capita: US\$865 (2012)*

GDP real growth: 2.45% (2012)*

GDP: US\$600.00 million (2012)*

Inflation: 598.00% (2012)*

Balance of trade: -US\$172.00 million (2010)*

* estimated figure

The archipelago is rich in marine and terrestrial biodiversity, but is vulnerable to various threats. Demersal and pelagic species provide the Comoros with waves of potential fish resources estimated at 33,000 tonnes a year. The sector provides about 16,000 direct and indirect jobs and has an impact on more than 10 per cent of the population. It contributes an estimated 21 per cent to gross domestic product (GDP) and provides 5 per cent of government revenue in foreign currency through European Union (EU) payments for licences to European fishing companies. Most fishing is done on a small scale, but some semi-industrial fishing also takes place. Like agriculture, however, the fisheries sector receives too little government support.

The economy

Since the Comoros gained independence in 1975, there has been no structural change to the economy. Agriculture and services (small-scale retail, banking services) still make up the bulk of economic activity. Industrial activities are still a bare minimum. Almost all domestic consumption (95 per cent) is imported. The country's membership to the franc zone and the strong Comorian franc favour imports over local goods. Moreover, low taxes on imports and the absence of financial incentives to support investors hinders the development of local manufacturing based on rational exploitation of natural resources, especially in the agribusiness sector.

The economy of the Comoros grew by an estimated 2.7 per cent in 2012, despite the ongoing euro-area crisis. This growth

was driven by strong agricultural exports, continued strong foreign direct investment (FDI) in the transport sector (roads and ports) and domestic demand, supported by remittances from emigrants. The expected recovery of public investment in economic and social infrastructure (energy, water, transport, health and education) after the Comoros reached the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative should boost private investment, which is forecast to grow by 9 per cent in 2013 and 2014. GDP is forecast to grow by 3.2 per cent in 2013 and 3.8 per cent in 2014.

If, however, the Central Bank of the Comoros (BCC) does not conduct a strict monetary policy to control prices, growth could generate inflation, since domestic demand is expected to remain steady thanks to remittances from emigrants and imports of capital goods for infrastructure rehabilitation.

For growth to continue, the business climate will need to improve significantly. In the World Bank's *Doing Business* report for 2013, the Comoros had the same rank as in 2012: 158 out of 185 countries. It did gain twelve places in the ranking for registering property and three places for business start-up, but it lost places in almost all other rankings. The climate could, however, begin to improve in 2014 thanks to technical assistance from the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

The AEO notes that the stimulus policy focused on economic and social infrastructure and the improvement of human capital should boost employment among unskilled youths. However, a proactive policy to train the local workforce and

thus boost employment is unlikely to be implemented before 2014.

Unlike the other Indian Ocean island economies (Mauritius and Seychelles), the Comorian economy has not yet truly begun a structural change. The Comoros is highly unstable politically, it suffers from insufficient budgetary resources and the authorities lack a long-term strategic vision on sustainable development and optimal management of natural resources. Consequently, the main resources that fuel its economy – land, biodiversity and marine resources – are deteriorating at an ever faster rate.

The main cities and most of the population are concentrated around the coasts. Population growth is putting increasing pressure on the land. Anjouan, for instance, has one of the highest population densities in Africa, with 450 inhabitants per square kilometre. Environmental legislation is outdated or inadequately enforced. With no regulations to protect against climate risks, infrastructure is built less than six metres above sea level.

Risk assessment

Politics	Fair
Economy	Fair
Regional stability	Fair

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1843 The Comoros was ceded to France by Portugal.

1886 The islands became a French protectorate.

1912 The islands became a French colony; they were administered from Madagascar.

1947 The Comoros became a separate French Overseas Territory and given representation in the French parliament.

1961 It achieved internal self-government.

1972 Elections produced a large majority for parties advocating independence and Ahmed Abdallah Abderrahman became president of the government council.

1973 Abderrahman was restyled president of the government.

1974 Mayotte voted to retain links with France while Grand Comore, Anjouan, Mohéli voted for independence.

1975 The Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros claimed independence from France, Mayotte was the only island in the archipelago that voted to retain links with France.

1978 A constitution was approved by referendum.

KEY INDICATORS

Comoros

	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	*0.64	*0.65	*0.67	*0.68	*0.69
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.61	*0.60
GDP per capita	US\$	817	799	1,202	903	*865
GDP real growth	%	1.0	1.8	2.1	2.2	*2.5
Inflation	%	4.8	4.8	2.7	6.8	*6.0
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	6.5	20.0	13.0	–	–
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	175.9	170.7	185.0	–	–
Balance of trade	US\$m	-169.4	-156.4	-172.0	–	–
Current account	US\$m	-58.6	-42.3	-55.1	-55.0	*-32.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	112.2	150.3	145.3	165.5	194.0
Foreign exchange	US\$m	111.3	139.0	131.8	146.6	176.0
Exchange rate	per US\$	335.85	354.14	371.46	350.11	379.24

* estimated figure

1982 Constitutional amendments increased the president's power by reducing those of each island's governor.

1989 Abderrahman was assassinated.

1990 In Comoros' first democratic elections, Said Mohamed Djohar was elected president.

1992 A new constitution was approved that included the new post of prime minister.

1995 An abortive coup to topple Djohar was foiled by French troops.

1996 Mohammed Taki Abdoul-Karim won the presidential election. Constitutional changes adopted *sharia* as law.

1997 The islands of Anjouan (Ndzuan) and Mohéli (Mwali) declared their independence from the Comoros. Economic depression was given as the reason for their wish to reintegrate with France.

1998 President Taki Abdoul-Karim died. Tajidine ben Said Massonde became president.

1999 Colonel Azali Assoumani seized power in a bloodless coup and became president. In legislative elections on Anjouan, hardline secessionists won every seat.

2001 A military, unionist force on Anjouan took control in August. Attempts to wrest control from it failed and in December the Comoran government, by amending the constitution, implemented a change to unify the country in a loose federation as a decentralised Comoran Union of three autonomous islands: Anjouan, Mohéli and Grand Comoros.

2002 The country's name was changed to L'Union des Comores (The Union of the Comoros). In May, Assoumani was declared president of The Union. Mohamed Bacar was elected president of Anjouan. Mohamed Said Fazul was elected president in Mohéli, and Abdou Soule Elbak was elected president of Grande Comore.

2003 Power-sharing agreements were signed to allow national elections to take place and the presidency to rotate between the islands.

2004 Parliamentary elections took place for the Union. Opposition candidates to the Union president (Assoumani) formed an alliance: Camp des Îles Autonomes (CIA) (Autonomous Islands Party) and won 27 seats against six for the president's party. The first federal government was sworn in.

2005 Mount Karthala, a volcano on Grande Comore, erupted twice.

2006 Presidential elections for the Union took place. In the first round, held on Anjouan, 10 of the 13 candidates were eliminated. In the nation-wide second round, Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambi won 58.02 per cent of the vote, Ibrahim Halidi Djaanffari 28.32 per cent and

Mohamed Djaanffari 13.65 per cent. President Sambi took office.

2007 President Becar (of Anjouan) refused to give up his office, as according to the constitution he was required to do before scheduled elections. His forces clashed with the national army sent to enforce the constitution; the African Union (AU) also sent troops to support the constitution. Dhoihirou Halidi was appointed interim president of Anjouan. The constitutional court dismissed the president of Mohéli and Mohamed Ali Said was sworn in as its president.

2008 Forces of the AU overthrew the renegade president of Anjouan, Mohamed Bacar, and Moussa Toybou took office as president. Comoros was given full membership of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

2009 A referendum held in Mayotte (sponsored by the interior ministry of France), voted by 95 per cent to become an integral region of France. The government in Comoros claimed Mayotte as part of its territory and considered the referendum as provocative. The constitution was changed, extending the presidential term of office from four years to five. In parliamentary elections held in December the Union-Presidential Movement (MP-Union) (Presidential Movement-Union) won 20 out of 24 seats.

2010 The International Monetary Fund (IMF) considered Comoros had undertaken enough political and economic reforms to warrant debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. After two rounds in the presidential elections Ikililou Dhoinine won with 61.12 per cent of the vote, Mohamed Said Fazul 32.65 per cent and Abdou Djibir 6.23 per cent; turnout was 50.96 per cent respectively.

2011 In January, the IMF agreed to the disbursement of US\$2.42 million following the second review under its Extended Credit Facility (ECF) that registered the government's commitment to continued macroeconomic and structural reform, bringing the total amount disbursed to US\$11.41 million. President Sambi's term of office expired in April. On 23 May, Mouigni Baraka Said Soilihi took office as governor of Grande Comore and Anissi Chamsidine became governor of Anjouan. On 26 May Ikiliou Dhoinine, former vice president and Sambi supporter, took office as president of Comoros.

2012 On 28 March Comoros awarded its first ever, oil exploration and production licence to the Kenya-based Bahari Resources oil company, to undertake exploration offshore in its territorial waters in the Indian Ocean.

2013 President and Prime Minister Ikililou Dhoinine reshuffled his government team on 15 July. It included six new ministers, including one woman.

Political structure

Constitution

The national constitution which was ratified by referendum in December 2001 created a federation – The Union of the Comoros – with each of the three islands having its own legislature, constitution and budget. Foreign relations, defence and currency were the responsibility of the Union. This inevitably caused some confusion with different election dates, different levels of authority on the islands and a mix of political parties holding power.

In an effort to sort out some these inconsistencies, constitutional changes were adopted on 17 May 2009 following a referendum in which 93.8 per cent of voters agreed to the changes; turnout was 52.7 per cent. Under these amendments, the island presidents were renamed governors, with the federal president assuming overall authority. President Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambi's term of office was extended by one year so that the next presidential election (in 2011) coincides with that of the island governors.

More powers were transferred to the president, such as replacing the federal rotating presidency with a permanently elected office and allowing the president to declare a state religion.

Form of state

Federal republic

The executive

The presidency of the Union of the Comoros rotates between the islands of Grand Comore, Anjouan, and Mohéli every four years according to the 2001 power-sharing constitution.

First round presidential elections are held on the island that will hold the next presidency; the top three candidates become the only candidates that the whole union votes on in the second round.

National legislature

The 33-member Assemblée de l'Union (federal parliament) has 15 members appointed by the three island legislatures (five each) and 18 elected through direct universal suffrage. Each island has its own assembly.

Legal system

French Napoleon Code and *Sharia* (Islamic) law in a new consolidated code.

Last elections

7 November and 26 December 2010 (presidential, first round on Mohéli and second round nationwide); 6/24 December 2009 (federal parliament); 17/ 21 March 2004 (autonomous islands' assemblies).

Results: Federal parliament: the Union-Presidential Movement (MP-Union) (Presidential Movement-Union) and its allies won 20 seats (out of 33) the opposition won four; representatives of the Autonomous Islands' Assemblies (three from each) filled the remaining nine. Autonomous Islands' Assemblies: Grande Comore: supporters of the island president won 13 seats out of 20 and supporters of the Union president (Assoumani), seven.

Anjouan: supporters of the island president won 23 seats out of 25 and supporters of the Union president (Assoumani), two.

Mohéli: supporters of the island president won nine seats out of 10 and supporters of the Union president (Assoumani), one. The opposition candidates to the Union president (Assoumani) formed an alliance: Camp des Îles Autonomes (CIA) (Autonomous Islands Party).

Presidential (first round (Mohéli primary)): Ikililou Dhoinine won 28.19 per cent of the vote, Mohamed Said Fazul 22.94 per cent, Abdou Djibir 9.88 per cent, Bianrifi Tarmidhi 9.31 per cent; six other candidates each won less than 9 per cent of the vote. Second round: Dhoinine won 61.12 per cent of the vote, Fazul 32.65 per cent, Djibir 6.23 per cent. Turnout was 67.1 per cent and 50.96 per cent respectively.

Next elections

2014 (federal parliament); 2014 (presidential)

Political parties

Comoros does not have a tradition of strong ideological political parties and political movements tend to support certain leaders. The only major issue of divergence is between those who favour a strong federal government and those who support autonomous island governments.

Ruling party

Union-Presidential Movement (MP-Union) (Presidential Movement-Union) (from 24 Dec 2009)

Main opposition party

Convention pour le Renouveau des Comores (CRC) (Convention for the Renewal of Comoros)

Population

694,000 (2012)*

Approximately 48 per cent of the population are under 15 years of age.

Anjouan is overpopulated, with 650 inhabitants per square km, while Mohéli (Mwali) has a population density of 100 per square km.

Last census: 1 September 2003: 575,660

Population density: 244 per square km. Urban population 28 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 2.6 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Ethnic make-up

Antalote, Cafre, Makao, Oimatsaha, Sakalava.

The descendants of Arab traders, Malay immigrants and African peoples contribute to the islands' complex ethnic mix.

Religions

Sunni Muslim 86 per cent (official religion), Roman Catholic 14 per cent.

Education

Unicef concluded that school enrolment dropped due to insufficient classrooms and qualified teachers, among other infrastructural inadequacies. Education also suffers from poor performance and quality. A Unicef-sponsored humanitarian action plan in 2002 provided US\$122,000 towards basic education.

Literacy rate: 59 per cent; adult rates (World Bank 2002).

Enrolment rate: 60 per cent (Unicef).

Health

The World Health Organisation (WHO), in 2003, funded health projects aimed at reducing mortality from common diseases and encouraging better use of existing health facilities, while improving the quality of healthcare overall. It also organised mosquito control activities to reduce the incidence of malaria.

HIV/Aids

Although prostitution is relatively rare, over 60 per cent of sex workers in Moroni tested HIV positive.

HIV prevalence: 0.12 per cent aged 15–49 in 2000

Life expectancy: 64 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 4.9 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef); maternal mortality five per 1,000 live births (World Bank).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 78 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012); 26 per cent of children aged under five years are malnourished (World Bank).

Head of population per physician: 0.15 physicians per 1,000 people, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Welfare

There is no minimum wage, there are no laws prohibiting bonded or forced labour and no protection for anti-union practices by employers. The labour code allows for one day off per week and one month of paid leave per year, although the government generally does not enforce the law due to a lack of provision.

The World Bank reported, in October 2003, that 47 per cent of households were living in poverty and 42 per cent of the population were malnourished. It

stated that the government were poor in implementing, even in partnership, basic social infrastructure, and health and educational services tended to be of low quality and poorly utilised. Local communities were found to be keen to undertake projects in partnership with a World Bank poverty reduction plan, the 'Social Fund Project,' to create small, income-generating activities. In future, proposed projects will rely mainly on village committees, community groups, NGOs and private firms.

Main cities

Moroni (on Grand Comore (Ngazidja) (capital, estimated population 50,721 in 2012), Mutsamudu (on Anjouan (Ndzuan), (26,469), Fomboni (on Mohéli (Mwali) (18,277), Domoni (16,279), Tsémbehou (12,962), Ongodjou (12,405).

Languages spoken

Shikomor and numerous African languages are spoken. English is rarely spoken.

Official language/s

Arabic and French

Media

The government maintains tight control of the media, with newspapers and radio stations suspended and journalists risk arrest following items deemed disrespectful to its interests. Consequently self-censorship is prevalent.

Press

There are few commercial publications due to a small advertising market and a poor distribution network

In French, weeklies include *Al Watwan* (www.alwatwan.net) and *La Gazette de Comores* are official publications. Independent newspapers include *KashKazi* (www.kashkazi.com) (weekly), and *L'Archipel* (monthly).

Broadcasting

The national, state broadcaster is Office Radio et Télévision des Comores (ORTC) (www.radiocomores.km).

Radio: With high levels of illiteracy and poverty the radio is the principal medium for news and information.

ORTC operates Radio Comoros which broadcasts in Arabic, French, Comoran and Swahili. Two regional governments run their own stations, including Radio Television Anjouanaise (RTA) (www.rtanjouan.org) on Anjouan, and Radio Ngazidja on Grand Comore. Other stations include Radio Ocean Indien (www.radiooceanindien.km) and Radio Dziyalandze (www.radiodziyalandze.com). Radio France International (RFI) (www.rfi.fr) has news programmes in French.

Television: ORTC operates the national, Television Nationale Comorienne (TNC). Other TV stations include RTA (www.rtanjouan.org) on Anjouan, TV Ulezi is a private provider while Mtsangani Television (MTV) broadcasts educational and cultural programmes. There are satellite services from Arabnet. TV and radio services can be received from Mayotte.

Other news agencies: APA (African Press Agency): www.apanews.net
The Comoran Press: www.comores-online.com
Panapress: www.panapress.com

Economy

The islands of Comoros are largely formed from volcanic rock making it unsuitable for agriculture, so that what production is possible remains at the level of subsistence farming. Nevertheless, according to a World Bank report in 2009, the economy is dominated by agriculture, at 46.3 per cent (down a bit to 43.9 per cent in 2011), industry at 12.1 per cent, of which manufacturing was 4.3 per cent, and services 41.6 per cent of GDP.

Around 80 per cent of the workforce is employed in agriculture, where meagre crops are supplemented by hunting, fishing and forest products. Food production in 2008–09 increased due to favourable weather.

GDP growth grew from 1.0 per cent in 2008 to 1.8 per cent in 2009 and increased to 2.1 per cent in 2010, due to donor aid, remittances and private sector construction. It reached an estimated 2.2 per cent in 2011, due to aid-funded imports.

A change in the political system in 2001 resulted in centralised, national planning which has achieved a somewhat more effective economic policy. There is an increasing number of young people in the population that require education and social services before they can become productive members of the workforce. Comoros must rely on international aid, either through remittances which typically provide over US\$12 million per annum, paid directly into households and allowing private consumption, or disbursements from financial institutions. The Paris Club of creditors agreed to debt restructuring in 2009, which was predicated on continued fiscal reforms. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) supports Comoros through a Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, which has resulted in enhanced growth, poverty reduction and debt sustainability. In September 2010, the IMF approved a US\$21.5 million three-year loan.

External trade

Comoros is a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa), and operates within a free trade zone with 13 of the 19 member states. It is also a member of the Communauté Financière d'Afrique (CFA) (Financial Community of Africa), so that its currency is pegged to the French franc (pre-euro). Comoros runs annual deficits on its trade account, largely due to its limited export base.

Imports

Principal imports are rice and other foodstuffs, consumer goods; petroleum products, cement and transport equipment.

Main sources: Pakistan (16.2 per cent of total in 2011), France (15.8 per cent), UAE (11.3 per cent).

Exports

Exports consist principally of agricultural plantation products, including cloves, essence of ylang-ylang (a major component of perfume) and vanilla, of which Comoros is a leading world producer.

Main destinations: Singapore (36 per cent of total in 2011), Turkey (3.7 per cent), France (10.5 per cent).

Agriculture

The agriculture sector is the principal source of export earnings. Total agricultural land is 186,000 hectares of which 8.1 per cent is pasture and 43 per cent arable. The agricultural sector remains underdeveloped (due to poor soil, adverse weather conditions and inadequate facilities) and over 50 per cent of the country's food requirements (notably rice) have to be imported. The sector employs 70 per cent of the workforce.

Major food crops grown are cassava, sweet potatoes, rice and bananas; yams and coconuts are also produced, while main cash crops are cocoa, ylang-ylang (perfumes), vanilla and cloves. Comoros produces around 1,700 tonnes of vanilla a year but its cultivation has suffered a drop in value due to overseas competition from new plantations and synthetic vanilla.

Fishing is underexploited, with tuna being the main catch. The fishing sector has received considerable aid from Japan and the EU.

Deforestation, caused by clearing for the cultivation of the ylang-ylang crop, is an increasing ecological problem.

Industry and manufacturing

The industrial sector contributes around 13 per cent to GDP and employs 5 per cent of the workforce; manufacturing contributes 5.4 per cent. The sector is underdeveloped, with activity confined to distillation of essences and perfumes (particularly from ylang-ylang), vanilla

processing, soft drinks, plastics and woodwork.

Tourism

The islands of Comoros offer a pristine marine environment with tropical coral reefs, an active volcano and unique flora and fauna. However its low population has also resulted in a lack of tourism infrastructure and no direct flights from Europe (Comoros' primary market).

Tourism had constituted 13.1 per cent of GDP in 2000, but which had fallen to 7.5 per cent by 2009, due, not only to the political instability in the islands, but also by the global economic crisis (2007–09), which cut visitor numbers. Likewise, visitor exports were cut from US\$20 million in 2008 (an amount deemed half the value of visitor exports in 2000), to US\$10 million in 2009. By 2011, visitor exports had returned to US\$20 million. Total employment in travel and tourism was 9.8 per cent in 2000, which had fallen to 6.5 per cent in 2009, and remained at this level until 2011, with a slight improvement predicted in 2012 of 6.8 per cent.

By 2007, the government had identified tourism as a key sector for potential growth of the economy. It has largely been foreign investment, particularly by the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, that has driven the market in the latter half of the decade. Travel and tourism constituted 26.2 per cent of total capital investment in 2010, which was a dramatic reversal of the -12.7 per cent in 2009. By 2010 the tourism sector had grown by 1.7 per cent and was expected to grow by 4 per cent in 2011.

Mining

There is no mining activity.

Hydrocarbons

There are no known hydrocarbon reserves. Consumption of oil was 1,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2008, all of which was imported. The state-owned Société Comorienne des Hydrocarbures (SCH), was responsible for sourcing foreign oil through the French oil company, Total. However, since the global oil prices rose in 2007–08 the government has attempted to switch to alternative, and potentially cheaper, suppliers.

Any consumption of natural gas or coal is commercially insignificant.

Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 50MW in 2007, producing over 20 million kilowatt hours. Electricity is provided by the parastatal utility Electricite et Eaux des Comores (EEDC), which is operated by the French company and contracted to collect revenue.

The electricity infrastructure is poor and there are frequent blackouts, partly due to

generator breakdowns and partly due to a lack of fuel. Solar-photovoltaic installations are used by small and rural communities.

Banking and insurance

The Banking sector is composed of the Banque Centrale des Comores (BCC), the central bank, the Banque de Développement des Comores (BDC), which focusses on development lending, and the Banque pour l'Industrie et le Commerce des Comores (BIC). The BDC stopped lending in 1997 due to liquidity problems, but still exists and is scheduled for restructuring some time in the future. The BIC is linked to France's BNP-Paribas and provides full international trade finance as well as local personal and business banking services.

Central bank

Banque Centrale des Comores (BCC)

Main financial centre

Moroni

Time

GMT plus three hours

Geography

The Comoros is an archipelago in the Mozambique Channel, between the island of Madagascar and the east coast of the African mainland. The group comprises four main islands (Grand Comore, Anjouan, Mohéli and Mayotte), and numerous islets and coral reefs. Mayotte, although geographically part of the Comoros group of islands, elected to remain as a French overseas territory, in 1975, and is politically separate from the Comoros.

Hemisphere

Southern

Climate

Tropical. Dry season May to October with average temperature 24 degrees Celsius (C). Rainy season from November to April with temperature 27–35 degrees C. Very hot and humid on coasts, cooler on inner highlands.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all.

Visa

Required by all.

Tourist visas obtained at the port of entry, are valid for 14 days. Visas valid for up to 90 days can be obtained in advance of travelling. Proof of return/onward passage is needed.

For business visas, information can be obtained from the Comoran Embassy 20 Rue Marbeau, 75116 Paris France (tel: (+33) 140-679-054; fax: (+33) 140-677-296).

Currency advice/regulations

There are no restrictions on the import of domestic or foreign currencies.

There are limited banking facilities for foreign travellers, credit cards are not universally accepted and travellers cheques can only be cashed in the Banque Internationale des Comores, in the capital. To avoid additional fees travellers cheques should be in euros. Foreign currency is exchanged in city and provincial banks.

Prohibited imports

Firearms, ammunition and radio transmission equipment, plants and soil.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

Yellow fever vaccination certificates requested from visitors arriving from infected areas.

Advisable precautions

Typhoid, hepatitis A, tetanus and polio vaccinations recommended. Malaria prophylaxis advisable as risk exists throughout the country. Water precautions should be taken. There is a rabies risk. Seek further advice with regard to vaccinations for diphtheria, hepatitis B, meningitis and tuberculosis.

Hotels

Advisable to book in advance. Limited first-class accommodation available on Grande Comore, Anjouan and Mayotte (Maore), but several high-quality resort hotels have been built.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

18 Mar (Death of Said Mohamed Cheikh Day), 25 May (Africa Day), 29 May (Death of President Ali Soilih Day), 6 Jul (Independence Day), 26 Nov (Death of President Ahmed Abdallah Day), 25 Dec (Christmas Day).

Variable dates

Eid al Adha, El am Hejir (Islamic New Year), Ashura, Eid al Fitr.

Islamic year 1435 (5 Nov 2013–24

Oct 2014):: The Islamic year contains 354 or 355 days, with the result that Muslim feasts advance by 10–12 days against the Gregorian calendar. Dates of feasts vary according to the sighting of the new moon, so cannot be forecast exactly.

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Thu: 0730–1300; Fri: 0730–1100.

Business

Mon–Thu: 0730–1430; Fri: 0730–1130, Sat: 0730–1200.

Government

Mon–Thu: 0730–1200 and 1500–1730, Fri: 0730–1100, Sat: 0730–1200.

Shops

Closed daily between 1200–1500.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

A GSM 900 service is in operation.

Electricity supply

220V AC

Social customs/useful tips

Few people speak English, business is usually conducted in French or Arabic.

Getting there

Air

Regional flights from Africa are supplemented by scheduled flights from Paris, France and Dubai. Air Mohéli was set up in 2011 to fly the Moroni–Dubai route.

National airline: Air Comores

International

International airport/s: Moroni International Prince Said Ibrahim (Code: HAH), 25km north of Moroni, on Ngazidja. Facilities include refreshments and a post office. There are no money changing facilities. Taxis, with fixed prices are available.

Airport tax: None

Surface

Water: Cargo ships that carry passengers provide an irregular service from East Africa, Réunion, Madagascar and Mauritius.

Main port/s: Moroni (Grand Comore) and Fomboni (Anjouan): both have offshore anchorage for larger vessels.

Getting about

National transport

Air: Each island is served by Air Comores. There are regular flights between the islands.

Road: Surfaced roads on Grande Comore and Anjouan; other islands' roads can be difficult in rainy season. Mohéli has only very basic tracks.

Water: Small boats, which can be hired, ply between the islands.

City transport

Taxis: Service is provided by taxi-brousse (bush taxis) on each island. The journey from the International Airport to the city centre takes 30 minutes.

Car hire

International driving licence required.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling code (IDD) for Comoros is +269, followed by the area code and subscriber's number:

Anjouan	71	Moroni	73
Mohali	72		

Useful telephone numbers

Emergency services: 744-890

Chambers of Commerce

Chambre de Commerce, d'Industries et d'Agriculture, PO Box 763, Moroni (tel: 730-958; fax: 731-983; e-mail: pride@snpt.km).

Banking

Banque de Development des Comores, Place de France, BP-298 Moroni (tel: 730-154, 730-818; fax: 730-397, e-mail: bdc@snpt.km).

Banque pour l'Industrie et le Commerce - Comores, BP 175, Place de France, Moroni (tel: 730-243, 730-225, 730-289; fax: 731-229).

Central bank

Banque Centrale des Comores, BP 405, Place de France, Moroni (tel: 73-1002/1814; fax: 73-0349).

Travel information

Comorian Association of Tourism (ACT) (tel: 732-847, 731-942; fax: 732-846).

Société Comorienne de Tourisme et d'Hotellerie (COMOTEL), Itsandra Hotel, Ngazidja (tel: 732-365).

International Prince Said Ibrahim Airport, BP 1003, Moroni (tel: 731-593, 732-452, 732-135; fax: 731-468).

Ministry of tourism

Ministry of Transport, Tourism, Post and Telecommunications, BP 97 Moroni (tel: 744-242; fax: 744-241).

Ministries

Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Moroni (tel: 744-044).

Ministry of the Economy, Commerce, Handicrafts and Investment, BP 474 Moroni (tel: 744-232; fax: 730-144).

Ministry of Education, Professional Formation and Human Rights, BP 73 Moroni (tel: 744-185; 744-180).

Ministry of Equipment, Energy and Urbanism, Moroni (tel: 744-500).

Ministry of Finance, Budget and Privatisation, BP 324 Moroni (tel: 744-141; fax: 744-140).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, BP 428 Moroni (tel: 744-100; fax: 744-111).

Ministry of Health, Population and Women's Affairs, Moroni (tel: 744-070).

Ministry of the Interior and Decentralisation, BP 686 Moroni (tel: 744-666; fax: 744-688).

Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs, Moroni (tel: 744-200).

Ministry of Production and the Environment, BP41 Moroni (tel: 744-630; fax: 744-632).

Ministry of Public Service, Employment and Labour, Moroni (tel: 744-540).

Other useful addresses

British Honorary Consulate, BP 986, Moroni (tel/fax: 733-182).

Comoros Embassy (France) 20 Rue Marbeau, 75016 Paris, France (tel: (+33) 1-4067-9054; fax: (+33) 1-4845-1365).

Comoros Mission to UN (US), 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 418, New York, NY 10017 (tel: (+1-212) 750-1637; e-mail: comun@undp.org; internet: www.un.int/comoros).

Société Internationale des Comores, BP 175, Moroni (tel: 730-243).

Other news agencies: APA (African Press Agency): www.apanews.net

The Comoran Press: www.comores-online.com

Panapress: www.panapress.com

Internet sites

Africa Business Network: www.ifc.org/abn

AllAfrica.com: http://allafrica.com

African Development Bank: www.afdb.org

Africa Online: www.africaonline.com

Mbendi AfroPaedia (information on companies, countries, industries and stock exchanges in Africa): http://mbendi.co.za