

Terres Australes

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1552–59 Saint Paul and Amsterdam Islands were sighted by survivors of a Portuguese expedition led by Ferdinand Magellan.

1772 Captain Marion Dufresne and ship's mate Crozet saw the group of islands, which became known as the Crozet Archipelago. Yves de Kerguelen sighted another archipelago, later named after him.

1840 Terre Adélie, in Antarctica, was sighted and claimed by the French.

1924 A French government decree placed the administration of the islands with the government of Madagascar (then a French colony).

1947 France established observation stations.

1955 Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises (TAAF) were accorded the status of an overseas French territory.

1959 The international community signed the Antarctic Treaty, establishing the legal framework for the management of Antarctica, banning any military activity within the Antarctic continent and guaranteeing the protection of its environment and wildlife.

1961 The Antarctic Treaty came into force.

1993 An agreement between the national institutes in charge of polar research in France and Italy agreed to construct a permanent scientific base, Concordia, approximately 1,000km from the French scientific base of Dumont d'Urville.

2000–01 Concordia was built and completed.

2002 Ten countries began working on a glacial project, the European Programme of Glaciology (EPICA), drilling to study the climate in the Antarctic during the last 500,000 years. Drilling reached 2,871 metres and collected ice samples from 520,000 years ago.

2003 The drilling reached the rock base of the Antarctic continent at a depth of 3,300 metres.

2004 The role of the *Administrator-Superior* was undertaken by a *préfet*, based in Saint Pierre on Réunion.

2005 Michel Champon took office as *préfet*. TAAF celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

2007 Eric Pilloton was appointed *préfet*.

2008 Rollon Mouchel-Blaisot took office as *Administrator-Superior* for the French Southern and Arctic Lands, in Paris.

2007 Eric Pilloton was appointed *préfet*. Nicolas Sarkozy became head of state and president of the French Republic.

2008 Rollon Mouchel-Blaisot took office as *Administrator-Superior* for the French Southern and Arctic Lands, in Paris.

2009 A new advisory committee was established to provide recommendations on how best to administer the largely under-populated region where representative government is unfeasible.

2010 A new plan of action to protect French wetlands within national parks, including Terres Australes, was instigated, with a budget of €20 million (US\$27.6 million) for 2010–13. Christian Gaudin took office as *Administrator-Superior* for the French Southern and Arctic Lands, in Paris, on 4 November.

2011 TAAF signed a partnership agreement with Centre National de Documentation Pédagogique (CNDP) (National Centre for Educational Documentation), providing a teaching resource for French schools.

2012 On 29 February, Pascal Bolot was named as *Administrator-Superior*. He took office on 10 April, based in Réunion, for TAAF. The first round of the French presidential elections was held on 22 April, in which 10 candidates took part. Incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy (UMP) won 27.18 per cent of the vote but his chief rival François Hollande (Parti Socialiste (PS) (Socialist Party)) won 28.63 per cent. The runoff was held on 6 May, in which the socialist candidate, François Hollande won 51.63 per cent of the vote and Nicolas Sarkozy 48.37 per cent; turnout was 80.35 per cent. On 15 May François Hollande took office as president and head of state.

Jean-Luc Marx was appointed as *Administrator-Superior* on 27 August.

2013 The results of a scientific exhibition to assess the sustainability of fishing in the area were announced on 1 October. The report included an analysis of a new species: the icefish.

Political structure

Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises (TAAF) (French Southern and Antarctic Territories) is a French *Territoire d'Outre Mer* (TOM) (Overseas Territory), but is administered under two different

KEY FACTS

Official name: Le Territoire des Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises (TAAF) (French Southern and Antarctic Territories)

Head of State: President François Hollande (PS) (from 15 May 2012), represented by *Administrator-Superior* Jean-Luc Marx (from 27 Aug 2012) (based in Saint Pierre, on Réunion)

Head of government: Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault (PS) (from 15 May 2012) Population

Area: 439,797 square km consisting of: Kerguelen Archipelago 7,215 square km, Crozet Archipelago 115 square km, Amsterdam Island 54 square km, Saint Paul Islands 7 square km, Terre Adélie (in Antarctica) 432,000 square km

Population: 310 (summer total) (150 winter total)

Capital: Port-aux-Françaises (on Kerguelen)

Official language: French

Currency: Euro (€) = 100 cents

Exchange rate: €0.75 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

international laws. France exercises full sovereignty over the southern islands, unambiguously recognised by all nations. Adélie Land (on mainland Antarctica) is administered according to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, despite the US not recognising France's claim to the Land. The Antarctic Treaty is an international agreement which provides for broad scientific co-operation and demilitarisation of the Antarctic continent and restrained existing territorial claims without prejudicing the solution to the sovereignty problem.

The fully sovereign area is governed by one law and two main decrees. The law of 6 August 1955 confers administrative and financial autonomy on the TOM. The implementation decree of 13 January 1956 defines the TOM's financial system and the decree of 8 September 1956 provides for the TOM's administrative organisation.

The TOM is under the authority of a chief administrator, whose official residence is in Paris. The administrator is assisted by an advisory council, which meets twice a year and consists of seven members appointed for five-year terms. The council must be consulted on the TOM's draft budget and it is kept informed and consulted on any proposed new scientific missions or applications for concessions and commercial activities.

The TOM is divided into four districts, each under the authority of a district head appointed by the chief administrator: Saint Paul and Amsterdam Islands – permanent settlement is Martin de Viviés. Crozet Islands – settlement is Alfred Faure (Possession Island). Kerguelen Islands – settlement is Port aux Français. Adélie Land – settlement is Dumont D'Urville.

Population

310 (summer total) (150 winter total)
The population, which comprises members of scientific missions, fluctuates according to season – it is higher in the summer (December–February). Saint Paul Island is uninhabited.

Annual growth rate: 0.0 per cent (2003)

Languages spoken

Official language/s
French

Media

There are two publications issued by Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises (TAAF). A monthly official journal and a quarterly pamphlet of general interest see publications at www.taaf.fr.

Economy

The Terres Australes have no permanent population, but are temporarily inhabited by scientific research groups. Scientific

activities are supported and developed by the Institut Français pour la Recherche et la Technologie Polaires (IFRTP) (French Institute for Polar Research and Technology) and the administration of the TOM is in charge of the logistics. Most of the TOM's economic activities centre on supporting the IFRTP. Fishing is the other main economic activity with fish landed by foreign ships exported to France and Réunion; other activities are philately and tourist cruises.

External trade

Crayfish and other fish are exported to France and Réunion.

Fishing

Research has indicated the viability of large-scale farming of giant brown macrocystis, a type of seaweed. French vessels fish for crayfish off Amsterdam and Saint Paul. There is an agreement between France and Ukraine to fish for icefish and toothfish.

A research programme which has been carried out since 1970, has shown that trout adapt well to a sub-antarctic environment and the result of sea-ranching salmon was also a biological success. There are estimated to be 60 to 120 million tons of krill in the TOM's coastal waters. Around Saint Paul and Amsterdam Islands, there are plentiful supplies of bull head fish, false cod, crayfish and cape lobster.

Tourism

Much of the Arctic region encompassed by TAAF is protected as a National Nature Reserve. Some tourists are accepted on-board the biannual (Spring and Autumn) supply ship (*Marion Dufresne*) for its 28-day round trip, but without any guarantee of passage if a scientific party needs transport.

No commercial quantities of hydrocarbons have been located.

Energy

There are three diesel generators in operation, in Amsterdam, powered by imported fuel.

Banking and insurance

Central bank

The Paris-based Institut d'Emission d'Outre-Mer (IEOM) provides all central banking services except foreign exchange reserves.

Time

GMT plus five hours

Geography

Terres Australes consists of several groups of islands in the southern Indian Ocean and a sector of Antarctica.

Adélie Land, a narrow segment of mainland Antarctica, is thick continental ice

over barren rock. Les Îles Crozet consists of five large and 15 tiny islands, their combined area is over 330 square km. They are volcanic with black basalt geology and treeless terrain. Pic Marion-Dufresne (1,090 metres) is the highest point on Île de l'Est. The main island of Îles Kerguelen, in the southern Indian Ocean, is volcanic, its highest point is the glaciated Mount Ross. It has around 300 smaller islands forming an archipelago, which combined is 7,000 square km in area. Îles Saint-Paul et Amsterdam are small uninhabited volcanic islands.

Hemisphere

Southern

Climate

The climate of Îles Saint-Paul et Amsterdam is oceanic, damp and mild. The temperature averages 15 degrees Celsius (C). The climate is particularly extreme in the Crozet Archipelago – the islands lie at the centre of an area where tropical and antarctic air masses meet, causing deep depressions and cyclone-forming processes. The Îles Kerguelen have a cool, humid climate due to the proximity of the Antarctic continent. The summers last from December to March and are similar to those beyond the Arctic Circle. The winters from May to October are comparatively mild. The climate is unstable with constant winds, sometimes at a speed of 160kph. The temperature of the surrounding sea averages 4 degrees C.

Adélie Land's climate is harsh. The temperature of the coastal area never rises above 4 degrees C in summer and can fall to minus 37 degrees C in winter.

Entry requirements

Visa

Required by all, except citizens of EU, North America, Australasia and Japan, for stays up to one month; this includes business trips by representatives of overseas companies or organisations. For further exceptions, full details and a copy of the application form visit www.diplomatie.fr/venir/visas/index.html. Proof of adequate funds for stay and return/onward ticket are necessary.

Health (for visitors)

Advisable precautions

Protective clothing is essential. Sunscreen should be applied and protective eyewear worn in summer in the Antarctic.

Weights and measures

The metric system is in use.

Getting there

Air

There are no air links to or between the bases.

Surface

Water: Relief ships bring new personnel and supplies. A charter vessel calls five times a year to the Antarctic islands and another calls twice a year to Adélie Land.

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.

Banking

Central bank

Institut d'Emission d'Outre-Mer (IEOM), 5 rue Roland Barthes, 75598 Paris Cedex 12, France (tel: (+33-1) 5344-4141; fax: (+33-1) 4347-5134; email: contact@ieom.fr).

Other useful addresses

Institut Français pour la Recherche et la Technologie Polaires (IFRTP), Technopole Brest Iroise, BP 75, 29280 Plouzane, France (tel: (+33-2) 9805-6500; fax: (+33-2) 9805-6555).
Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises (TAAF), 34 Rue des Renaudes, 75017 Paris (tel: (+33-1) 4053-4652; fax: (+33-1) 4766-9123).

Internet sites

French tourism:

www.discoverfrance.net/Colonies/Antarctic.shtml

Information about antarctica:

www.gdargaud.net/Antarctica/InfoAntarctica.html

Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty:

www.ats.aq

TAAF (in French): www.taaf.fr