

Lakshadweep

It was formerly (1956–73) Laccadive, Minicoy, and Amindivi Islands

It is an union territory of India. It is a group of some three dozen islands scattered over 30,000 square miles (78,000 square km) of the Arabian Sea off the southwestern coast of India. The principal islands in the territory are Minicoy and those in the Amindivi group. The easternmost island lies about 185 miles (300 km) from the coast of the state of Kerala. Ten of the islands are inhabited. The administrative centre is Kavaratti. The name Lakshadweep means “Hundred Thousand Islands” in the Malayalam language and also in Sanskrit. Area 12 square miles (32 square km). Pop. (2008 est.) 69,000.

Lakshadweep islands lie about 220 to 440 kms off the Kerala coast between 8° and 12° North Latitudes and 71° and 74° East Longitudes. The islands are connected to mainland by passenger ships and flights operated from Kochi.

Lakshadweep is the tiniest Union Territory of India and is its only coral island chain. This archipelago consists of 36 islands, 12 atolls, 3 reefs and 5 submerged banks. The islands have a total area of 32 sq.kms and the lagoons enclosed by the atolls cover an area of 4200 sq.kms. Its territorial waters extend to 20,000 sq.kms and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to 4,00,000 sq.kms. Only 10 of these islands namely, Agatti, Amini, Andrott, Bitra, Chetlat, Kadmat, Kalpeni, Kavaratti, Kiltan and Minicoy are inhabited. Kavaratti is the Administrative Headquarters of the Union Territory. The islands are restricted area and permit from the Administration is required to visit the islands. However permit formalities of bonofied tourist are taken care by the SPORTS.



**LAKSHADWEEP
MAJOR INDICATOR, 2006-2007****Item Unit Particular**

Location Arabian Sea

Geographical situation

Longitude 71o-74o East

Latitude 8o-12o-30o North

Islands Nos. 36

Inhabited 11(2001 Census)

Uninhabited 25

Total Geographical area Sq.km 32

Land use area Sq.km 26.89

Total Lagoon area Sq.km 4200

Territorial Waters Sq.km 20000

Economic Zone Sq.km 400000

Name of Headquarter Island Kavaratti

Distance by Sea

Kavaratti -- Calicut Km 346

Kavaratti -- Kochi Km 404

Kavaratti -- Mangalore Km 352

Population (2001 Census) Nos. 60650

Male Nos. 31131

Female Nos. 29519

Rural Population (2001 Census) Nos. 33683

Male Nos. 17191

Female Nos. 16492

Urban Population (2001 Census) Nos. 26967

Male Nos. 13940

Female Nos. 13027

Percentage of Workers to Total Population

I. Total Workers (Main workers+Marginal Workers 2001, Census) 25.32

Male 42.41

Female 7.28

II. Main Workers (2001 Census) 19.31

Male 33.05

Female 4.82

III. Marginal Workers 6.01

Male 9.37

Female 2.47

Percentage of ST Population to Total Population (2001 Census) 94.51

Male 91.91

Female 97.26

Density of Population (2001 Census) per Sq.Km 1895

No of Female per 1000 Males per Sq.Km 948

Climate (2006)

Annual Rainfall
 Minicoy Centre MMs 1803.7
 Amini Centre MMs 1645.0
 Temperature Max. Min.
 Minicoy Centigrade 31.7 25.0
 Amini Centigrade 31.7 24.9

Item Unit Particular**Administrative set up**

District Nos. 1
 Tehsil (Amini, Andrott, Kavaratti & Minicoy) Nos. 4
 Sub-Division (Agatti, Amini, Andrott, Chetlat(Bitra), Kadmat, Kalpeni, Kavaratti, Kiltan & Minicoy) Nos. 9
 C.D. Blocks (Amini-(Amini & Kadmat), Andrott-(Andrott & Kalpeni), Kavaratti-(Agatti & Kavaratti), Kiltan-(Bitra, Chetlat & Kiltan) & Minicoy) Nos. 5
 Lok Sabha Seat Nos. 1
 Police Stations Nos. 9
 Police Outpost Nos. 2
 Panchayat
 District Panchayat Nos. 1
 Village (Dweep) Panchayat Nos. 10

AGRICULTURE

Total reporting area hecets 3200
 Area not available for cultivation hecets 650
 Total cropped area hecets 2570
 Net sown area hecets 2570
 Area sown more than once hecets 1565
 Coconut harvested lakh Nuts 280.18

AGRICULTURE (CENSUS 2000-01)

Operational holdings Nos 10231
 Area operated hect 2802.86

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Vet. dispensary. Nos 6
 Live stock (2002 Census)
 Cattle Nos 4206
 Poultry Nos 130651
 Goats Nos 46333
 Other Livestock Nos 5006
 Total LiveStock Nos 55545
 Eggs produced including Govt & Private sector Lakh 127.36
 Milk produced including Govt. & Private sector 000' litters 1848.40

FISHERIES

Fish Landed Tonne 11751

Value Rs. In Lakhs 2350.00

Fisheries requisites distributed worth (2002-03) Rs. In Lakhs 3.1

Fishermen Training Centre Nos 2

Boat Building Yard Nos 2

Workshop Nos 10

Fisherman engaged in fishing Nos 8140

Mechanised fishing boats issued Nos 505

Relief, soils, and climate

The islands of Lakshadweep are small, none exceeding 1 mile (1.6 km) in breadth; the Amindivis are the northernmost islands of the group, and Minicoy Island is the southernmost island. Almost all the inhabited islands are coral atolls. The higher eastern sides of the islands are the most suited for human habitation, while the low-lying lagoons on the western sides protect the inhabitants from the southwest monsoon. The soils of Lakshadweep are generally sandy, derived from the coral.

Throughout the year, temperatures in Lakshadweep generally range from about 70 °F (about 20 °C) to nearly 90 °F (about 32 °C). Cyclones moving across the Arabian Sea rarely strike the islands. However, the winds and waves associated with them can alter the land features considerably.

Plant and animal life

Aside from an abundance of coconut palms, common trees include banyans, casuarinas, pandani (screw pines), breadfruits, tamarinds, and tropical almonds (genus Terminalia). Betel nut and betel leaf also grow in the islands. Among the most notable marine fauna are sharks, bonitos, tunas, snappers, and flying fish. Manta rays, octopuses, crabs, turtles, and assorted gastropods are plentiful. The islands also are home to an array of water birds, such as herons, teals, and gulls.

People

With the exception of the peoples of Minicoy (whose cultures bear some affinity with those of the Maldivian Islands to the south), most people of Lakshadweep are descendants of migrants from the Malabar Coast of southwest India, who had arrived in the islands sometime before the 7th century ce. After becoming established in the islands, these migrant communities (or their offspring) converted to Islam. Although Islam is the predominant religion in contemporary Lakshadweep, vestiges of the religious and social orientation of the original Hindu migrants are evident in the existence of a matrilineal kinship system and castelike social groups.

Most of the Lakshadweep islanders speak Malayalam. Mahi (or Mahl), which is akin to old Sinhalese, is spoken on Minicoy, however. Some people also speak Hindi. The population is concentrated mostly on the islands of Andrott, Kavaratti, Minicoy, and Amini.

Agriculture and fishing

Coconut palms are the agricultural mainstay of Lakshadweep. Copra is produced and exported to the mainland. In some places the underlying coral has been excised and the tracts fertilized with organic matter, which has allowed the cultivation of bananas, vegetables, edible root crops, and millet.

Fishing also forms a major segment of the territory's economy, with tuna as the primary catch. Many fishermen continue an ancient tradition of skilled navigation. Some still sail between the islands and the Indian mainland in distinctive craft called odam.

Manufacturing

Food processing—largely fish-focused—is one of Lakshadweep's chief industries. There is a tuna cannery on Minicoy, where the traditional process of drying bonito also is practiced. Among the territory's other manufacturing activities are coir (coconut fibre) production, hosiery production, weaving, and boat building.

Tourism

Although the government of Lakshadweep promotes tourism, the industry is closely monitored to guard against negative environmental impact. Permits are needed to visit the territory. Government-sponsored tour packages are available.

Transportation

Lakshadweep is connected to the Indian mainland by sea and by air. Kozhikode (formerly Calicut), on the coast of Kerala, is the nearest mainland seaport. Kochi, also on the coast of Kerala, is the port of departure and arrival for most passenger ships serving the islands. There is an airport on the island of Agatti, which has regular plane service to and from Kochi. Mainland and interisland helicopter services also are available. There are only a few miles of roads in Lakshadweep.

Constitutional framework

The governmental structure of Lakshadweep, like that of most other Indian states and territories, is determined by the national constitution of 1950. The territory is led by an administrator, who is appointed by the president of India. As a very small territory, Lakshadweep consists of a single district, with four subdivisions. The territory falls under the jurisdiction of the Kerala High Court.

Education

Education in Lakshadweep has improved immensely since the mid-20th century, with primary and secondary schools available throughout the islands. Compared with other states and territories of India, Lakshadweep has one of the highest literacy rates. A college affiliated with the University of Calicut (in Kerala) offers baccaalaureate degrees in several fields.

History

The islands of present-day Lakshadweep were first mentioned by a Greek sailor in the 1st century ce as a source of tortoise shell. Muslim missionary activity in the 7th century and continued contact with Arab traders eventually led to the conversion of all the islanders to Islam. Sometime before 1100 a small Hindu kingdom on the Malabar Coast annexed the islands, and after the fall of the Kulashekhara dynasty of Kerala in 1102 they passed to the Kolathiris, another small Hindu dynasty. Later in the 12th century, after a Kolathiri princess married a Muslim convert, a separate kingdom (including the islands that eventually formed Lakshadweep) was set up in the Kannur (Cannanore) area of Kerala in order to protect the Keralan tradition of matrilineal descent.

It is possible that the first European to visit the islands was the Italian explorer Marco Polo—if the “female island” mentioned in his 13th-century travelogues was indeed Minicoy Island, as some have speculated. In 1498 the Portuguese arrived in the islands. They subsequently built a fort to control trade, particularly in coir. Residents of the islands staged an uprising in 1545.

Successive bibis (female rulers) and their husbands ruled the islands until control of the northern group of islands, the Amindivis, passed to Tippu Sultan, the sultan of Mysore (now Karnataka), on the mainland, in the 1780s. When Tippu was killed in battle with the British in 1799, the Amindivis came under British control. The bibi and her husband were permitted to retain the other islands and receive income from them in exchange for an annual payment to the British. These payments repeatedly were in arrears, and in 1908 the bibi ceded to the British direct administration of these islands. Sovereignty was transferred to India upon Indian independence in 1947, and the islands were constituted a union territory in 1956.
