



**Australia-Oceania :: Ashmore and Cartier Islands**  
(territory of Australia)

**Introduction :: Ashmore and Cartier Islands**

**Background:**  
These uninhabited islands came under Australian authority in 1931; formal administration began two years later. Ashmore Reef supports a rich and diverse avian and marine habitat; in 1983, it became a National Nature Reserve. Cartier Island, a former bombing range, became a marine reserve in 2000.

**Geography :: Ashmore and Cartier Islands**

**Location:**  
Southeastern Asia, islands in the Indian Ocean, midway between northwestern Australia and Timor island

**Geographic coordinates:**  
12 14 S, 123 05 E

**Map references:**  
Oceania

**Area:**  
total: 5 sq km  
country comparison to the world: 247  
land: 5 sq km  
water: 0 sq km  
note: includes Ashmore Reef (West, Middle, and East Islets) and Cartier Island

**Area - comparative:**  
about eight times the size of The Mall in Washington, DC

**Land boundaries:**  
0 km

**Coastline:**  
74.1 km

**Maritime claims:**  
territorial sea: 12 nm  
contiguous zone: 12 nm  
exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm  
continental shelf: 200 m depth or to the depth of exploitation

**Climate:**  
tropical

**Terrain:**  
low with sand and coral

**Elevation extremes:**  
lowest point: Indian Ocean 0 m  
highest point: unnamed location 3 m

**Natural resources:**  
fish

**Land use:**  
arable land: 0%  
permanent crops: 0%  
other: 100% (all grass and sand) (2011)

**Natural hazards:**  
surrounded by shoals and reefs that can pose maritime hazards

**Environment - current issues:**  
illegal killing of protected wildlife by traditional Indonesian fisherman, as well as fishing by non-traditional Indonesian vessels, are ongoing problems

**Geography - note:**

Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve established in August 1983; Cartier Island Marine Reserve established in 2000

## People and Society :: Ashmore and Cartier Islands

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### Population:

no indigenous inhabitants

*note:* Indonesian fishermen are allowed access to the lagoon and fresh water at Ashmore Reef's West Island; access to East and Middle Islands is by permit only

## Government :: Ashmore and Cartier Islands

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### Country name:

**conventional long form:** Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands

**conventional short form:** Ashmore and Cartier Islands

### Dependency status:

territory of Australia; administered from Canberra by the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

### Legal system:

the laws of the Commonwealth of Australia and the laws of the Northern Territory of Australia, where applicable, apply

### Diplomatic representation in the US:

none (territory of Australia)

### Diplomatic representation from the US:

none (territory of Australia)

### Flag description:

the flag of Australia is used

## Economy :: Ashmore and Cartier Islands

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### Economy - overview:

no economic activity

## Transportation :: Ashmore and Cartier Islands

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### Ports and terminals:

none; offshore anchorage only

## Military :: Ashmore and Cartier Islands

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### Military - note:

defense is the responsibility of Australia; periodic visits by the Royal Australian Navy and Royal Australian Air Force

## Transnational Issues :: Ashmore and Cartier Islands

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### Disputes - international:

Australia has closed parts of the Ashmore and Cartier reserve to Indonesian traditional fishing; Indonesian groups challenge Australia's claim to Ashmore Reef