

The Indian Islands, Andaman & Nicobar & Lakshadweep Islands

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India has many islands spread across its coastline, both in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. These islands are very important not only for their natural beauty, but also their biodiversity, their strategic, cultural and economic importance. India has two important islands: the Andaman and Nicobar Islands located in the Bay of Bengal and the Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea. In this article, we are going to cover the Islands of India.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the most important islands in India. They are located in the Bay of Bengal and have around 572 islands, out of which 37 are inhabited.

Andaman Islands

- The Andaman Islands are closer to mainland India; stretch north-south over 800 km.
- The largest islands are North, Middle, and South Andaman.
- Capital: Port Blair (South Andaman Island).

- Strategic Importance: Near the Ten Degree Channel and Malacca Strait make them important for maritime security.
- The biodiversity includes tropical rainforests, coral reefs and is home to Andaman wild pig, saltwater crocodile, dugong, and diverse birdlife.
- Tribes present are Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarwa, Sentinelese (minimal outside contact).
- Tourism: Famous for Havelock Island, Radhanagar Beach, scuba diving, and water sports.

Nicobar Islands

- The Nicobar Islands are located on the South of Andamans, separated by the Ten Degree Channel.
- Capital: Car Nicobar.
- Indira Point, India's southernmost tip, makes Nicobar Islands strategically important and close to major sea routes.
- Biodiversity includes UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve and is home to Nicobar pigeon, coconut crab, and endemic flora/fauna.
- Tribes: Nicobarese and Shompen (semi-nomadic, interior forest dwellers).

Lakshadweep Islands

- Lakshadweep Islands are located in the Arabian Sea and composed of 36 coral islands, 200-400 km from India's southwest coast.
- Kavaratti is the capital.
- Geography includes Low-lying atolls, reefs, and lagoons and only ~10 inhabited islands.
- Biodiversity includes rich marine life like corals, reef fish, sea turtles, mollusks; coconut palms dominate the region.
- The economy consists of Fishing, coconut cultivation, tourism (snorkeling, scuba diving- Bangaram & Agatti popular).
- Culture is predominantly Muslim, Malayalam-speaking, strong maritime traditions.

Important Coastal Islands of India

Apart from Andaman & Nicobar Islands and the Lakshadweeps, the major coastal islands of India are:

Island	State	Importance
Diu	Gujarat	Portuguese heritage, forts, beaches.
Majuli	Assam	Largest river island; Vaishnavism centre; erosion threat.

Sriharikota	Andhra Pradesh	ISRO's Satish Dhawan Space Centre.
Vypin	Kerala	Fishing, coconut cultivation, tourism hub near Kochi.

Islands of India Strategic Importance

The Islands of India are strategically important due to their location, geographical biodiversity, international maritime trade routes and serve as outposts for surveillance, defense and maritime security.

- **Naval Bases:** The Indian Navy maintains key bases in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, including INS Jarawa and INS Baaz, to safeguard the eastern seaboard and oversee traffic through the Malacca Strait.
- **Strategic Infrastructure:** Airstrips and ports in both the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands enhance connectivity, support military operations, and protect India's maritime interests, including its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

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