

Geography

Location: Southern Africa, island in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar

Map references: World

Area:

total area: 1,860 sq km

land area: 1,850 sq km

comparative area: slightly less than 10.5 times the size of Washington, DC

note: includes Agalega Islands, Cargados Carajos Shoals (Saint Brandon), and Rodrigues

Land boundaries: 0 km

Coastline: 177 km

Maritime claims:

continental shelf: 200 nm or to the edge of the continental margin

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

International disputes: claims UK-administered Chagos Archipelago, which includes the island of Diego Garcia in UK-administered British Indian Ocean Territory; claims French-administered Tromelin Island

Climate: tropical, modified by southeast trade winds; warm, dry winter (May to November); hot, wet, humid summer (November to May)

Terrain: small coastal plain rising to discontinuous mountains encircling central plateau

Natural resources: arable land, fish

Land use:

arable land: 54%

permanent crops: 4%

meadows and pastures: 4%

forest and woodland: 31%

other: 7%

Irrigated land: 170 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: water pollution

natural hazards: cyclones (November to April); almost completely surrounded by reefs that may pose maritime hazards

international agreements: party to - Biodiversity, Climate Change, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Life Conservation, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection