

# French Southern and Antarctic Territories

**Status:** French Overseas Territory

**Area:** 169,800 sq. miles

**Population:** Summer about 300, Winter about 150

**Currency:** 100 cents = 1 Euro (€1 = \$1.19)



INDIAN OCEAN



The French Southern and Antarctic Territories — or the *Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises* (TAAF) — consist of five widely dispersed districts: three archipelagos in the southern Indian Ocean (Kerguelen, St. Paul and Amsterdam, Crozet), the Iles Eparses, or Scattered Islands, around Madagascar and Adélie Land, the French claim on Antarctica itself. The TAAF has no permanent population. Its administrative capital and its resident administrator are in Reunion. Apart from Adélie Land which constitutes 98 percent of its total land area, it is small, altogether about the size of Luxembourg. But the islands command an Exclusive Economic Zone of nearly 900,000 square miles, including some important fisheries.

The colorful French explorer, Yves-Joseph de Kerguelen-Trémarec is credited with discovering the Kerguelen Islands in 1772 and claiming them for France. Visitors to the islands were transitory: whalers, seal hunters and scientists. In 1950 France established its first permanent meteorological station on Kerguelen to support aviation to Antarctica.



The first stamp used in the French territory is an overprint of a Madagascar stamp featuring birds native to the African island nation, Scott 1.

Amsterdam and St. Paul Islands, located more than 1,000 miles north of Kerguelen, were also volcanic in origin. They were claimed by France in 1843 at the urging of fishermen from Reunion. A permanent meteorological station was established on Amsterdam in 1950.

Crozet Island was discovered in 1772 by Julien Crozet who claimed it for France. In 1938 it was declared a nature preserve. A small research station was established in 1961, which became permanent in 1963.

Adélie Land, the part of Antarctica claimed by France, was discovered in 1840 by the French explorer Jules Dumont d'Urville, who named it after his wife. The territory includes about 220 miles of coastline. Its inland borders are sectors of a circle running about 1,600 miles to the South Pole. The first research station, Port Martin, was operated from 1950 to 1952 when it was destroyed by fire. Its replacement, the Dumont d'Urville Station, has been a permanent facility since 1956.

The Iles Eparses (the Scattered Islands), five disputed islands around Madagascar, were made the fifth district of the TAAF in 2007. Their attachment to the territory is anomalous since they are much closer to the equator than to Antarctica. Most of these islands have a small military presence in the form of weather stations.

The early expeditions to the territory mainly used French stamps on their mail, though a special cancellation was used for mail from Kerguelen from early in the 20th century. After 1924, the area was administratively under Madagascar. Covers from that period are known with stamps from France, Madagascar, and South Africa. In 1950, the postal service for the growing network of scientific and

military facilities in the territory was regularized using Madagascar stamps, though covers with Reunion stamps denominated in CFA francs are known. In 1955, as Madagascar approached independence, Paris created the TAAF. On October 28, 1955, the first TAAF stamp went on sale, overprinted on the current 15-franc Madagascar definitive. On April 25, 1956, six specially designed definitives were released.



The king penguin appears on the high denomination of a 1960 set featuring birds, Scott 19.



The Ecology of St. Paul Island stamp of 1998 includes native birds and a helicopter, Scott 239.



Charles De Gaulle appears on a set of two common design stamps in 1972, a little more than a year after he died, Scott 52.



Emperor penguins appear on the territory's first airmail stamps issued in 1956, Scott C2.