Welcome to Ascension Island!

We have produced this welcome pack to help you make the most of your time on the island and to give you information and forms that you might find useful. We have tried to ensure that the information in this pack is up to date, but as with all documents it can become outdated. If you find something is incorrect or if you think it would be useful to add something please let us know by e-mailing Recruitment@Ascension.gov.ac. If there is something you want to know but it isn’t detailed in this pack, just ask anyone on the island. We’re a friendly community and if that person can’t help they will probably know someone who can.

Dean Hambleton-Ayling
Director of Human Resources

Our Island

There are no indigenous people on Ascension. Instead, the population is mainly made up of St Helenian’s (known as ‘Saints’), British ex-pats and Americans. There are a range of nationalities from other countries, although they tend to be in very small numbers.

Ascension Island is a working island. That means that everyone on island is here to work or to be with someone who works. There is no right of abode. As such, if an individual over 18 does not have a job (and is not the partner of someone who is working) they must leave the island. To reinforce this point, everyone on island will be working to a fixed term contract (normally 24 months). It is possible for individuals to have contracts renewed again and again, so some individuals will have been on Island for many decades. However, when their contract ends for a final time, they will also need to leave the island.

We have four settlements on island: Georgetown (the capital), Two Boats, Travellers Hill (the Ministry of Defense base) and the American base. All settlements are accessible to all islanders. There are regular social events at all locations, and public transport around the island on Friday and Saturday evenings.

There are some restricted areas on the island (although not many). These are normally clearly marked. All unauthorized people are prohibited from driving on the runway, and from climbing Cross Hill (the large hill in front of Government House). Jubilee View, a picnic area at the front of the hill (with two white guns) is accessible from the lower road visible from Government House.

Ascension has a wealth of animal and plant life, many of which are unique to the Island. They live in a variety of habitats ranging from the large protected marine area which surrounds the island teaming with fish, sharks and rays; sandy beaches
where green turtles lay their eggs; old lava fields in which several species of seabirds rear their young; and the Green Mountain National Park, home to plants found nowhere else on the planet. Whilst there are beautiful walking pathways around the mountain, remember there is a large penalty for intentionally harming any of the protected species.

The weather normally stays at about 25-34°C all year round.

There are several micro climates on the island. Green Mountain and Two Boats are slightly cooler than Georgetown, and they tend to have occasional light rain, while Georgetown is more humid and dry.

We do experience torrential rain at times (usually over winter time), however, it doesn’t last long and the temperature usually remains quite warm.

We use Greenwich Meantime and clocks are not put forward during British Summer time.


Generally 12:30 -13:30 is taken as a lunch break across the island and most people finish work between 16:30 -17:00.
**Government**

Ascension Island is a United Kingdom Overseas Territory. Supreme Authority is vested in Her Majesty the Queen, although Executive authority for the Territory is exercised by the Governor resident on St Helena, represented by the Administrator of Ascension. There is an Island Council. The Governor receives advice from the Island Council and consults it when making laws. The composition and functions of the Island Council are prescribed by law. The current Island Council consists of five elected members plus three ex-officio members (the Administrator, the Attorney General and the Director of Financial Services). Ex-officio members have no vote.

**Staying Safe in the Sun**

You will quickly realise it is sunny an awful lot on Ascension and it can be deceptively easy to dehydrate and burn. Suntan lotion is available on island at the NAAFI (in Travellers Hill and at Chandlery in Georgetown). We recommend that you take a hat and water with you if you are going to be in the sun for a prolonged period.

**Beach Safety**

There are many beautiful beaches on island. Some have their own unique biodiversity, most noticeably the green turtles. The turtles nest between December and June. Please be aware of this when you are on the beach. Because they are a protected species, it is a criminal offence to endanger turtles, sharks or any other creature on Green Mountain National Park (including land crabs).

We do not currently recommend swimming in the waters around Ascension, due to number of sharks. There have been a number of serious incidents involving shark attacks.

There is a beach volley ball facility at English Bay. Emergency phones are located at these sites along with life-saving buoys, in the event of an emergency. Both beaches have barbecue facilities.

Because of our location, there can be deceptively strong currents within our waters. There is information about sea swell in the weekly newspaper. You can subscribe to a daily weather briefing from the Met office by emailing: met.office@atlantis.co.ac.

**Your Housing**

There are a range of properties on island: bungalows, flats and studio accommodation. The type of property you are in will depend upon the status of your contract. If you have been offered a ‘single status’ contract of employment you are likely to have been accommodated in barracks type accommodation. This type of accommodation varies from single en suite bedrooms with communal catering and laundry facilities to small self-catering units with an en-suite bedroom, kitchen, lounge and shared laundry facilities.

All accommodation is furnished. Typical inventories have been provided in the “Moving to Ascension” pack

If you would like to report a fault (for example plumbing, electrical etc), or you have any other queries regarding your accommodation, you can contact the helpdesk on telephone number 66116 during normal working hours (Mon-Fri 8am - 4.30pm).
In case of emergencies call:

Electrician Mobile Number: 45317
Plumber Mobile Number: 45318

A separate leaflet has been produced in this pack with more information.

Clothing

Due to the hot and humid weather, suits are not usually worn for work. Women usually choose to wear dresses or shorts, skirts or trousers with a light blouse. Men usually choose to wear light trousers with a short sleeved, button up, shirt.

There are occasional formal events where certain attire is specified. These are normally clearly marked on posters/invitations.

Electricity supply

The electricity supply is 240v standard UK 3 pin plugs.

The Islander Newspaper

There is a weekly newspaper called ‘The Islander’, published every Wednesday. There are details of island events, recipes, puzzles, jobs as well as news of celebrations. The paper can be bought from most shops for 60p.

TV

There are five free digital channels available to view, these include, BBC1, BBC2, ITV, BFBS Extra, Forces TV. These operate on the Freeview frequency. A TV guide is regularly published in the Islander newspaper. It is also available at: http://www.bfbs.com/tv/Programme_Guide

Phones and Internet

The island international dial code is (00 247) for Ascension Island. You can have phone lines installed in your property. This is usually done on the same day as the request. You will need a phone line in order to have broadband installed.

Sure South Atlantic Ltd is the communications provider on the island. Please refer to the Sure brochures for more information regarding landline tariffs and broadband and mobile packages.
Post

The postcode for Ascension is ASCN 1ZZ. Post can be sent directly to Ascension (please note that some online purchasing sites don’t always recognise the post code). International recorded mail is more reliable from the UK but this is more expensive. Air mail can take around up to six weeks to arrive. Surface mail will be sent on the Ministry of Defense Ship from the UK and on the Royal Mail Ship from St Helena. This can take a number of months to arrive.

Health Care

Although medical resources on Ascension are limited, you will receive full medical care whilst you are here. There are two Doctors, a Midwife and several Nursing staff. There are daily outpatient clinics (11am and 4pm) including midwifery services. These clinics are operated on a first come first served basis. It is not possible to make appointments for such clinics.

For more complex medical conditions there are medical referrals to the UK. These are usually carried out in Oxford.

There is a well-equipped Dental Clinic which provides all routine treatment. More complex cases are referred for treatment in the UK. Most dental services are free to island residents. (There are charges for cosmetic dentistry).

Mosquitoes are common on Ascension but they are not the malarial variety. Some people are more susceptible to mosquito bites than others. There are some mosquito repellents available on-island, otherwise you can order some from the UK and have them shipped.

Childcare

The statutory provision for childcare facilities does not commence until school age. As such, there are no formal childcare facilities on Island. There are a small number of child minders on island. Details of the registered child minders can be obtained from the Social Worker: Social.worker@Ascension.gov.ac. Two Boats School admits children into its Foundation Stage class (morning only sessions) from the start of term following the child’s third birthday.
Banking and Money Matters

The local currency is the St Helena pound, which has the same value as the UK pound. Dollars are also used, mainly on the American Base, although pounds are accepted as well. A few of the clubs and shops also accept dollars.

There is only one bank on the island, the Bank of St Helena, which is situated on the ground floor of the main AIG building. They are open 6 days a week, although the hours are restricted on each day. Please visit the Bank of Saint Helena website for more information and for information on their accounts www.sainthelenabank.com.

To open a bank account you will need: Passport, proof of employment, evidence of your past address.

It is possible to have your Ascension Island Government Salary paid into a St Helena bank account, a UK bank account or one abroad (or to have the salary split accordingly).

It can take up to three days working days to transfer money to a UK bank account (around 7 days to other locations).

There are no cash machines on the island. There are chip and pin facilities at the Obsidian NAAFI shop and Chandlery Shop. UK banks don’t normally charge for using a debit card on island. Some of the shops on-island offer customers an account scheme which you can pay off at the end of each month.

Education

Two Boats School provides education for all children aged 3-16 on Ascension Island. Class sizes and exam success would be the envy of most schools around the world. The school is housed in a purpose-built building, situated in Two Boats village. The majority of pupils live in Two Boats village or Georgetown. A school bus runs at the start and end of each school day to transport the pupils from Georgetown. The bus stops opposite the Exiles building in Georgetown and by the disused tennis courts opposite to the Conservation building.

For information about requesting a school place, please contact: Nanette Anthony (nanette.anthony@tbschool.edu.ac)

There is a pre-school club once a week called “Ladybirds” which is based in two boats. Details of the chair of that group can also be obtained from the social worker.
**Transport**

Public transport is limited on Ascension. There is a public transport service on the weekends in the evenings. Hire cars can either be booked with the Obsidian Hotel (accommodation@atlantis.co.ac, 66246).

**Driving on Ascension**

The maximum speed limit is 40 MPH, although there are speed restrictions in residential areas. Most roads do not have pavements, so pedestrians frequently use the roads. As such extra care should be taken when driving. If you are walking along the roads, it is advisable to walk in the direction of the on-coming traffic and carry a torch if it is dark.

Drivers should familiarise themselves with the St Helena Highway code. A copy of the Highway Code can be purchased from the Post Office, alternatively an electronic copy is available on the Ascension Island Government public drive under “Highway Code”.

Overseas driving licenses are only valid for three months. Anyone intending to drive will need an Ascension Island driving license, which is issued annually. Ascension Island driving licenses can be obtained from the Post Office in Georgetown Square.

Individuals learning to drive will require a provisional license. These can also be obtained from the Post Office and are issued with a three monthly renewable basis.

Driving tests can be booked through the Police Station in Georgetown. There is no charge for the driving test. There are two components to the driving test:
- Theory test (50 multiple choice questions with a 75% pass mark)
- Practical test

You will also need to pass a vision test (to ensure that you can see clearly).

**Motor Vehicle Requirements**

All cars are required to have an ‘A’ number plate. Vehicles must be registered at the Post Office. Vehicle registrations cost approximately £16.20.

The number plate will cost around £15 from stores. The plates can be fitted for around £10 at the Transport workshop, or you can fit these yourself.

Road Tax is payable on private vehicles. For most vehicles this will be around £35 (pick-up Trucks are more). This is payable at the Post Office.

The Motor Transport Workshop is based at the far end of the pier head complex (in between the stores and the passenger terminal. The team repair and maintain all vehicle makes.

All cars require an MOT carried out on Ascension, this costs around £29.00, available from the Motor Transport Workshop.
**Shipping Goods to the Island**

It is possible to have goods shipped to Ascension Island from the UK, St Helena and South Africa.

There are two shipping routes:
Falklands Islands Resupply Ship (FIRS) – from the UK
HMS Royal Mail Ship (RMS) - from South Africa and St Helena

Most people use Richard James International, based in Bristol, to ship goods (including food and amazon orders). Richard James’ Contact Details: [www.richardjamesinternational.co.uk](http://www.richardjamesinternational.co.uk)

FIRS shipping dates can change at short notice. Check here for the most up to date position on the supply ship:
[www.richardjamesinternational.co.uk/shipping-dates.aspx](http://www.richardjamesinternational.co.uk/shipping-dates.aspx)

Items ordered from Richard James can be collected from a delivery point at the end of Long Beach (the end of the road that the Police Station is on)

The RMS is currently scheduled to operate until February 2018. Details of the shipping dates can be found here:

Items ordered for delivery on the RMS can be collected the warehouse at the Pier head.

**Food**

There is a basic range of food across the island. There are three food shops:
- Chandery’s (in Georgetown)
- Jams (in Two Boats)
- NAAFI (in Travellers Hill)

It is possible to get most basic food items, but you may need to visit many if not all of the shops.

Asda, Tesco, Waitrose, and Sainsbury’s all deliver to Richard James. Many islanders order cupboard items, toiletries, cleaning products etc from UK supermarkets and ship it to Ascension. Richard James charge £17 for the first 5 boxes and £1 for each box thereafter. Food can take up to 6 weeks to arrive (based on the FIRS schedule).

There is a hydroponic site on the island that provides fresh salad items and herbs for the island. Produce is sold at the Chandlery shop in Georgetown and JAMS convenience store in Two Boats.

Fresh fruit and vegetables are available from the Chandlery shop when the RMS visits from St Helena once or twice a month. The quality and selection of produce can be variable and stocks can sell out fast due to high demand.

The NAAFI and JAMS offer a range of potatoes, apples, oranges.
It is possible to buy frozen bread from some of the shops as well as freshly baked bread, baguettes and rolls etc. from the NAAFI.

Most meat is imported frozen from St Helena, South Africa and the UK and is sold in all of the food shops.

Fresh fish is available most of the time, either from line fishing or from local fishermen. There are restrictions on some of the things you can catch - it is illegal to take, damage or kill any spiny lobster (crayfish) when they are in berry (females with eggs). A maximum of 10kg of fish may be exported for private (non-commercial) purposes only. An export permit is required; this can be purchased from Georgetown Post Office and costs £10 for the UK and £5 for Saint Helena.

Orders for dried goods, toiletries and household provisions can also be placed with Thorpes on St Helena - www.thorpes.sh. You also have the option of ordering cheese and cold meats through Thorpes. You will be charged freight costs for these shipments.

A small selection of soya and Quorn products can usually be found at the NAAFI, and Chandlery although variety is limited.

Tap water is safe to drink. Alternatively, bottled water is readily available in most of the shops on-island.
Shopping

Shopping facilities on Ascension Island are basic. There are a few shops on the island that sell everyday essentials and groceries. There are also a few souvenir and gift shops.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>GOODS SOLD</th>
<th>OPENING HOURS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chandlery Georgetown</td>
<td>Tinned goods, fresh fruit and vegetable, frozen meat, frozen vegetables, frozen bread, frozen convenience foods, deli counter, toiletries and household provisions including a small range of cookware.</td>
<td>MON-FRI: 0900 - 1800 SAT: 0900 – 17:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAAFI Travellers Hill</td>
<td>Tinned goods, frozen vegetables, frozen convenience foods, frozen chicken, frozen bread, freshly baked frozen savouries and bread, confectionary, magazines, toiletries, household provisions etc.</td>
<td>MON - SAT: 0900 - 2100 SUN: 0900 - 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAMS Two Boats</td>
<td>Tinned goods, fresh fruit and vegetable, frozen meat, vegetables, bread &amp; convenience foods, cold meats, cheese, eggs, toiletries and household provisions.</td>
<td>MON, TUE, WED, THUR: 1100 - 1330 and 1530 - 1830 FRI: 1130 - 1330 and 1530 - 1700 SAT: 1100 - 1430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obsidian Hotel (Gift Shop) Georgetown</td>
<td>Ascension souvenirs.</td>
<td>MON - FRI: 0800 - 1700 SAT: 1000 - 1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Ryder (Charity Shop) Georgetown</td>
<td>Second hand goods i.e. clothing, footwear, books etc.</td>
<td>FRI: 1700 - 1800 SAT: 1000 - 1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A&amp;P’s Gift World Georgetown</td>
<td>Ascension souvenirs, greetings cards, household provisions, toiletries, tinned goods and clothing etc.</td>
<td>WED &amp; FRI: 1700 - 1830 SAT: 1000 - 1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Movie Shack Georgetown</td>
<td>DVDs and video games for rental.</td>
<td>Mon - FRI: 1700 - 1900 SAT: 1030 - 1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glamour Georgetown</td>
<td>Women’s shoes, toiletries, cosmetics and clothing.</td>
<td>SAT: 1030 - 1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pebbles Georgetown</td>
<td>Children and adult clothing.</td>
<td>WED: 1500 - 1700 Sat: 1000 - 1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bon Appetit Two Boats</td>
<td>Take away restaurant</td>
<td>MON - FRI: 1000 - 1300 Occasional SAT: 1100 – 1300 1730 - 1930</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clubs, bars and places to eat

There are several bars and places to eat on Ascension.

Please note that children are not permitted in bars after 9pm Sunday to Thursday and 10.30pm Friday and Saturday, with the exception of the Volcano Club, please see below.

The Saints Members' Club offers morning snacks from Monday to Friday (from 10am) and lunches on Thursday and Friday. The bar opens from 4pm Monday to Wednesday and from 12pm Thursday to Sunday.

Two Boats Club caters for lunch from Monday to Saturday. Special lunches can also be arranged upon request. The bar opens from 12pm Monday to Saturday and from 1pm on Sunday.

The Volcano Club (VC) snack bar is open Monday to Saturday 4:30pm- 8:30pm, catering American style food. The bar opens Tuesday to Saturday from 4.30pm. There is also happy hour on Wednesday and Friday from 6.30pm. Children are not permitted on the club premises after 9pm.

The Chicken Inn at the NAAFI offers a lunch menu as well as evening meals from 7pm. The bar opens from 7pm Monday to Friday and 12pm Saturday and Sunday.

The restaurant at the Obsidian Hotel also offers evening meals from 7.30pm. Orders must be placed in advance by calling the hotel reception by noon that day. The bar opens from 7pm.

There is usually a disco held at either of the clubs on the weekend – details are published in the Islander.

Cinema

There is a cinema based at the NAAFI at Travellers Hill. Details of the movies showing are on display at the bars and clubs, they are also displayed at the AIG building and on the AIG website:

http://www.ascension-island.gov.ac/the-island/what-to-do/t3-cinema-schedule/

Tickets are available on the door, or via the cashier at the Airhead (63373)

T3 MEMBERSHIP CARD PRICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card Type (Valid for)</th>
<th>ADULT</th>
<th>CHILD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bronze (2 Weeks)</td>
<td>£5.00</td>
<td>£4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver (1 Month)</td>
<td>£10.00</td>
<td>£8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold (6 Months)</td>
<td>£50.00</td>
<td>£40.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Library

There is a public library and resource centre at the School that offers a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books and DVDs. It is free to borrow books and there is no charge for overdue items. If you wish to donate books, videos or DVDs, once you no longer need them, they gladly accept donations.

Opening times:
Thursday 17:30 – 19:30
Saturday 11:00 – 13:00

Sports, keeping fit and things to do

There are 24 hour gym facilities at Travellers Hill including a weight suite and an aerobic suite. There is a small monthly subscription. To join, contact the cashier at Airhead (63373). The cashier is open Monday-Friday 08:30-11:30.

There are three swimming pools on the island. Two Boats pool and Georgetown pool (salt water pool) are always opened (except when they’re being cleaned) and are free to use. There are no lifeguards present at these pools. Children must be supervised by an adult at all times.

Travellers Hill pool has a lifeguard and is opened from 5pm to 7pm on Wednesday and from 2pm to 4pm on Saturday and Sunday. There is a £2 entrance fee. This facility is free for gym members to use.

There is an active BSAC dive club on the island based in Georgetown (next to the Police Station in Georgetown).

Snorkelling is very popular as well. You can buy some snorkelling equipment from A&P’s gift world, although it may be cheaper to import it from the UK.

Fishing competitions take place throughout the year.

Zumba classes take place on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6.30pm at Two Boats Club. There is also a children’s class on Saturdays from 11am.

Aerobics class takes place on Monday and Thursday from 6pm at the Community Centre in Two Boats.

Boot Camp class is also held at the Community Centre on Wednesday evenings from 6pm. There is a fee of £1 per class.

Hash walks take place on Saturday afternoons. Details of the route are published in the Islander. There is a fee of £3 or $5 per Hash and participants usually take a plate of eats for the end of the walk.

If you prefer to exercise alone, it’s safe to walk, jog, run or cycle along the roads. People tend to do this early morning or late afternoon to avoid the sun. Alternatively, there is a gym at Travellers Hill, please see membership forms for more information.

The Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) in Two Boats is always open for sporting activities such as five a side football, tennis and basketball.

Football and cricket leagues take place throughout the year. There is also an annual ‘Gradinski’ triathlon; again, details are usually published in the Islander.
Discovering the island

The Conservation Department runs a number of tours for visitors and locals alike

Island Tour: The Island Tour is an excellent way for visitors to see the highlights of Ascension and learn about the island. Packed full of interesting facts and detailed information from the tour guide, the journey starts at the historical turtle ponds and journeys to all the key areas on Ascension including Two Boats, Green Mountain National Park and Comfortless Cove. The tour lasts for 2.5 to 3 hours and gives visitors the opportunity to get a taste of Ascension’s rich biodiversity as well its fascinating history, with of course some great photo opportunities. (Available all year)

Georgetown Heritage Tour: The Heritage Tour takes visitors on a journey back in time where they can discover Ascension from the time of the first settlers. This tour, conducted on foot, allows visitors to explore and learn about the many historical sites of Georgetown including the forts, St Mary’s Church and the Exiles building. The tour lasts for up to 2.5 to 3 hours, with visitors given the chance to explore the exhibits at the Museum and Fort Hayes. (Available all year)

Turtle Tour: The Turtle Tour gives visitors an amazing opportunity to observe Green Turtles nesting on the pristine golden beaches of Ascension Island. It includes a short presentation from the Conservation team following which visitors will be escorted to Long Beach to see these incredible creatures up close and in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. The cost of the tour is only £5.00 per adult and £2.50 per child, so it’s a bargain to witness a truly unique natural phenomenon. (Available during turtle season – January - June)

Tours can be booked through the Conversation Office (Opening Hours Monday – Friday 7:30-9:30)

Hairdressers

There is currently no formal hairdresser on the island.

Volunteering

There are many ways to volunteer your time and help here with very active Conservation and Heritage groups on the island. The weekly Islander newspaper is run by volunteers and is always looking for new people. There are also opportunities to get involved as a retained fire-fighter, life guard or community police officer. Sue Ryder shop is also run by volunteers. Volunteers at the school are always welcomed too.
You will be required to undertake a criminal records check if you wish to volunteer at the school, as a community police officer or working with any voluntary group that involves working unsupervised with children.

Contact Recruitment@Ascension.gov.ac initially and we will put you in contact with the relevant bodies

**Churches**

St Mary’s is an Anglican church and holds services on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings.

**Visiting Family**

It is possible to book a transit house. Visiting family members must obtain an entry permit prior to travelling to Ascension. Travel insurance (which includes medical evacuation) is absolutely essential for any family member wishing to visit Ascension. Please visit the AIG website for more information [http://www.ascension-island.gov.ac/visiting-the-island/](http://www.ascension-island.gov.ac/visiting-the-island/).

**Useful Websites**

- [www.the-islander.org.ac](http://www.the-islander.org.ac) (The Islander Newspaper)
- [www.ascensionconservation.org.ac](http://www.ascensionconservation.org.ac) (AIG’s Conservation Department)
- [www.tbs.eu.ac](http://www.tbs.eu.ac) (Two Boats School)
- [www.heritage.org.ac](http://www.heritage.org.ac) (Ascension Island Heritage Society)
- [www.postoffice.gov.ac](http://www.postoffice.gov.ac) (Post Office)
- [www.scouts.org.ac](http://www.scouts.org.ac) (1st Ascension Scout Group)

See the Ascension Island Government website for more interesting website links.