

**OFFICIAL NAME:** Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros

**CAPITAL:** Moroni

**SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT:** Federal Islamic Republic

**AREA:** 1,862 Sq Km (719 Sq Mi)

**ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION** 631,800

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**LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY:** Comoros is located at the northern end of the Mozambique Channel between Mozambique and Madagascar. It is a group of three islands, Grande Comore, Anjouan, Moheli and several islets. The Comoros Islands are volcanic in origin and Grande Comore has an active volcano known as Mount Kartala while 50% of that island is a desert lava field. Anjouan and Moheli have a black basalt relief with a wide fertile valley. Anjouan has a natural harbor at Mutsamudu and all the islands have lush vegetation. Major Cities (pop. est.); Moroni 24,000, Mutsamudu 15,000, Domoni 8,000, Fomboni 5,600 (1990). Land Use; forested 18%, pastures 7%, agricultural-cultivated 45%, other 30% (1993).

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**CLIMATE:** The Comoros has a tropical climate with a dry season from May to October and a wet season from November to April. In the wet season heavy rain and strong winds prevail from the northerly Indian Monsoon while in the dry season the continental winds prevail from the southeast. Average annual precipitation varies from 1,100 mm (33 inches) to 5,500 mm (217 inches) depending on the location. Average temperature ranges in Moroni are from 19 to 27 degrees Celsius (66 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit) in August to 24 to 31 degrees Celsius (75 to 88 degrees Fahrenheit) in March.

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**PEOPLE:** The islands have a mixed population of different ethnic groups. The principal ethnic group are the Antalaotra while there are other groups such as the Casre, Makoa, Oimapasaha and Sakalava. All the inhabitants are descendants of immigrants from Africa, Arabia, Indonesia, Madagascar, India, China and Malaysia.

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**DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS:** Density; 257 persons per sq km (666 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 27.6% urban, 72.4% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 50.0% male, 50.0% female (1989). Life Expectancy at Birth; 54.0 years male, 58.0 years female (1989). Age Breakdown; 46% under 15, 28% 15 to 29, 13% 30 to 44, 8% 45 to 59, 4% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and over (1989). Birth Rate; 47.0 per 1,000 (1989). Death Rate; 13.0 per 1,000 (1989). Increase Rate; 34.0 per 1,000 (1989). Infant Mortality Rate; 91.0 per 1,000 live births (1989).

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**RELIGIONS:** The official religion is Islam with 99% of the population Sunni Muslims while Christians represent less than 1% of the population.

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**LANGUAGES:** The official languages are French and Arabic, although the national language is Comorian, a hybrid language related to Swahili with a mixture of Arabic words.

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**EDUCATION:** Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 56.7%, Koranic education 8.3%, primary 3.6%, secondary 2.0%, higher 0.2%, unspecified 29.2% (1980). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 82,053 or 46.3% (1980).

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**MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993:** In Dec. 1961 France granted Comoros internal self government and in 1974 Anjouan, Grande Comore and Moheli voted for complete independence. Mayotte a neighboring island voted to remain under French protection. France recognized the independence of the three islands but continued to rule Mayotte as a overseas territory, after another referendum in 1976. In 1975 Comoros joined the UN while several Comoran governments held power for short periods after independence was declared. In 1978 voters approved a new constitution that established an Islamic republic headed by a President. In the same year the former head of state Ahmed Abdallah was restored to power after a French mercenary coup overthrew Ali Soilih who was the leader of the coup that ousted Abdallah 3 years earlier. French relations were reestablished, party politics were banned and the government reshuffled in 1980. In Sept. 1984 as the sole candidate, Abdallah was returned to office taking over as the head of state after modifying the constitution and removing the Prime Minister's office. In Nov. 1989 Abdallah was assassinated which resulted in the return of a democracy in Mar. 1990 when Said Mohammed Djohar was elected as President. On Aug. 3, 1991 there was an unsuccessful coup attempt by Hassan Halidi, the son of the Supreme Court's president, after the Supreme Court invoked an article of the constitution and proclaimed that Pres. Djohar was unfit to rule, although Pres. Djohar with the backing of the army and France returned to resume power. Halidi was subsequently placed under house arrest. On Nov. 19, 1991 the Comoran Union of Progress (Udzima) withdrew its support for Pres. Djohar alleging he had witch-hunt following the coup attempt. On Jan. 6, 1992 Pres. Djohar appointed a new coalition government following the signing of a national reconciliation pact that recognized his presidency, although Udzima was not represented in the government. On April 8, 1992 the National Conference agreed on a new constitution and electoral schedule with a referendum on the constitution set for May 24, 1992 while on May 8, 1992 Pres. Djohar announced a new transitional coalition government that strengthened his son-in-law, Mohamed Said Abdallah Mchangama, position within it. On June 7, 1992 the referendum resulted in support for the new constitution and on July 10, 1992 due to a breakdown in relations the transitional government was dissolved. On Sept. 26, 1992 there was a failed coup attempt by junior officers while Pres. Djohar was out of the country. In Nov. 1992 the country's first multiparty elections were the results in two areas were canceled after being marred by

violence. On Jan. 1, 1993 as a result of a stalemate in the Federal Assembly Pres. Djohar appointed Ibrahim Adberamane Halidi as prime minister. On April 25, 1993 the death sentence was imposed on 9 people who had taken part in the coup attempt of Sept. 1992, although the sentences were latter commuted to prison terms. In May 1993 following a vote of no confidence Pres. Djohar appointed Said Ali Mohamed as prime minister who formed a new government. In June 1993, another political crisis resulted when Djohar dissolved the Federal Assembly and appointed a new interim prime minister. In Dec. 1993 elections were held amid rule changes, irregularities and violence.

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**CURRENCY:** The official currency is the Franc (CF) into 100 Centimes.

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**ECONOMY:** Gross National Product; USD \$272,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$169,400,000 (1993). Imports; CF 21,900,000,000 (1994). Exports; CF 4,700,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; USD \$15,700,000 (1994). Balance of Trade; CF -17,200,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 126,500 or 28.3% of total population (1991). Unemployed; 75.0% (1994).

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**MAIN TRADING PARTNERS:** Its main trading partners are the USA, France, Madagascar, Kenya, Italy, Germany and Tanzania.

**MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS:** Bananas, Cassava, Cinnamon, Cloves, Coconuts, Maize, Rice, Sweet Potatoes, Timber, Vanilla, Yams.

**MAJOR INDUSTRIES:** Agriculture, Fishing, Food Processing, Forestry, Oil Extraction, Sugar Refining.

**MAIN EXPORTS:** Cloves, Coconuts, Copra, Perfumed Oils, Vanilla.

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**TRANSPORT:** Railroads; nil. Roads; length 750 km (466 mi) (1987). Vehicles; cars 3,600 (1983), trucks and buses 2,000 (1983). Merchant Marine; vessels 6 (1990), deadweight tonnage 3,480 (1990). Air Transport; N/A.

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**COMMUNICATIONS:** Daily Newspapers; nil. Weekly Newspapers; 2 (1992). Radio; receivers 61,000 (1994). Television; N/A. Telephones; units 4,510 (1994).

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**MILITARY:** Around 520 (1995) total active duty personnel with 100% army while military expenditure accounts for N/A of the Gross National Product (GNP).