

## **Robinson Crusoe's Island**

Robinson Crusoe spent 28 years shipwreck on deserted island. He was the only survivor of a ship caught in a terrible storm. He survived and managed to defeat the feeling of loneliness thanks to his intelligence and strong will.

According to Robinson's descriptions, the island is small and has 2 parallel chains of hills, one stretching across the northern part of the island and the other in the southern part. The northern chain has on its eastern part probably the largest hill on the island. The entire island is visible from this hill.

The island has several small rivers, almost creeks, flowing across its surface.

One of these creeks is only one mile distance from where Robinson lived. He had used the river mouth of the creek to unload the items he found on the wreck. This creek with a marshy river mouth, flooded by high tides, dries out during the dry season. The creek's valley starts in the western part of the island, goes shortly to the east before turning south and continuing to its river mouth in the south-west.

On the eastern coast, the island has large stones emerging from the sea for a distance of 10 km into the east and, after these stones submerged piles of sand continue for another 2,5 km. To the north-east the island has submerged stones for 2,5 km.

Fifteen kilometers to the western coast of the main island are two smaller islands.

Far to the south-west of the western coast of the island, after Robinson's estimations 100 km, a chain of mountains is visible, stretching from west to south-west. These are most probably part of the South-American continent.

The main feature of the waters surrounding the island is the presence of two powerful currents. One is located in the south, flowing from west to east, while the counter-current flows in the opposite direction, off the northern coast. The northern current is split in two by the north-eastern submerged stones. One part flows south and the other to the north-west.

The climate of the island is tropical. Robinson believes it is placed at 9° latitude north. It is warm year-round, but two seasons can be recognized: the rainy season and the dry season.

The rainy season lasts from middle of February to middle of April and from middle of August to middle of October.

The dry season lasts from middle of April to middle of August and from middle of October to middle of February.

Along the creek mentioned earlier, there could be distinguished two major areas of vegetation.

On the lower part of this course are savannas and grasslands. The main species of plants found here are green tobacco, aloes, wild sugar cane and many other species, these last ones being unknown to Robinson.

The upper part of the creek's course is dominated by large, beautiful forests and woodlands. One of the tree species growing on the island is the cedar. Other plants found here include vines-yards, hanging on the tress, and many water-melons on the forest-floor.

In this second area of vegetation, at the creek's spring is a clearing in the forest. This clearing is full of prospering vegetation. Here grow wild cocoa trees, orange trees and lemon trees.

Such an organization of the vegetation is found in other parts of the island. The western coast also has savannas full of herbs and flowers surround by prospering forests.

One curious tree species, unknown to Robinson, has a special property: poles and stakes made from this tree, if fixed into the ground, grow back branches and even roots.

The island is home to many species of many species of animals, a diverse fauna.

Turtles come to this island, probably to lay their eggs, because Robinson had found eggs inside the ones he caught. Turtles are very common on the west coast of the island. Other marine animals that come to the island's shore are seals and penguins.

Birds are extremely numerous. There are many species, most unknown to Robinson. This species include ducks and parrots. Parrots are found mostly on the western part of the island.

The most numerous mammals are rabbits and goats.

Predatory animals include foxes and wild cats.

Robinson lived on one of the hills on the western end of the southern chain. Here he found a plateau located on the north-north-west side of the hill. It had about 100 meters broad and 200 long. The hill from its top to the plateau was very steep. Robinson enclosed on the plateau a semicircle with a diameter of 20 yards. He made a tent to protect him from rain and dug a cave into the soft and crumbly stone the hill was made of. He also made himself a cottage in the opening at the creek's spring, where the lush vegetation was.

Robinson made currants out of grapes and made a flock of domesticated goats. He never left his home on the plateau in the raining season, because, if he did, he would have suffered of fever.

Robinson caught one of the parrots living on the western part of the island and made it his pet. He named it Poll and taught it to talk.

He found a large cave on the island and kept part of his provisions there.

This is the island Robinson Crusoe lived on, as he described it, and the way it has influenced his life on it. The island being prosperous, Robinson managed to make his sitting relatively pleasant. The years spend on the island profoundly changed Robinson's perception of the world. From a mean, stubborn man he became an open-minded and wise person.

## **The Truth behind the Story**

It is a popular belief that Daniel Defoe inspired himself for the novel "Robinson Crusoe" from the adventures of Alexander Selkirk, also known as Selcraig.

The son of a shoemaker, the Scottish Selkirk ran away to sea in 1659, just like Robinson. In September 1704, after a quarrel with he was put ashore on his own request on the uninhabited Mas a Tierra island in the Juan Fernandez cluster, 640 km west of Valparaiso, Chile. He remained there alone until February 1709, when he was discovered and taken aboard an English ship commanded by Woodes Rogers.

This cluster of islands was discovered in 1563 by Juan Fernandez, a Spanish navigator, and is formed of three islands: Isla Mas a Tierra (Isla Robinson Crusoe), Isla Mas Afuera (Isla Alejandro Selkirk) and Isla Santa Clara.

Thus the true island of Robinson Crusoe could be considered Isla Robinson Crusoe.

The islands are of volcanic origins, dating from about 3 million years ago. They rise steeply out of the Pacific. There are few beaches and bays, these probably formed out of volcanic craters.

The altitudes can reach 1500 meters and there are paths for walks and a beach with temperate waters. The island landscape is similar to that in the novel.

Here live many species of plants and animals, some of which are endemic.

Out of all the plant species 70% are endemic. On the island grow giant ferns known as palmillos, chonta palms and a wide variety of vines. The aromatic sandalwood tree, now extinct on the island, was last observed in 1908.

The fauna includes three endemic birds of which the Juan Fernandez fire crown and a native hummingbird are the most popular. Also the island is home to the Juan Fernandez fur seal, hunted to near extinction during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Plants and animals introduced from the mainland, which have long threatened the integrity of the native ecosystem, are being delimited from the island in ambitious project funded in part by the Dutch government.

The island has even become a World Biosphere Reserve, because of its incredible and partially endemic wildlife.