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# Anguilla

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**Anguilla** (English pronunciation *ang-GWILL-ah*, IPA: /æŋˈɡwɪlə/) is a British overseas territory in the Caribbean, one of the most northerly of the Leeward Islands in the Lesser Antilles. It consists of the main island of Anguilla itself, approximately 26 km (16 miles) long by 5 km (3 miles) wide at its widest point, together with a number of much smaller islands and cays with no permanent population. The island's capital is The Valley. The total land area of the territory is 102 km<sup>2</sup> (39.4 square miles), with a population of approximately 13,500 (2006 estimate).

## History

Anguilla was first settled by Amerindian tribes who migrated from South America. The earliest Amerindian artefacts found on Anguilla have been dated to around 1300 BC, and remains of settlements date from 600 AD. The date of European discovery is uncertain: some sources claim that Columbus sighted the island in 1493, while others state that the island was first discovered by the French in 1564 or 1565. The name Anguilla derives from the word for "eel" in any of various Romance languages (modern Spanish: *anguila*; French: *anguille*; Italian: *anguilla*), probably chosen because of the island's eel-like shape.

Anguilla was first colonised by English settlers from Saint Kitts, beginning in 1650. Other early arrivals included Europeans from Antigua and Barbados. It is likely that some of these early Europeans brought enslaved Africans with them. Historians confirm that African slaves lived in the region in the early seventeenth century. For example, Africans from Senegal lived in St. Christopher (today St. Kitts) in 1626. By 1672 a slave depot existed on the island of Nevis, serving the Leeward Islands. While the time of African arrival in Anguilla is difficult to place precisely, archive evidence indicates a substantial African presence (at least 100) on the island by 1683.

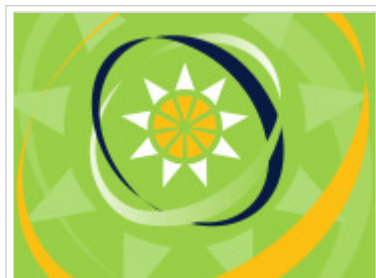
The island was administered by England, and later the United Kingdom, until the early nineteenth century when – against the wishes of the inhabitants – it was incorporated into a single British dependency along with Saint Kitts and Nevis. After two rebellions in 1967 and 1969 and brief period as a self-declared independent republic headed by Ronald Webster, British rule was fully restored in 1969.

Anguilla	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> "Strength and Endurance"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>God Save the Queen</i> National song: <i>God Bless Anguilla</i> <sup>1</sup>	
	
<b>Capital</b>	The Valley
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Demonym</b>	Anguillian
<b>Government</b>	British Overseas Territory
- Monarch	HM Queen Elizabeth II



Anguilla became a separate British dependency (now termed a British overseas territory) in 1980.

## Politics



Anguilla is an associated member of the OECS.

Anguilla is an internally self-governing overseas territory of the United Kingdom. Its politics takes place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democratic dependency, whereby the Chief Minister is the head of government, and of a pluriform multi-party system.

The United Nations Committee on Decolonisation includes Anguilla on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The territory's constitution is Anguilla Constitutional Order 1 April 1982 (amended 1990). Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the House of Assembly. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. Military defence is the responsibility of the United

Kingdom.

## Geography

- Governor	Andrew George
- Chief Minister	Osbourne Fleming
<b>Establishment</b>	
- UK overseas territory	1980
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	102 km <sup>2</sup> ( 220th) 39.4 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- 2006 estimate	13,477 ( 212th)
- Density	132/km <sup>2</sup> ( n/a) 342/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2004 estimate
- Total	\$108.9 million
- Per capita	\$8,800
<b>Currency</b>	East Caribbean dollar ( XCD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ai
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 264
<p><sup>1</sup> "National Song of Anguilla". <i>Official Website of the Government of Anguilla</i>. Retrieved on 12 October, 2005.</p>	



Anguilla is a flat, low-lying island of coral and limestone in the Caribbean Sea, east of Puerto Rico. The soil is generally thin and poor, supporting only scrub vegetation.

Anguilla is noted for its spectacular and ecologically important coral reefs. Apart from the main island of Anguilla itself, the territory includes a number of other smaller islands and cays, mostly tiny and uninhabited. Some of these are:

- Anguillita
- Dog Island
- Prickly Pear Cays
- Scrub Island
- Seal Island
- Sombrero, also known as Hat Island
- Sandy Island

## Climate

Anguilla has a tropical though rather dry climate, moderated by northeast trade winds. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. Average daily maxima range from about 27 °C (80 °F) in December to 30 °C (86 °F) in July. Rainfall is erratic, averaging about 90 cm (35 in) per year, the wettest months being September and October, and the driest February and March. Anguilla is vulnerable to hurricanes from June to November, peak season August to mid-October.

## Economy



Map of Anguilla



Anguilla's thin arid soil is largely unsuitable for agriculture, and the island has few land-based natural resources. Its main industries are tourism, offshore incorporation and management, offshore banking, and fishing. Many insurance and financial business are headquartered in Anguilla.

The economy of Anguilla is expanding rapidly, especially the tourism sector which is driving major new developments in partnerships with multi-national companies. This boom, beginning gently during 2005-2006, is accelerating through 2007 and is expected to continue for years. In an effort to prevent overheating, there is currently a moratorium on "non-belongers" (foreigners) buying land in Anguilla. Anguilla's currency is the East Caribbean dollar, though the US dollar is also widely accepted. The exchange rate is fixed to the US dollar at US\$1 = EC\$2.70.

## Demographics

The majority of residents (90.08%) are black, the descendants of slaves transported from Africa. Growing minorities include whites at 3.74% and people of mixed race at 4.65% (figures from 2001 census).

72% of the population is Anguillian while 28% is non-Anguillian (2001 census). Of the non-Anguillian population, many are citizens of the United States, United Kingdom, St Kitts & Nevis, the Dominican Republic, or Jamaica and a very few Nigerians ranging from 7-15.

2006 and 2007 saw an influx of large numbers of Chinese, Indian, and Mexican workers, brought in as labor for major tourist developments due to the local population not being large enough to support the labor requirements.

## Culture

The Anguilla National Trust (ANT) was established in 1993 to preserve the heritage of the island, including its cultural heritage. The Trust has programmes encouraging Anguillian writers and the preservation of the island's history.

The island's cultural history begins with the Arawak Indians. Artifacts have been found around the island, telling of life before European settlers arrived.

As throughout the Caribbean, holidays are a cultural fixture. Anguilla's most important holidays are of historic as much as cultural importance – particularly the anniversary of the emancipation (previously August Monday in the Park), celebrated as the Summer Festival. British holidays, such as the Queen's birthday, are also celebrated.

## Religion

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Overlooking Sandy Ground, Anguilla



According to the 2001 census Christianity is Anguilla's predominant religion, with 29 percent of the population practising Anglicanism. Another 23.9 percent are Methodist. Other churches on the island include Seventh-day Adventist, Baptist, Roman Catholic, and Jehovah's Witnesses (0.7%). Between 1992 and 2001 the number of followers of the Church of God and Pentecostal Churches increased considerably. There are at least fifteen churches on the island, several of architectural interest. Although a minority on the island, it is an important location to followers of Rastafarian religion – Anguilla is the birthplace of Robert Athlyi Rogers, author of *The Holy Piby* which has had a strong influence on Rastafarian beliefs. Various other religions are practised as well.

**Religions in Anguilla**  
in percent

Religion	1992	2001
Anglican	40.4	29.0
Methodist	33.2	23.9
Seventh-day Adventist	7.0	7.6
Baptist	4.7	7.3
Roman Catholic	3.2	5.7
Church of God	-	7.6
Pentecostal	-	7.7
Jehovah Witnesses	-	0.7
Rastafarian	-	0.7
Evangelical	-	0.5
Brethren	-	0.3
Muslim	-	0.3
Presbyterian	-	0.2
Hindu	-	0.4
Jewish	-	0.1
None	-	4.0
Other	10.7	3.5
Not stated	0.7	0.3



## Language

Today most people in Anguilla speak a British-influenced variety of "Standard" English. Other languages are also spoken on the island, including varieties of Spanish, Chinese and the languages of other immigrants. However, the most common language other than Standard English is the island's own English-lexifier Creole language (not to be confused with French Creole spoken in islands such as Haiti, Martinique, and Guadelupe). It is referred to locally by terms such as "dialect" (pronounced "dialec"), or "Anguillian". It has its main roots in early varieties of English and West African languages, and is similar to the dialects spoken in English-speaking islands throughout the Eastern Caribbean.

## Music

## Sport

Boat racing has deep roots in Anguillian culture, and is the national sport. There are regular sailing regattas on national holidays which are contested by locally built and designed boats.

Rugby union is represented in Anguilla by the Anguilla Eels RFC, who were formed in April 2006, through the hard work and dedication of Martin Welsh, Jacquie Ruan, and Mark Harris (Toronto Scottish RFC). They played their first match against formidable Rugby Club Les Archibalds from nearby Marigot in French St. Martin, and won 8-7. The Eels then were finalists in the St. Martin tournament in Nov 2006 and semi finalists in 2007. 2008 has seen the Anguilla Eels play the very strong St Barths Barracudas.

As in many other former British Colonies, cricket is also a popular sport. Anguilla is the home of Omari Banks, who played for the West Indies Cricket Team, while Cardigan Connor played first-class cricket for English county side Hampshire and was 'chef de mission' (team manager) for Anguilla's Commonwealth Games team in 2002.

Retrieved from " <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anguilla>"

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# Antigua and Barbuda

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries**

**Antigua and Barbuda** (Spanish for *Ancient* and *Bearded*) is an island nation located in the eastern Caribbean Sea, on the sea's boundary with the Atlantic Ocean. There are two major islands - Antigua (IPA: /ænˈtiːɡə/) and Barbuda (/bɑrˈbjuːdə/), which are close neighbors within the middle of the Leeward Islands, roughly 17 degrees north of the equator.

The islands of Antigua and Barbuda are part of the Lesser Antilles archipelago. To the south of Antigua and Barbuda lie the islands of Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago. Montserrat lies to the southwest; Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Eustatius are to the west, and Saint Barthélemy, Saint Martin and Anguilla are to the northwest.




## History

Pre-ceramic Amerindians were the first to inhabit the islands of Antigua and Barbuda in 2400 BC. Later Arawak and Carib Amerindian tribes populated the islands. The island of Antigua was named Wadadli by these natives and is today called *Land of Wadadli* by locals. Christopher Columbus landed on his second trip in 1493 and named the island Santa Maria de la Antigua after a church in Seville, Spain. Early settlement by the Spanish was replaced by English rule from 1632 (British rule from 1707 Acts of Union), with a French interlude in 1666. Slavery, established to run the sugar plantations on Antigua, was abolished in 1834.

The islands became an independent state within the Commonwealth of Nations on November 1 1981, with Elizabeth II as the first Queen of Antigua and Barbuda and the Right Honourable Vere Cornwall Bird became the first prime minister.

## Politics

The politics of Antigua and Barbuda takes place in a framework of a federal parliamentary representative democratic monarchy, whereby the Head of State is the monarch, who appoints the Governor-General as

Antigua and Barbuda	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> Each Endeavouring, All Achieving	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Fair Antigua and Barbuda</i> <b>Royal anthem:</b> <i>God Save the Queen</i> <sup>1</sup>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Saint John's
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Demonym</b>	Antiguan, Barbudan
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and federal constitutional monarchy

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vice-regal representative. In 2007 Louise Lake-Tack became the first female to hold the position of Governor-General in the history of Antigua and Barbuda. A Council of Ministers is appointed by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister, currently Baldwin Spencer. The Prime Minister is the head of the government. Vere Cornwall Bird, Antigua and Barbuda's first Prime Minister, is credited with having brought Antigua and Barbuda and the Caribbean into a new era of independence.

Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of the Parliament. The bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (seventeen-member body appointed by the governor general) and the House of Representatives (seventeen seats; members are elected by first past the post to serve five-year terms). The last elections held were on 23 March 2004, while the next are due in 2009. At the last elections, the Antigua Labour Party won four seats, while the United Progressive Party won thirteen.

Since 1949, the party system had been dominated by the personalist Antigua Labour Party. However, the Antigua and Barbuda legislative election, 2004, saw the defeat of the longest-serving elected government in the Caribbean. The Prime Minister, Lester Bryant Bird and deputy Robin Yearwood had been in office since 1994, when he succeeded his father, Vere Bird. The elder Bird had been Prime Minister from independence in 1981 and, before independence, had been Chief Minister of Antigua from 1960, except for the period 1971-76 when the Progressive Labour Movement (PLM) defeated them in those elections.

The Judicial Branch is the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (based in Saint Lucia; one judge of the Supreme Court is a resident of the islands and presides over the Court of Summary Jurisdiction). Antigua is also a member of the Caribbean Court of Justice. The Supreme Court of Appeal was the British Judicial Committee of the Privy Council up until 2001, when the nations of the Caribbean Community voted to abolish the right of appeal to the Privy Council in favour of a Caribbean Court of Justice. Some debate between member countries had repeatedly delayed the court's date of inauguration. As of March, 2005, only Barbados was set to replace appeals to the Privy Council with appeals the Caribbean Court of Justice, which then had come into operation.

## Military

The Royal Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force is the country's armed force. It has 185 members.

## Parishes and dependencies

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- Head of State	Elizabeth II
- Governor-General	Louise Lake-Tack
- Prime Minister	Baldwin Spencer
<b>Independence</b>	from the United Kingdom
- Date	November 1, 1981
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	442 km <sup>2</sup> ( 198th) 171 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- 2005 estimate	82,786 ( 197th)
- Density	184/km <sup>2</sup> ( 57) 394/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	US\$875.8 million ( 170th)
- Per capita	US\$12,586 ( 59th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.815 (high) ( 57th)
<b>Currency</b>	East Caribbean dollar ( <span>xcd</span> )
<b>Time zone</b>	AST ( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ag
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 268
<sup>1</sup>	<i>God Save The Queen</i> is officially a national anthem but is generally used only on regal and vice-regal occasions.



The island of Antigua is divided into six parishes:

	Name	Population
1.	St. George	4,473
2.	St. John	14,121
3.	St. Mary	5,303
4.	St. Paul	6,117
5.	St. Peter	3,622
6.	St. Philip	2,964



The island of Barbuda (1,241) and the uninhabited island of Redonda each enjoy dependency status.

The capital is the city of St. John's (population 21,514).

## Geography

The country consists of a number of islands, of which Antigua is the largest and most populous. Barbuda, just north of Antigua, is the other main island. The islands have a warm, tropical climate, with nearly constant temperatures throughout the year. Redonda, another nearby island, which was annexed in the 1860s when its phosphate resources were discovered, is also the territory of Antigua and Barbuda although it has been unoccupied since 1930.

The islands are mostly low-lying with the highest point being Boggy Peak, at 402 metres (1,319 ft). The small country's main town is the capital, Saint John's, on Antigua; Barbuda's largest town is Codrington. Antigua & Barbuda combined have 365 beaches.

The Antiguan Racer is the rarest snake in the world with approximately only two hundred remaining in the wild. It is found on Bird Island, an island off the coast of Antigua.

## Economy

Tourism dominates the economy, accounting for more than half of the GDP. Weak tourist arrival numbers since early 2000 have slowed the economy, however, and pressed the government into a tight fiscal corner. The





dual-island nation's agricultural production is focused on the domestic market and constrained by a limited water supply and a labour shortage stemming from the lure of higher wages in tourism and construction work.

Manufacturing comprises enclave-type assembly for export with major products being bedding, handicrafts, and electronic components. Prospects for economic growth in the medium term will continue to depend on income growth in the industrialised world, especially in the United States, which accounts for about one-third of all tourist arrivals.

## Demographics

The ethnic distribution consist of 91% Black, 4.4% Mixed Race, 1.7% White, 2.9% Other. The majority of the white population is ethnically Irish and British, while there are also Christian Levantine Arabs (primarily of Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian descent) and a small population of Asians and Sephardic Jews.

An increasingly large percent of the population live abroad, most notably in the United Kingdom ( Antiguan Britons), United States and Canada. A minority of the Antiguan residents are immigrants from other countries, particularly Dominica, Guyana and Jamaica with an increasing number of immigrants from the Dominican Republic, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Nigeria. There is also a significant population of American citizens estimated at 4500 people which would make it one of the largest American citizen populations in the English speaking Eastern Caribbean.

Almost all Antiguans are Christians (74%), with the Anglican Church (about 44%) being the largest denomination. Catholicism is the other significant denomination, with the remainder being other Protestants: including Methodists, Moravians, Pentecostals and Seventh-Day Adventists. There are also Jehovah's Witnesses. Non-Christian religions practiced on the islands include Rastafari, Islam, Judaism, and Baha'i.



St. John's Cathedral

## Language

The official language of Antigua and Barbuda is English, but many of the locals speak Antigua Creole. The Barbudan accent is slightly different from the Antiguan one. Spanish is also widely spoken in certain communities in Antigua where immigrants from the Dominican Republic make up large numbers.

In the years before Antigua and Barbuda's independence, Standard English was widely spoken in preference to Antigua Creole, but afterwards Antiguans began treating Antigua Creole as a respectable aspect of their culture. Generally, the upper and middle classes shun Antigua Creole. The educational system dissuades use of Antigua Creole and instruction is done in Standard (British) English. The higher up one goes on the socio economic ladder, the less prevalent Antigua Creole becomes, to the extent that some Antiguans will even deny that they speak or understand Antigua Creole

Many of the words used in the Antiguan dialect are derived from British and also African origins. The dialect was formed when enslaved Africans owned by British planters imitated the 18th century English spoken by their masters; utilizing traditional African language structures they created an African-English hybrid or pidgin. This can be easily seen in some phrases like: "Me nah go" meaning "I am not going". Another example is: "Ent it?" meaning "Ain't it?" which is

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in itself dialect and means "Isn't it?". Common island proverbs often can be traced to Africa.

## Culture

The culture of Antigua and Barbuda is predominantly British which is evident throughout many aspects of the society. American popular culture also has a heavy influence. Family and religion play an important role in the lives of Antiguan. There is a national Carnival celebration held during August each year. Historically, Carnival commemorates the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies. The annual Carnival includes pageants, shows, contests and festive activities and is a notable tourist attraction.

Calypso and soca music are important in Antigua and Barbuda and Burning Flames is a popular band.

## Sport

Like in many commonwealth countries, cricket is the most popular sport. The 2007 Cricket World Cup was hosted in the West Indies from 11 March to 28 April 2007. Antigua hosted eight matches at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, which was completed on 11 February 2007 and can hold up to 20 000 people at full capacity. Antigua is also a Host of Stanford Twenty20 - Twenty20 Cricket, a version started by Allen Stanford in 2006 as a regional cricket game with almost all Caribbean islands taking part. Viv Richards is from Antigua and scored the fastest Test Century also Brian Lara twice scored the World Test Record at Antigua Recreation Ground.



Cricket ground in St. John,  
Antigua.

Association football is also a very popular sport. Antigua has a national football team albeit inexperienced.

Athletics is also popular. Talented athletes are trained from a young age and Antigua and Barbuda have produced a few fairly adept athletes. Janill Williams, a young athlete with much promise comes from Gray's Farm, Antigua. Also, Sonia Williams and Heather Samuel have represented Antigua and Barbuda at the Olympic Games. Others prominent rising stars include Brendan Christian (100 m, 200 m), Daniel Bailey (100 m, 200 m) and James Grayman (High Jump).

## Education

The people of Antigua & Barbuda have a high level of literacy at well over 90%. In 1998, Antigua and Barbuda adopted a national mandate to become the preeminent provider of medical services in the Caribbean. As part of this mission, Antigua and Barbuda is building the most technologically advanced hospital in the Caribbean, the Mt. St. John Medical Centre. The island of Antigua currently has two medical schools, the American University of Antigua (AUA), founded in 2004 and The University of Health Sciences Antigua (UHSA), founded in 1982.



There is also a government owned state college in Antigua as well as the Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Information Technology (ABIIT). The University of the West Indies has a branch in Antigua for locals to continue University studies.

With the onset of the Internet more Antiguan are completing online degrees.

## Foreign relations

Antigua and Barbuda is a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, Caribbean Community, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Organization of American States, World Trade Organization and the Eastern Caribbean's Regional Security System.

Antigua and Barbuda is also a member of the International Criminal Court (with a Bilateral Immunity Agreement of protection for the US-military as covered under Article 98).

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# Argentina

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**Argentina** (officially *República Argentina* Spanish pronunciation: [reˈpuβlika aɾxenˈtina]), is a South American country, constituted as a federation of twenty-three provinces and an autonomous city. It is second in size on the South American continent to Brazil and eighth in the world. Argentina occupies a continental surface area of 2,766,890 km<sup>2</sup> (1,068,302 sq mi) between the Andes mountain range in the west and the southern Atlantic Ocean in the east and south. It is bordered by Paraguay and Bolivia in the north, Brazil and Uruguay in the northeast, and Chile in the west and south. The country claims the British-administered overseas territories of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Argentina also claims 969,464 km<sup>2</sup> (374,312 sq mi) of Antarctica, known as Argentine Antarctica, overlapping other claims made by Chile and the United Kingdom ( British Antarctic Territory).

Argentina has the highest Human Development Index level and the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in purchasing power parity in Latin America and its total national GDP is the 23rd largest in the world. The country is currently classified as an Upper-Middle Income Country or as a secondary emerging market by the World Bank. Argentina's nominal GDP makes it the 31st largest economy in the world.

## Etymology

The name Argentina (from Latin *argentum*: silver) was first used extensively in the 1612 book *Historia del descubrimiento, población, y conquista del Río de la Plata* (History of the discovery, population, and conquest of the Río de la Plata) by Ruy Díaz de Guzmán, naming the territory *Tierra Argentina* (Land of Silver).

## History

<b><i>República Argentina</i> (Spanish)</b> <b>Argentine Republic</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>En unión y libertad</i> "In Union and Liberty"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Himno Nacional Argentino</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Buenos Aires
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	Spanish, Italian, German,



Río de la Plata aboriginals, as pictured by Hendrick Ottsen (1603).

	Jewish, Arabs, Armenian, Irish, British, French, Native American, African
<b>Demonym</b>	Argentine
<b>Government</b>	Federal presidential republic
- President	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner
- Vice President	Julio Cobos
<b>Independence</b>	from Spain
- May Revolution	25 May 1810
- Declared	9 July 1816
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	2,780,403 km <sup>2</sup> ( 8th) 1,078,757 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.1
<b>Population</b>	
- 2008 estimate	40,677,348 ( 30th)
- 2001 census	36,260,130
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$523.7 billion (2007) ( 23rd)
- Per capita	\$13,307 (2007) ( 57th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$260.7 billion ( 31st)
- Per capita	\$6,548 ( 66th)
<b>Gini (2006)</b>	49
<b>HDI (2005)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.869 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 38th)
<b>Currency</b>	Peso ( <span style="font-variant: small-caps;">ARS</span> )
<b>Time zone</b>	ART ( UTC-3)
- Summer ( DST)	ART ( UTC-2)





The first signs of human presence in Argentina are located in the Patagonia ( Piedra Museo, Santa Cruz), and date from 11,000 BC( Santa María, Huarpes, Diaguitas, Sanavirones, among others). In 1480, the Inca Empire under the rule of king Pachacutec launched an offensive and conquered present-day northwestern Argentina, integrating it into a region called Collasuyu. In the northeastern area, the Guaraní developed a culture based on yuca and sweet potato. The central and southern areas ( Pampas and Patagonia) were dominated by nomadic cultures, unified in the seventeenth century by the Mapuches.



Gen. Jose de San Martin,  
Liberator of Argentina, Chile  
and Peru.

European explorers arrived in 1516. Spain established a permanent colony on the site of Buenos Aires in 1580; the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata was created in 1776. During the early part of this period it was largely a country of Spanish immigrants and their descendants, known as *criollos*, some of them gathered in Buenos Aires and other cities, others living on the *pampas* as *gauchos*. Descendants of African slaves (See: Afro-Argentines) were present in significant numbers. Indigenous peoples inhabited much of the rest of Argentina. In 1806 and 1807 the British Empire launched two invasions to Buenos Aires, but the criollo population repelled both attempts. On May 25, 1810, after confirmation of the rumors about the overthrow of King Ferdinand VII by Napoleon, citizens of Buenos Aires created the First Government Junta ( May Revolution). Two nations emerged in what is now Argentina United Provinces of South America (1810) and Liga Federal (1815) Other provinces through the reluctance of some factions and the centralist tendencies of the more radical activists delayed a combined State. In the meantime, Paraguay declared its independence in 1811.

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Argentina also has a territorial dispute with the United Kingdom over an additional 1,000,000 km <sup>2</sup> (386,102 sq mi) of Antarctica, the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.	



Buenos Aires *Cabildo*, scene of the  
1810 resolution that led to  
independence.



Military campaigns led by General José de San Martín between 1814 and 1817 made independence increasingly a reality. In 1820 Liga Federal was crushed by forces of the United Provinces of South America and Portugal armies from Brazil and its provinces absorbed into United Provinces of South America. Argentines revere San Martín, who campaigned in **Argentina**, Chile, and Peru, as the hero of their national independence. On July 9, 1816, a Congress gathered in Tucumán (the Congress of Tucumán) and finally issued a formal declaration of independence from Spain. Bolivia declared itself independent in 1825, and Uruguay was created in 1828 as a result of the Argentina-Brazil War. In 1818, General José de San Martín crossed the Andes to free Chile and Peru, thus eliminating the Spanish threat. Centralist and federalist groups (Spanish: *Unitarios* and *Federales*) were in conflict until national unity was established and the constitution promulgated in 1853. The constitution was strongly defended in moving oratory by the patriot and Franciscan Mamerto Esquiú, for whom one of the country's departments is named. From 1865 to 1870, the bloody War of Triple Alliance was fought by Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay against Paraguay.



Gov. Juan Manuel de Rosas during his 1829-52 reign of terror, in which he held the fragile confederacy together.



Buenos Aires Customs House, ca. 1880. Maritime trade had long been central to the city; after 1875 it became a cornerstone of national development.



Dalmacio Velez Sarsfield, whose 1869 *Civil Code* lay the foundation for Argentina's statutory laws.

Foreign investment and immigration from Europe led to the adoption of modern agricultural techniques. In the 1870s, the "Conquest of the Desert" subdued the remaining indigenous tribes throughout the southern Pampas and Patagonia, leaving 1,300 indigenous dead.

From 1880 to 1929, Argentina enjoyed increasing prosperity and prominence while emerging as one of the 10 richest countries in the world, benefiting from an agricultural export-led economy. The population of the country swelled sevenfold. Conservative forces dominated Argentine politics through non-democratic means until 1916, when their traditional rivals, the Radicals, won control of the first free-elected government. The military forced Hipólito Yrigoyen from power in 1930, leading to another decade of Conservative rule. The country was neutral during World War II. Political change led to the presidency of Juan Perón in 1946, who worked to empower the working class and greatly expanded the number of unionized workers. Perón's wife, Maria Eva Duarte de Perón (better known as Evita) played an important role as First Lady during both Peronist administrations. She was the driving force of power behind Perón's success among the working class people and quickly became an enigma that is still researched today. Being born into poverty herself, Evita never forgot the hardships her family endured during her childhood. She quickly created the Eva Perón

Foundation which provided several services and needs to the working poor of Argentina such as basic items like pots and pans, sewing machines, and even fully furnished houses. The foundation built hundreds of schools, hospitals, orphanages and even Evita City which still stands today as an active neighbourhood.



President Juan Perón (1946).

This was the first time the country had seen such a shift in attention to aiding the poor and it did not sit well with the oligarchy. Evita was seen as the "bridge of love" between Perón and the people and she was. She fought for and won the fight for women's suffrage and organized the Perónist Feminist Party. Throughout Perón's first and second term as president, the economy turned to more protectionist policies and the developing of industry. Things began to change; however, and not for the better. After Evita's untimely death at the age of 33 in 1952 from uterine cancer, Perón gradually started to lose his footing among the people and eventually his administration began to fall apart. The Revolución Libertadora of 1955 deposed him in a coup, and he fled into exile to live in Spain. Little did anyone know at the time he would return to Argentina after several years of exile to become president again.



Pres. Hipolito Yrigoyen, 1928. Patient activist for universal (male) suffrage and the country's first president so elected.



From the 1950s to the 1970s, moderate military and weak civilian administrations traded power. During those years the economy grew strongly and poverty declined (to less than 7% in 1975). At the same time political violence continued to escalate, fighting against the military government, demanding the return of Perón from his Spanish exile. In 1973, Perón returned to the presidency, but he died within a year of assuming power. His third wife Isabel, the Vice President, succeeded him in office, but the military coup of March 24, 1976 removed her from office.



Economist Martínez de Hoz and Pres. Videla, both of whose policies left a traumatic legacy in Argentina.

The armed forces took power through a junta in charge of the self-appointed National Reorganization Process until 1983. The military government repressed opposition and leftist groups using harsh illegal measures (the "Dirty War"); thousands of dissidents "disappeared", while the SIDE cooperated with DINA and other South American intelligence agencies, and with the CIA in Operation Condor. Many of the military leaders that took part in the Dirty War were trained in the U.S.-financed School of the Americas, among them Argentine dictators Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola. The military dictatorship (1976-1983) built several public facilities but largely increased the extent of the country's foreign debt. From that point the economy of the country began to be controlled more and more by the conditions imposed on it by both its creditors and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) with priority given to servicing the repayment of the foreign debt. These and other economic problems, charges of corruption, public revulsion in the face of human rights abuses and, finally, the country's 1982 defeat by the British in the Falklands War discredited the Argentine military regime.



Raul Alfonsín (*left*) greets supporters during the 1983 campaign with his trademark salute.

Democracy was restored in 1983. Raúl Alfonsín's government took steps to account for the "disappeared", established civilian control of the armed forces, and consolidated democratic institutions. The members of the three military juntas were prosecuted and sentenced to life terms. Failure to resolve endemic economic problems and an inability to maintain public confidence led to Alfonsín's early departure six months before his term was to be completed.

The 1990s began with hyperinflation. President Carlos Menem imposed a peso-dollar fixed exchange rate in 1991 to stop hyperinflation and adopted far-reaching market-based policies, dismantling protectionist barriers and business regulations, and implementing a privatization program. These reforms contributed to significant increases in investment and growth with stable prices through most of the 1990s. However, the peso was tied to the dollar at an artificially high rate that could only be maintained by flooding the market with dollars. As a result the foreign debt increased enormously and state companies and services were privatized. The total opening up of the market to foreign goods, which up until



Pres. Arturo Frondizi (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) hosts Pres. Kennedy, 1961. Frondizi's policies encouraged foreign and local investment in energy and industry, making Argentina nearly self-sufficient in both.



Pres. Leopoldo Galtieri's tragic 1982 invasion of the Falkland Islands cost Argentina lives and prestige.



then were produced locally, resulted in the collapse of local industry. So while part of the population was saving in dollars, traveling overseas, and purchasing imported and luxury goods cheaply, the rest of the population was experiencing an increase in both poverty and unemployment. The IMF and the world economists praised the liberalization of the Argentine market, and the country was presented as a “model student”. Toward the end of the 1990s, large fiscal deficits and overvaluation of the pegged peso caused a gradual slide into economic crisis. In 1998 a period of profound economic recession began. This was a direct result of the economic measures which dominated the decade of the 90s and which produced a false sense of stability and well being. By the end of his term in 1999, these accumulating problems and perceived corruption had made Menem unpopular.

The Menem and de la Rúa administrations faced diminished competitiveness in exports, massive imports which damaged national industry and reduced employment, chronic fiscal and trade deficits, and the contagion of several economic crises. Unemployment reached as high as 25% of the economically active population, and another 15% had only part-time work. The Asian financial crisis in 1998 precipitated an outflow of capital that mushroomed into a recession, and culminated in economic crisis in November 2001. The governing coalition was forced to undertake a series of measures including the freezing of bank accounts. This was done to halt the flow of capital out of the country and to stem the growing debt crisis. However, a climate of popular discontent was unleashed as a result. On 20 December 2001 Argentina was thrown into its worst institutional and economic crisis for several decades. There were violent street protests, which brought about clashes with the police and resulted in several fatalities. The increasingly chaotic climate, amidst bloody riots, finally resulted in the resignation of President de la Rúa. The economic crisis accentuated the people's lack of trust in their politicians. During this time street protests were accompanied by the cry “they all should go.” The “they” referred to the politicians, especially those involved in many reported acts of corruption. They were also accused of dealing fraudulently with public goods and money, without any judicial sanctions in place to curb the corruption.



Current president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, in office since December 2007

In two weeks, several presidents followed in quick succession, culminating in Eduardo Duhalde's being appointed interim President of Argentina by the Legislative Assembly on 2 January 2002. Argentina defaulted on its international debt obligations. The peso's near eleven year-old linkage to the United States dollar was abandoned, resulting in major depreciation of the peso and a spike in inflation. Duhalde, a peronist with a centre-left economic position, had to cope with several problems inherited from De La Rúa's shaky government.

With a more competitive and flexible exchange rate, the country implemented new policies based on re-industrialization, import substitution, increased exports, and consistent fiscal and trade surpluses. By the end of 2002 the economy began to stabilize, mainly thanks to the soybean and other cereals' boom and floating of exchange rates. In 2003, Néstor Kirchner was elected president. During Kirchner's presidency, Argentina restructured its defaulted debt with a steep discount (about 66 percent) on most bonds, paid off debts with the International Monetary Fund, renegotiated contracts with utilities, and nationalized some previously privatized enterprises. Currently, Argentina is enjoying a period of economic growth. In 2007 Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, was elected president, becoming the first woman to be elected president of Argentina. Also in 2007, Centre-left Fabiana Ríos (ARI) became the first woman to be elected governor of Tierra del Fuego and first elected



Brazilian Presidents "Lula" da Silva (since 2003) and Jose Sarney (1985-90) reunite with Argentine Presidents Nestor Kirchner (2003-07) and Raul Alfonsín (1983-89) to commemorate 20 years of productive trade talks.



female governor in Argentina's history.

## Politics

### Government

Argentina's political framework is a federal presidential representative democratic republic, in which the President of The Argentine Nation is both head of state and head of government, complemented by a pluriform multi-party system. The current president (2007) is Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, with Julio Cobos as vice president.

The Argentine Constitution of 1853 mandates a separation of powers into executive, legislative, and judicial branches at the national and provincial level.

Executive power resides in the President and his or her cabinet. The President of The Argentine Nation and Vice President are directly elected to four-year terms, limited to two consecutive terms, and the cabinet ministers are appointed by the president.



The Argentine Legislature, Buenos Aires.

Legislative power is vested in the bicameral National Congress or *Congreso de la Nación*, consisting of a Senate ( *Senado*) of seventy-two seats, and a Chamber of Deputies ( *Cámara de Diputados*) of 257 members.

Senators serve six-year terms, with one-third standing for reelection every two years. Members of the Chamber of Deputies are directly elected to four-year term via a system of proportional representation, with half of the members of the lower house being elected every two years. A third of the candidates presented by the parties must be women.

The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. The Argentine Supreme Court of Justice has seven members who are appointed by the President in consultation with the Senate. The rest of the judges are appointed by the Council of Magistrates of the Nation, a secretariat composed of representatives of judges, lawyers, the Congress, and the executive (see Law of Argentina).

Argentina is a member of an international block, Mercosur, which has some legislative supranational functions. Mercosur is composed of five full members: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela. It has five associate members without full voting rights: Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

Argentina was the only country from Latin America to participate in the 1991 Gulf War under mandate of the United Nations. It was also the only Latin American country involved in every phase of the Haiti operation. Argentina has contributed worldwide to peacekeeping operations, including in El Salvador-Honduras-Nicaragua, Guatemala, Ecuador-Peru, Western Sahara, Angola, Kuwait, Cyprus,



The Casa Rosada, seat of executive power



Croatia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Timor Leste. In recognition of its contributions to international security, U.S. President Bill Clinton designated Argentina as a major non-NATO ally in January 1998. In 2005, it was elected as a temporary member of the UN Security Council.

In 1993, Argentina launched the United Nations White Helmets indicative of humanitarian aid.

On November 4- November 5, 2005, the Argentine city of Mar del Plata hosted the Fourth Summit of the Americas. This summit was marked by a number of anti-U.S. protests. As of 2006, Argentina has been emphasizing Mercosur as its first international priority; by contrast, during the 1990s, it relied more heavily on its relationship with the United States.

Argentina has long claimed sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (*Islas Malvinas*), the South Shetland Islands, the South Sandwich Islands and almost 1 million km<sup>2</sup> in Antarctica, between the 25°W and the 74°W meridians and the 60°S parallel. For more than a century, there has been an Argentine presence at the Orcadas Base.

Argentina is a founding signatory and permanent consulting member of the Antarctic Treaty System and the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat is established in Buenos Aires.

## Military

Argentina's armed forces are controlled by the Defense Ministry, with the country's President as their Commander-in-Chief. Historically, Argentina's military has been one of the best equipped in the region (for example, developing its own advanced jet fighters as early as the 1950s), but has faced expenditure cutbacks in comparison to other regional militaries. The age of allowable military service is 18 years; there is no obligatory military service and currently no conscription.

The armed forces are composed of a traditional Army, Navy, and Air Force. Controlled by a separate ministry (the Interior Ministry), Argentine territorial waters are patrolled by the Naval Prefecture, and the border regions by the National Gendarmerie; both arms however maintain liaison with the Defense Ministry. Argentina's Armed Forces are currently undertaking major operations in Haiti and Cyprus, in accordance with UN mandates.

## Provinces



Argentina is divided into twenty-three provinces (*provincias*; singular *provincia*), and one autonomous city (commonly known as the *capital federal*, but officially *Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires*):

- |                                   |                         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Buenos Aires (autonomous city) | 13. Mendoza             |
| 2. Buenos Aires (province)        | 14. Misiones            |
| 3. Catamarca                      | 15. Neuquén             |
| 4. Chaco                          | 16. Río Negro           |
| 5. Chubut                         | 17. Salta               |
| 6. Córdoba                        | 18. San Juan            |
| 7. Corrientes                     | 19. San Luis            |
| 8. Entre Ríos                     | 20. Santa Cruz          |
| 9. Formosa                        | 21. Santa Fe            |
| 10. Jujuy                         | 22. Santiago del Estero |
| 11. La Pampa                      | 23. Tierra del Fuego    |
| 12. La Rioja                      | 24. Tucumán             |

Though declared the capital in 1853, Buenos Aires didn't become the capital of the country until 1880. There have been moves to relocate the administrative centre elsewhere. During the presidency of Raúl Alfonsín, a law was passed ordering the transfer of the federal capital to Viedma, a city in the Patagonian province of Río Negro. Studies were underway when economic problems halted the project in 1989. Though the law was never formally repealed, it is now treated as a relic.

Provinces are divided into smaller secondary units called *departamentos* ("departments"), of which there are 376 in total. The province of Buenos Aires has 134 similar divisions known as *partidos*. *Departamentos* and *partidos* are further subdivided into municipalities or districts.

In descending order by number of inhabitants, the major cities in Argentina are Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Rosario, Mendoza, Tucumán, La Plata, Mar del Plata,

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Provinces of Argentina. Argentina claims the Falkland Islands ("*Islas Malvinas*"), a UK overseas territory, as well as a slice of Antarctica, both of which it assigns to its Tierra del Fuego Province (number 23).





Salta, Santa Fe, San Juan, Resistencia, and Neuquén.

## Geography



Topographic map of Argentina  
(including some territorial claims).

### Main features

The total surface area of Argentina (not including the Antarctic claim) is as follows:

- Total: 2,766,891 km<sup>2</sup>
- Land: 2,736,691 km<sup>2</sup>
- Water: 30,200 km<sup>2</sup>

Argentina is about 3,330 km (about 2,070 mi) long from north to south, and 1,400 km (about 870 mi) from east to west (maximum values). It can roughly be divided into four parts: the fertile plains of the Pampas in the centre of the country, the source of Argentina's agricultural wealth; the flat to rolling, oil-rich plateau of Patagonia in the southern half down to Tierra del Fuego; the subtropical flats of the Gran Chaco in the north, and the rugged Andes mountain range along the western border with Chile.

The highest point above sea level in Argentina is located in Mendoza. Cerro Aconcagua, at 6,962 meters (22,834 feet), is the highest mountain in the Americas, the Southern, and Western Hemisphere. The lowest point is Laguna del Carbón in Santa Cruz, −105 meters (−344 ft) below sea level. This is also the lowest point on the South American continent. The geographic centre of the country is located in south-central La Pampa province.

The country has a territorial claim over a portion of Antarctica (unrecognized by any other country), where, from 1904, it has maintained a constant presence.

### Geographic regions



The country is traditionally divided into several major geographically distinct regions:

### Pampas

The plains west and south from Buenos Aires. Called the Humid Pampa, they cover most of the provinces of Buenos Aires and Córdoba, and big portions of the provinces of Santa Fe and La Pampa. The western part of La Pampa and the province San Luis also have plains (the Dry Pampa), but they are drier and used mainly for grazing. The Sierra de Córdoba in the homonymous province (extending into San Luis), is the most important geographical feature of the pampas.

### Gran Chaco

The Gran Chaco region in the north of the country is seasonal dry/wet, mainly cotton growing and livestock raising. It covers the provinces of Chaco and Formosa. It is dotted with subtropical forests, scrubland, and some wetlands, home to a large number of plant and animal species. The province of Santiago del Estero lies in the drier region of the Gran Chaco.

### Mesopotamia

The land between the Paraná and Uruguay rivers is called Mesopotamia and it is shared by the provinces of Corrientes and Entre Ríos. It features flatland apt for grazing and plant growing, and the Iberá Wetlands in central Corrientes. Misiones province is more tropical and belongs within the Brazilian Highlands geographic feature. It features subtropical rainforests and the Iguazú Falls.

### Patagonia

The steppes of Patagonia, in the provinces of Neuquén, Río Negro, Chubut and Santa Cruz, are of Tertiary origin. Most of the region is semiarid in the north to cold and arid in the far south, but forests grow in its western fringes which are dotted with several large lakes. Tierra del Fuego is cool and wet, moderated by oceanic influences. Northern Patagonia (roughly Río Negro south of the homonymous river, and Neuquén) can also be referred as the Comahue region.

### Cuyo

West-central Argentina is dominated by the imposing Andes Mountains. To their east is the arid region known as Cuyo. Melting waters from high in the mountains form the backbone of irrigated lowland oasis, at the centre of a rich fruit and wine growing region in Mendoza and San Juan provinces. Further north the region gets hotter and drier with more geographical accidents in La Rioja province.

### NOA or Northwest

This region is the highest in average elevation. Several parallel mountain ranges, several of which have peaks higher than 20,000 feet (6,000 m), dominate the area. These ranges grow wider in geographic extent towards the north. They are cut by fertile river valleys, the most important being the Calchaquí Valleys in the provinces of Catamarca, Tucumán, and Salta. Farther north the province of Jujuy near Bolivia lies mainly within the Altiplano plateau of the Central



Source: CIA Political map of Argentina showing the area it controls. The Falkland Islands (*Islas Malvinas*) are controlled by the United Kingdom but are claimed by Argentina.



Andes. The Tropic of Capricorn goes through the far north of the region.

## Rivers and lakes

Major rivers in Argentina include the Pilcomayo, Paraguay, Bermejo, Colorado, Río Negro, Salado, Uruguay and the largest river, the Paraná. The latter two flow together before meeting the Atlantic Ocean, forming the estuary of the Río de la Plata. Regionally important rivers are the Atuel and Mendoza in the homonymous province, the Chubut in Patagonia, the Río Grande in Jujuy, and the San Francisco River in Salta.

There are several large lakes in Argentina, many of them in Patagonia. Among these are lakes Argentino and Viedma in Santa Cruz, Nahuel Huapi in Río Negro and Fagnano in Tierra del Fuego, and Colhué Huapi and Musters in Chubut. Lake Buenos Aires and O'Higgins/San Martín Lake are shared with Chile. Mar Chiquita, Córdoba, is the largest salt water lake in the country. There are numerous reservoirs created by dams. Argentina features various hot springs, such as those at Termas de Río Hondo with temperatures between 89 °C and 65 °C.

## Coastal areas and seas

Argentina has 4,665 km (2,899 mi) of coastline. The continental platform is unusually wide; in Argentina this shallow area of the Atlantic Ocean is called Mar Argentino. The waters are rich in fisheries and suspected of holding important hydrocarbon energy resources. Argentina's coastline varies between areas of sand dunes and cliffs. The two major ocean currents affecting the coast are the warm Brazil Current and the cold Falkland Current (Spanish: *corriente antártica* or *corriente de las Malvinas*). Because of the unevenness of the coastal landmass, the two currents alternate in their influence on climate and do not allow temperatures to fall evenly with higher latitude. The southern coast of Tierra del Fuego forms the north shore of the Drake Passage.

## Climate



Because of longitudinal and elevation amplitudes, Argentina is subject to a variety of climates. As a rule, the climate is predominantly temperate with extremes ranging from subtropical in the north to subpolar in the far south. The north of the country is characterized by very hot, humid summers with mild drier winters, and is subject to periodic droughts. Central Argentina has hot summers with thunderstorms (in western Argentina producing some of the world's largest hail), and cool winters. The southern regions have warm summers and cold winters with heavy snowfall, especially in mountainous zones. Higher elevations at all latitudes experience cooler conditions.

The hottest and coldest temperature extremes recorded in South America have occurred in Argentina. A record high temperature of 49.1 °C (120.4 °F), was recorded at Villa de María, Córdoba on January 2, 1920. The lowest temperature recorded was −39 °C (−38.2 °F) at Valle de los Patos Superior, San Juan, July 17, 1972.

Major winds in Argentina include the cool Pampero blowing on the flat plains of Patagonia and the *Pampas* after a cold front; the Viento Norte, a warm wind that can blow from the north in mid and late winter creating mild conditions; and the Zonda, a hot and dry wind (see also foehn wind), affecting west-central Argentina. Squeezed of all moisture during the 6,000 meter descent from the Andes, Zonda winds can blow for hours with gusts up to 120 km/h, fueling wildfires and causing damage. When the Zonda blows (June–November), snowstorms and blizzard (*viento blanco*) conditions usually affect the higher elevations.

The Sudestada (literally “southeastern”) could be considered similar to the Noreaster, though snowfall is rarely involved (but is not unprecedented). Both are associated with a deep winter low pressure system. The *sudestada* usually moderates cold temperatures but brings very heavy rains, rough seas, and coastal flooding. It is most common in late autumn and winter along the coasts of central Argentina and in the Río de la Plata estuary.

The southern regions, particularly the far south, experience long periods of daylight from November to February (up to nineteen hours), and extended nights from May to August. All of Argentina uses UTC-3 time zone. The country does observe daylight saving time occasionally, the last summertime being started at 0:00 December 30, 2007 and being finished at 0:00 March 16, 2008.

Extremities Argentina's easternmost continental point is northeast of the town of Bernardo de Irigoyen, Misiones (), the westernmost in the Mariano Moreno Range in Santa Cruz (). The northernmost point is located at the confluence of the Grande de San Juan and Mojinete rivers, Jujuy (), and the southernmost is Cape San Pío in Tierra del Fuego ().

## Enclaves and exclaves

There is one Argentine exclave, the Martín García Island (co-ordinates ). It is near the confluence of the Paraná and Uruguay rivers, a kilometer (0.62 mi) inside Uruguayan waters, and 3.5 kilometres (2.1 mi) from the Uruguayan coastline near the small town of Martín Chico (itself halfway between Nueva Palmira and Colonia del Sacramento).



Rural areas cover the region of Las Pampas.



The Andean range over the southern province of Chubut.



An agreement reached by Argentina and Uruguay in 1973 reaffirmed Argentine jurisdiction over the island, ending a century-old dispute. Under the terms of the agreement, Martín García is to be devoted exclusively as a natural preserve. Its area is about 2 square kilometres (500 acres), and its population is about 200 people.

## Flora

Subtropical plants dominate the north, part of the Gran Chaco region of South America. The genus *Dalbergia* of trees is well disseminated with representatives like the *Brazilian Rosewood* and the *quebracho* tree; also predominant are white and black *algarrobo* trees ( *prosopis alba* and *prosopis nigra*). *Savannah*-like areas exist in the drier regions nearer the Andes. Aquatic plants thrive in the wetlands dotting the region.



The ceibo is Argentina's national flower.

In central Argentina the *humid pampas* are a true tallgrass prairie ecosystem. The original *pampa* had virtually no trees; today along roads or in towns and country estates (*estancias*), some imported species like the American sycamore or eucalyptus are present. The only tree-like plant native to the *pampa* is the ombú, an evergreen. The surface soils of the *pampa* are a deep black colour, primarily *humus*, known commonly as compost. It is this which makes the region one of the most agriculturally productive on Earth. However, this is also responsible for decimating much of the original ecosystem, to make way for commercial agriculture. The western *pampas* receive less rainfall, this *dry pampa* is a plain of short grasses or steppe.

Most of Patagonia in the south lies within the rain shadow of the Andes. The flora, shrubby bushes and plants, is well suited to withstand dry conditions. The soil is hard and rocky, making large-scale farming impossible except along river valleys. Coniferous forests grow in far western Patagonia and on the island of Tierra del Fuego. Conifers native to the region include alerce (*Fitzroya cupressoides*), ciprés de la cordillera (*Austrocedrus chilensis*), ciprés de las guaitecas (*Pilgerodendron uviferum*), huililahuán (*Podocarpus nubigenus*), lleuque (*Prumnopitys andina*), mañío hembra (*Saxegothaea conspicua*), and pehuén (*Araucaria araucana*), while native broadleaf trees include several species of *Nothofagus* including coigüe or coihue, lenga (*Nothofagus pumilio*), ñire (*Nothofagus Antarctica*). Other introduced trees present in forestry plantations include spruce, cypress, and pine. Common plants are the copihue and colihue ( *Chusquea culeou*).

In Cuyo, semiarid thorny bushes and other xerophile plants abound. Along the many river oasis, grasses and trees grow in significant numbers. The area presents optimal conditions for the large scale growth of grape vines. In the northwest of Argentina there are many species of cacti. In the highest elevations (often above 4,000mts), no vegetation grows because of the extreme altitude, and the soils are virtually devoid of any plant life.

The *ceibo* flower, of the tree *Erythrina crista-galli*, is the national flower of Argentina.

## Fauna



Many species live in the subtropical north. Big cats like the jaguar, cougar, and ocelot; primates ( howler monkey); large reptiles (crocodiles), and a species of caiman. Other animals include the tapir, capybara, peccary, bush dog, raccoon, and various species of turtle and tortoise. There are many birds, notably hummingbirds, flamingos, toucans, and parrots.



The hornero is one of the national emblems of Argentina.

The central grasslands are populated by the giant anteater, armadillo, pampas cat, maned wolf, mara and the rhea (*ñandú*), a flightless bird. Hawks, falcons, herons, tinamous (Argentine "partridges" or "perdiz") inhabit the region. There are also deer and foxes. Some of these species extend into Patagonia.

The western mountains are home to different animals. These include the llama, guanaco, vicuña, among the most recognizable species of South America. Also in this region are the fox, viscacha, Andean Mountain Cat, kodkod and the largest flying bird in the New World, the Andean Condor.

Southern Argentina is home to the cougar, huemul, pudú (the world's smallest deer), and introduced, non-native wild boar. The coast of Patagonia is rich in animal life: elephant seals, fur seals, sea lions, and species of penguin. The far south is populated by cormorant birds.



The *puma* inhabits the northeast of the country.

The territorial waters of Argentina have abundant ocean life; mammals such as dolphins, orcas, and whales like the southern right whale, a major tourist draw for naturalists. Sea fish include sardines, argentine hakes, dolphinfish, salmon, and sharks; also present are squid and spider crab (*centolla*) in Tierra del Fuego. Rivers and streams in Argentina have many species of trout and the South American dorado fish. Outstanding snake species inhabiting Argentina include boa constrictors, and the very venomous yarará pit viper and South American rattle snake.

The Hornero was elected the National Bird after a survey in 1928.

## Economy

Argentina benefits from abundant natural resources, a highly literate population, an export-oriented agricultural sector, and a diversified industrial base, that was once one of the wealthiest nations with a large middle class but this segment of the population has suffered by a succession of economic crises.

Argentina's economy started to slowly lose ground after 1945 when it went from a wealthy nation with a strong and prosperous economy to a deep recession in the mid 50s, losing its place in the position of prosperous industrialized nations. The economy further declined during the military dictatorship that lasted from 1976 to 1983.

During this period, the government took out large loans with high interest rates from the IMF and private banking institutions. The country engaged in a disorganized and corrupt rapid liberalization that marked the end of its industrial hegemony in Latin America. During the military dictatorship over 400,000 companies of all sizes went bankrupt. The economic decisions made from 1983 till 2001 failed to revert the situation. Finally, in 2001, after 3 years of recession,



the economy broke down and reached its worst point in history.

Although significant since then, the result is that, today, while a significant segment of the population is still financially well-off, they stand in sharp contrast with the millions who have seen their purchasing power drastically reduced. Since 2002, there has been an improvement in the situation of the poorer sectors and a strong rebound of the middle class.

The urban poverty rate dropped to 23% by 2007, down from the peak observed in 2003, but is still above the level prior to the recession. From the late 1970s the country piled up public debt and was plagued by bouts of high inflation. In 1991, the government pegged the peso to the U.S. dollar and limited the growth in the money supply. It then embarked on a path of trade liberalization, deregulation and privatization. Inflation dropped and gross domestic product grew, but external economic shocks and failures of the system diluted benefits, causing the economy to crumble slowly from 1995 until the collapse in 2001.

By 2002, Argentina had defaulted on its debt, its GDP had shrunk, unemployment was more than 25%, and the peso had depreciated 75% after being devalued and floated. However, careful spending control and heavy taxes on then-soaring exports allowed the state to regain resources and conduct monetary policy.

In 2003, import substitution policies and soaring exports, coupled with lower inflation and expansive economic measures, triggered a surge in the GDP. This was repeated in 2004 and 2005, creating millions of jobs and encouraging internal consumption. Capital flight decreased, and foreign investment slowly returned. An influx of foreign currency from exports created a huge trade surplus. The Central Bank was forced to buy dollars from the market, and continues to do so from time to time to prevent the Argentine peso from appreciating significantly and cutting competitiveness.

The situation by 2006 was further improved. The economy grew 8.8% in 2003, 9.0% in 2004, 9.2% in 2005, 8.5% in 2006, and 8.7% in 2007, though inflation, estimated at around 12 to 15% (official numbers are 9.8% for 2006), has become an issue again, and income distribution is still considerably unequal.

## Sectors

Argentina is one of the world's major agricultural producers, ranking third worldwide in production of soybeans, fifth in maize, and eleventh in wheat. In 2007, agricultural output accounted for 10% of GDP, and nearly one third of all exports. Soy and vegetable oils are major export commodities at 32% of exports. Wheat, maize, oats, sorghum, and sunflower seeds totalled 7%. Cattle is also a major industry. Beef, milk, leather products, and cheese were 6% of total exports. Sheep and wool industries are important in Patagonia, pigs and caprines elsewhere.



Newbery Airfield, Buenos Aires. One of two international airports in Buenos Aires, it's helped link Argentina to the world as well as the vast nation to its capital.



Fruits and vegetables made up 4% of exports: apples and pears in the Río Negro valley; oranges and other citrus in the northwest and Mesopotamia; grapes and strawberries in Cuyo, and berries in the far south. Cotton and yerba mate are major crops in the Gran Chaco, sugarcane and tobacco in the northwest, and olives and garlic in Cuyo. Bananas (Formosa), tomatoes (Salta), and peaches (Mendoza) are grown for domestic consumption. Argentina is the world's fifth-largest wine producer, and fine wine production has taken major leaps in quality. A growing export, total viticulture potential is far from met. Mendoza is the largest wine region, followed by San Juan. As a strike by farmers, who are protesting an increase in export taxes for their products, continued for a 13th day March 25, 2008 with no solution in sight, butchers and supermarkets were among the first hit.

Industrial petrochemicals, oil, and natural gas are Argentina's second group of exports, 20% of totals. The most important oil fields lie in Patagonia and Cuyo. An impressive network of pipelines send raw product to Bahia Blanca, centre of the petrochemical industry, and to the La Plata- Rosario industrial belt. Coal is also mined.

Mining is a growing industry. The northwest and San Juan Province are main regions of activity. Metals mined include gold, silver, zinc, magnesium, copper, sulfur, tungsten and uranium. In only ten years exports soared from US\$ 200 million to 1.2 billion in 2004, 3% of total. Estimates for 2006 are US\$ 2bn, a 10 fold rise from 1996.

In fisheries, argentine hake accounts for 50% of catches, pollack and squid follow. Forestry has expanded in Mesopotamia; elm for cellulose, pine and eucalyptus for furniture, timber, and paper products. Both sectors each account for 2% of exports.

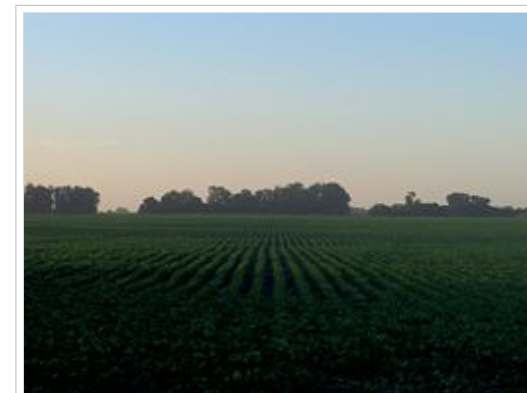


The Yacyretá Dam hydroelectric complex is the second largest in the world.

Manufacturing is the nation's largest single sector in the economy, with 22% of GDP. Leading sectors are motor vehicles, auto parts, and transportation and farming equipment (7% of exports), iron and steel (3%), foodstuffs and textiles (2%). Other manufactures include cement, industrial chemicals, home appliances, and processed wood. The biggest industrial centers are Buenos Aires, Rosario and Córdoba.

The telecommunication sector has been growing at a fast pace, with an important penetration of mobile telephony (More than 75% of the population) internet (with more than 16 million people online), and broadband services (4.1%). Regular telephone (with 9.5 million lines) and mail are robust.

Argentina produces energy in large part through well developed hydroelectric resources; nuclear energy is also of high importance. The country is one of the largest producers and exporters (with Canada and Russia) of Cobalt-60, a radioactive isotope widely used in cancer therapy. Construction has led employment creation in the current economic expansion and is 6% of GDP.



View of soy fields. Though Argentina's is now an industrial and service economy, agriculture still earns more than half the foreign exchange.





The service sector is the biggest contributor to total GDP, accounting for 58%. Argentina enjoys a diversified service sector, which includes well-developed social, corporate, financial, insurance, real-estate, transport and communication services, as well as vigorous commercial and tourist trades.

Tourism is increasingly important, now providing 7% of economic output. Argentines are traveling more within their borders, and foreigners are flocking to a country seen as affordable, safe, and incredibly diverse: Cosmopolitan Buenos Aires and Rosario; the Iguazu Falls and colonial Salta; the South American indigenous Jujuy Province and fun-filled Córdoba; the wineries of Mendoza; the ski-suitable scenic Bariloche to the beaches of Pinamar; and Perito Moreno Glacier to Tierra del Fuego. 3.7 million tourists visited in 2005.

## Transportation



A cargo ship in front of the Rosario-Victoria Bridge.

Argentina's infrastructure is advanced compared to other countries in Latin America. There are nearly 215,471 km (133,887 mi) of roads of which 68,809 km are paved, and 734 km are expressways, many of which are privatized. Multilane highways now connect several main cities and more are now under construction.

The railway network has a total length of 31,902 km. After decades of decaying service and lack of maintenance, most passenger services shut down in 1992 when the rail company was privatized, and thousands of kilometers of track are now in disrepair. Railway services are currently being reactivated among several cities.

The country has around 3,000 kilometers of waterways, the most significant among these being the Río de la Plata, Paraná, Uruguay, Río Negro and Paraguay rivers.



Well-known for its productive agriculture, Argentina also benefits from a well-developed services sector.



Light rail in Buenos Aires

## Water supply and sanitation

Water supply and sanitation in Argentina faces five key challenges: (i) low coverage with higher levels of service provision for its income level; (ii) poor service quality; and (iii) high levels of pollution; (iv) low cost recovery; and (v) unclear allocation of responsibilities between institutions in the sector.

## Population

### Contemporary figures

The National Institute of Statistics and Census of Argentina (INDEC) 2001 census showed the population of Argentina was 36,260,130. It ranks third in South America in total population and 30th globally. The 2008 estimate is 40,677,348. Argentina's population density is 15 inhabitants per square kilometer of land area;



however, the population is not evenly distributed: areas of the city of Buenos Aires have a population density of over 14,000 inhab./km<sup>2</sup>, while Santa Cruz province has fewer than 1 inhab./km<sup>2</sup>. Argentina is the only nation in South America with a net positive migration rate; about +0.4 net immigrants per 1000 locals, yearly.

### **Cities and metropolitan areas**

As of 2005, Argentina's 20th largest metropolitan areas are:



Rank	City	Province	Population	Region
1	<b>Buenos Aires</b>	City + 24 <i>partidos</i> in Buenos Aires Province	13,052,177	Pampean
2	<b>Córdoba</b>	Córdoba	1,513,200	Pampean
3	<b>Rosario</b>	Santa Fe	1,295,100	Pampean
4	<b>Mendoza</b>	Mendoza	1,009,100	Cuyo
5	<b>La Plata</b>	Buenos Aires	857,800	Pampean
6	San Miguel de Tucumán	Tucumán	833,100	NOA (northwest)
7	Mar del Plata	Buenos Aires	699,600	Pampean
8	Salta	Salta	530,400	NOA (northwest)
9	Santa Fe	Santa Fe	525,300	Pampean
10	San Juan	San Juan	456,400	Cuyo
11	San Salvador	Jujuy	400,000	NOA (northwest)
12	Resistencia	Chaco	399,800	Gran Chaco
13	Neuquén	Neuquén	391,600	Patagonian
14	Santiago del Estero	Santiago del Estero	389,200	Gran Chaco
15	Corrientes	Corrientes	332,400	Mesopotamia
16	Bahía Blanca	Buenos Aires	310,200	Pampean
17	Río Cuarto	Cordoba	144,021	Pampean
18	Comodoro Rivadavia	Chubut	140,628	Patagonia
19	Santa Rosa	La Pampa	110,640	Pampean
20	Zárate	Buenos Aires	101,271	Pampean
21	Tandil	Buenos Aires	101,010	Pampean



Cordoba city centre



Puerto Madero Docklands, Buenos Aires



Monument to the Argentine flag in Rosario

## Demographics



Fiesta del Inmigrante or "Immigrants' Festival" celebrates the immigration to Argentina during the 19th and 20th century in the town of Oberá, Misiones

## Ethnicity

Argentina, along with other areas of new settlement like Canada, Australia, or New Zealand is considered a country of immigrants and a melting pot of different peoples, both autochthonous and immigrants. Most Argentines are descendents of colonial-era settlers and of the 19th and 20th century immigrants from Europe, with almost 90% of the population being of European descent. For generations the majority of these immigrants came mainly from Italy and Spain as well as other European countries. The last national census, based on self-identification, showed that only 2% of the population identified as Amerindian, and the mestizo population makes up over 8.6%. A study conducted by the University of Buenos Aires showed that over 56% of the population has some degree of Amerindian admixture on either paternal or maternal lineages, and about 10% were shown to have Amerindian ancestors on both lineages.

After the Spanish colonists, waves of European settlers migrated to Argentina from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. Major contributors included Italy (initially from Piedmont, Veneto, and Lombardy, later from Campania and Calabria), Spain (foremost among them Galicians and Basques, and France (mostly to Buenos Aires and Mendoza). Smaller but significant numbers of immigrants came from Germany and Switzerland (to the *Lakes Region* of Patagonia; and to Córdoba), Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Greece, Lebanon, the United Kingdom, Ireland (to Buenos Aires, Santa Fé, and Patagonia; see also English settlement in Argentina), and Portugal. Eastern Europeans were also numerous from Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania and from Central Europe (Croatia (ex. President of Argentina Néstor Kirchner is of Croatian descent), Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Romania), as well as Balkan countries (Serbia and Montenegro, particularly in Chaco). There is a large Armenian community, and the Patagonian Chubut Valley has a significant Welsh-descended population.

## Minorities

Small but growing numbers of people from East Asia have also settled in Argentina, mainly in Buenos Aires. The first Asian-Argentines were of Japanese descent; Koreans, Vietnamese, and Chinese followed, now at over 60,000.

The majority of Argentina's Jewish community are Ashkenazi Jews while about 15–20% from Sephardic groups from Syria. Argentina is home to the fifth largest Ashkenazi Jewish community in the world. (See also History of the Jews in Argentina) Argentina has a large Arab community, made up mostly of immigrants from Syria and Lebanon. Many have gained prominent status in national business and politics, including former president Carlos Menem, the son of Syrian settlers from the province of La Rioja. Most of the Arab Argentines are Christian of the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches.

The officially recognized indigenous population in the country, according to the "Complementary Survey of Indigenous Peoples" based on 2001 Census data, stands at approximately 402,921 people (about 1 percent of the total population)



An Argentine gaucho.

## Illegal immigrants

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 36 of 637



Illegal immigration has been a recent factor in Argentine demographics. Most illegal immigrants come from Bolivia and Paraguay, countries which border Argentina to the north. Smaller numbers arrive from Peru, Ecuador, and Romania. The Argentine government estimates that 750,000 inhabitants lack official documents and has launched a program called *Patria Grande* ("Big Homeland"), to encourage illegal immigrants to regularize their status; so far over 670,000 applications have been processed under the program.

## Urbanization

Argentina's population is very highly urbanized. About 3 million people live in the autonomous city of Buenos Aires, and 12.4 million in Greater Buenos Aires (2007), making it one of the largest conurbations in the world. Together with their respective metropolitan areas, the second- and third-largest cities in Argentina, Córdoba and Rosario, comprise about 1.3 and 1.1 million inhabitants respectively.

Most European immigrants to Argentina settled in the cities, which offered jobs, education, and other opportunities which enabled newcomers to enter the middle class. Many also settled in the growing small towns along the expanding railway system. Since the 1930s, many rural workers have moved to the big cities.

The 1990s saw many rural towns become ghost towns when train services ceased and local products manufactured on a small scale were replaced by massive amounts of cheap imported goods. Many slums ( *villas miserias*) sprouted in the outskirts of the largest cities, inhabited by impoverished lower-class urban dwellers, migrants from smaller towns in the interior, and also a large number of immigrants from neighbouring countries that came during the time of the convertibility and did not leave after the 2001 crisis.

Some urban areas appear European, reflecting the influence of European settlers. Many cities are built in a Spanish-grid style around a main square (*plaza*). A cathedral and important government buildings often face the *plaza*. The general layout of the cities is called *damero* (checkerboard), since it is based on a pattern of square blocks, though modern developments sometimes depart from it (the city of La Plata, built at the end of the nineteenth century, is organized as a checkerboard plus diagonal avenues at fixed intervals).

The city of La Plata was the first in South America with electric street illumination.



Government house of Tucumán.



Beach on the Atlantic Ocean, Mar del Plata.

## Largest metropolitan areas of Argentina

	Core City	Province	Population
1	<b>Buenos Aires</b>	Buenos Aires	13,052,177
2	<b>Córdoba</b>	Córdoba	1,613,211



	Core City	Province	Populati
7	<b>Mar del Plata</b>	Buenos Aires	706,600
8	<b>Salta</b>	Salta	556,400



3	<b>Rosario</b>	Santa Fe	1,325,090
4	<b>Mendoza</b>	Mendoza	1,109,104
5	<b>La Plata</b>	Buenos Aires	957,800
6	<b>Tucumán</b>	Tucumán	903,100

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (Estimates for 2006)

### Buenos Aires



### Córdoba

9	<b>Santa Fe</b>	Santa Fe	534,300
10	<b>San Juan</b>	San Juan	498,400
11	<b>Resistencia</b>	Chaco	452,800
12	<b>Neuquén</b>	Neuquén	400,600

## Culture



Argentine culture has significant European influences. Buenos Aires, considered by many its cultural capital, is often said to be the most European city in South America, as a result both of the prevalence of people of European descent and of conscious imitation of European styles in architecture. The other big influence is the gauchos and their traditional country lifestyle of self-reliance. Finally, indigenous American traditions (like mate tea drinking) have been absorbed into the general cultural milieu.

## Literature

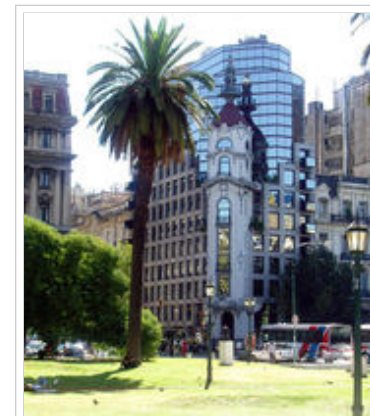
Argentina has a rich history of world-class literature, including one of the twentieth century's most critically acclaimed writers, Jorge Luis Borges. The country has been a leader in Latin American literature since becoming a fully united entity in the 1850s, with a strong constitution and a defined nation-building plan. The struggle between the Federalists (who favored a loose confederation of provinces based on rural conservatism) and the Unitarians (pro-liberalism and advocates of a strong central government that would encourage European immigration), set the tone for Argentine literature of the time.

The ideological divide between gaucho epic *Martín Fierro* by José Hernández, and *Facundo* by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, is a great example. Hernández, although a federalist, opposed to the centralizing, modernizing, and Europeanizing tendencies. Sarmiento wrote immigration was the only way to save Argentina from becoming subject to the rule of a small number of dictatorial *caudillo* families, arguing such immigrants would make Argentina more modern and open to Western European influences, and therefore a more prosperous society.

Argentine literature of that period was fiercely nationalist. It was followed by the modernist movement, which emerged in France in the late nineteenth century, and this period in turn was followed by vanguardism, with Ricardo Güiraldes as an important reference. Jorge Luis Borges, its most acclaimed writer, found new ways of looking at the modern world in metaphor and philosophical debate, and his influence has extended to writers all over the globe. Borges is most famous for his works in short stories such as *Ficciones* and *The Aleph*.

Argentina has produced many more internationally noted writers, poets, and intellectuals: Juan Bautista Alberdi, Roberto Arlt, Enrique Banchs, Adolfo Bioy Cásares, Eugenio Cambaceres, Julio Cortázar, Esteban Echeverría, Leopoldo Lugones, Eduardo Mallea, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, Tomás Eloy Martínez, Victoria Ocampo, Manuel Puig, Ernesto Sabato, Osvaldo Soriano, Alfonsina Storni, and María Elena Walsh. Quino (born *Joaquín Salvador Lavado*), has entertained readers the world over, while dipping into the events of modern times, with soup-hating Mafalda and her comic strip gang.

## Film and theatre



European and modern styles in Buenos Aires.



Street in Buenos Aires CBD.



Neoclassical architecture, downtown.



Argentina is a major producer of motion pictures. The world's first animated feature films were made and released in Argentina, by cartoonist Quirino Cristiani, in 1917 and 1918. Argentine cinema enjoyed a 'golden age' in the 1930s through the 1950s with scores of productions, many now considered classics of Spanish-language film. The industry produced actors who became the first movie stars of Argentine cinema, often tango performers such as Libertad Lamarque, Floren Delbene, Tito Lusiardo, Tita Merello, Roberto Escalada, and Hugo del Carril.

More recent films from the "New Wave" of cinema since the 1980s have achieved worldwide recognition, such as *The Official Story* (*La historia oficial*), *Nine Queens* (*Nueve reinas*), *Man Facing Southeast* (*Hombre mirando al sudeste*), *Son of the Bride* (*El hijo de la novia*), *The Motorcycle Diaries* (*Diarios de motocicleta*), or *Iluminados por el fuego*. Argentine composer Gustavo Santaolalla, Eugenio Zanetti and Luis Enrique Bacalov all are Academy Award winners. Although rarely rivaling Hollywood-type movies in popularity, local films are released weekly and widely followed in Argentina and internationally. Even low-budget films have earned prizes in cinema festivals (such as Cannes). The city of Mar del Plata organizes its own film festival, while Buenos Aires has its independent cinema counterpart. The per capita number of screens is one of the highest in Latin America, and viewing per capita is the highest in the region. A new generation of Argentine directors has caught the attention of critics worldwide. Additionally, Argentina is a major centre of cinema, it is compared to European countries in terms of people who attend movie theaters. An example of this was *Spider-Man 3* which took in 466,586 the first day a record in Argentina. In Italy it took in 400,000 and Germany 486,571, breaking all records for first day release.



Gran Rex Cinema, Buenos Aires.

Buenos Aires is one of the great capitals of theatre. The Teatro Colon is a national landmark for opera and classical performances. Built at the ending of XIX century, Teatro Colon's acoustic is considered the best in the world. Currently it is undergoing major refurbishment, in order to preserve its outstanding sound characteristics, the French-romantic style, the impressive Golden Room (a minor auditorium targeted to Chamber Music performances), and the museum at the entrance. Enrico Caruso, B.Gigli, Félix Weingartner, Artur Nikisch, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Igor Stravinsky, Paul Hindemith, Camille Saint-Saëns, Manuel de Falla, Aaron Copland, Krzysztof Penderecki, Gian-Carlo Menotti, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Herbert von Karajan, Tullio Serafin, Gino Marinuzzi, Albert Wolff, Víctor De Sabata, Leonard Bernstein, Mstislav Rostropovich, Sir Malcolm Sargent, Karl Böhm, Fernando Previtali, Sir Thomas Beecham, Ferdinand Leitner, Lorin Maazel, Igor Markevitch, Bernard Haitink, Zubin Mehta, Marek Janowsky, Aldo Ceccato, Riccardo Muti, Kurt Masur, Michel Corboz, Franz-Paul Decker, Riccardo Chailly, Sir Simon Rattle, Claudio Abbado, René Jacobs are among the artists, composers and conductors who performed in this opera house.

Besides the Teatro Colón (one of the great opera houses of the world), with its program of national and international caliber, *Calle Corrientes*, or Corrientes Avenue, is synonymous with the art. It is dubbed 'the street that never sleeps', and sometimes referred to as the Broadway of Buenos Aires. Many great careers in acting, music, and film have begun in its many theaters. The *Teatro General San Martín* is one of the most prestigious along Corrientes Avenue; the *Teatro Nacional Cervantes* is designated the national theater of Argentina. Another important theatre is the *Independencia* in Mendoza. Florencio Sanchez and Griselda Gambaro are famous Argentine playwrights. Julio Bocca is one of the great ballet dancers of the modern era.

## Painting and sculpture





Perhaps one of the most enigmatic figures of Argentine culture is Oscar Agustín Alejandro Schulz Solari, *aka* Xul Solar, whose watercolor style and unorthodox painting media draws large crowds at museums worldwide; he also 'invented' two imaginary languages. The works of Candido Lopez (in Naïve art style), Emilio Pettoruti (cubist), Antonio Berni ( neo-figurative style), Fernando Fader, and Guillermo Kuitca are appreciated internationally.

Benito Quinquela Martín is considered to be the quintessential 'port' painter, to which the city of Buenos Aires and particularly the working class and immigrant-bound La Boca neighbourhood, was excellently suited for. Lucio Fontana and Leon Ferrari are acclaimed sculptors and conceptual artists. Ciruelo is a world-wide famous fantasy artist and sculptor and Eduardo MacIntyre's geometric designs have influenced advertisers worldwide since the 1970s.

## Food and drink

Argentine food is influenced by cuisine from Spain, Italy, Germany, France and other European countries, and many foods from those countries such as pasta, sausages, and desserts are common in the nation's diet. Argentina has a wide variety of staple foods, which include *empanadas*, a stuffed pastry; *locro*, a mixture of corn, beans, meat, bacon, onion, and gourd; and *chorizo*, a spicy sausage. Other popular items include *facturas* ( Viennese-style pastry), Dulce de Leche and mate, Argentina's national beverage.



Asado

The Argentine barbecue, *asado* as well as a *parrillada*, is one of the most famous in the world and includes various types of meats, among them *chorizo*, sweetbread, chitterlings, and *morcilla* ( blood sausage). Thin sandwiches, sandwiches de miga, are also popular. Argentines have the highest consumption of red meat in the world.

Since 1992, Argentina has invested over 650 million dollars to modernize the wine industry. The country is an important wine producer, rated fifth in the world, with the annual *per capita* consumption of wine amongst the highest in the world. ( Malbec has become a representative variety from Argentina). Malbec grape, a discardable varietal in France (country of origin), has found in Province of Mendoza an ideal environment to successfully develop and turn itself into the world's best Malbec. The city of Mendoza is one of the eight wine capitals of the world, and

Mendoza accounts for 70% of the country total production (all varietals considered). "Wine tourism" is important in the Province of Mendoza, with the impressive landscape of Cordillera de Los Andes and the highest peak in America, Mount Aconcagua, 6952 meters high, providing a very desirable destination for international tourism.

## Sports



*Font of the Nereids* (1903) by Lola Mora, a student of Auguste Rodin's.



*Yerba mate* (an invigorating green tea) in its traditional gourd.



Football (soccer) is the most popular sport in Argentina, whose national team is twice FIFA World Cup Champion and one-time Olympic Gold medalist (also fourteen-time Copa América winners).

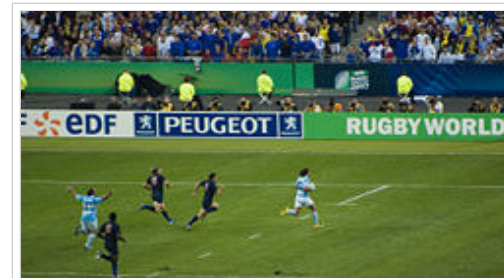
Also widespread are volleyball and basketball; a number of basketball players participate in the NBA and European leagues. Manu Ginobili, Andres Nocioni, Carlos Delfino, and Fabricio Oberto are a few, and the national team won Olympic Gold in the Athens Olympics. Argentina has an important rugby union football team, "Los Pumas" (see Argentina national rugby union team), with many of its players playing in Europe. Argentina beat host nation France twice in the Rugby World Cup 2007, placing them third in the competition. The Pumas currently sit at fourth spot in the International Rugby Board's official world rankings. Argentine tennis is very competitive on the world stage, with dozens of players, male and female, in active tour.

Other popular sports include field hockey (the top female sport, see *Las Leonas*), golf, and sailing. Argentina has the highest number of highly-ranked polo players in the world and the national squad has been the uninterrupted world champion ever since 1949. The Open Polo Championship of Buenos Aires is the most important polo-related event in the world. Cricket is growing in popularity due to the National Team's recent successes where they came as the underdogs and finished runner's up of the Inaugural World Cricket League Division 3. Baseball is played in a most limited fashion, as well as the Gridiron.

Motorsports are well represented in Argentina, with Turismo Carretera and TC 2000 being the most popular car racing formats. People all over the country enjoy the races, but it is most fervently followed in small towns and rural Argentina, attracting a rather similar demographic as NASCAR in the United States. The Rally Argentina is part of the World Rally Championship (currently held in Córdoba Province). In Formula 1 racing, the country produced one world champion (Juan Manuel Fangio, five times) and two runners-up (Froilán González and Carlos Reutemann, once each)

The official national sport of the country is pato, played with a six-handle ball on horseback.

## Music



Ignacio Corleto of Los Pumas on his way to score a try against France in the 2007 Rugby World Cup. That day they beat France 17 - 12. Argentina reached third place in the tournament



*Tango*, the music *and* lyrics (often sung in a form of slang called lunfardo), is Argentina's musical symbol. The Milonga dance was a predecessor, slowly evolving into modern *tango*. By the 1930s, *tango* had changed from a dance-focused music to one of lyric and poetry, with singers like Carlos Gardel, Roberto Goyeneche, Hugo del Carril, Tita Merello, and Edmundo Rivero. The golden age of *tango* (1930 to mid-1950s) mirrored that of Jazz and Swing in the United States, featuring large orchestral groups too, like the bands of Osvaldo Pugliese, Anibal Troilo, Francisco Canaro, and Juan D'Arienzo. After 1955 *tango* turned more intellectual and listener-oriented, led by Astor Piazzolla. Today tango has worldwide popularity, and the rise of *neo-tango* is a global phenomenon with groups like Tanghetto, Bajofondo and Gotan Project.

Argentine rock, called *rock nacional*, is the most popular music among youth. Arguably the most listened form of Spanish-language rock, its influence and success internationally owes to a rich, uninterrupted development. Bands such as Soda Stereo or Sumo, and composers like Charly García, Luis Alberto Spinetta, and Fito Páez are referents of national culture. Mid 1960s Buenos Aires and Rosario were cradles of the music, and by 1970 Argentine rock was established among middle class youth (see Almendra, Sui Generis, Pappo, Crucis). Seru Giran bridged the gap into the 1980s, when Argentine bands became popular across Latin America and elsewhere ( Enanitos Verdes, Fabulosos Cadillacs, Virus, Andrés Calamaro). There are many sub-genres: underground, pop oriented, and some associated with the working class ( La Renga, Ataque 77, Divididos, Hermética, V8, Tren Loco, Los Redonditos). Current popular bands include: Babasonicos, Rata Blanca, El Otro Yo, Ataque 77, Bersuit, Los Piojos, Intoxicados, Catupecu Machu, and Miranda!.

European classical music is well represented in Argentina. Buenos Aires is home to the world-renowned Colón Theatre. Classical musicians, such as Martha Argerich, Daniel Barenboim, Eduardo Alonso-Crespo, Eduardo Delgado, Lalo Schiffrin, and classical composers such as Alberto Ginastera, are internationally acclaimed. All major cities in Argentina have impressive theaters or opera houses, and provincial or city orchestras. Some cities have annual events and important classical music festivals like Semana Musical Llao Llao in San Carlos de Bariloche and the multitudinous Amadeus in Buenos Aires.



Progressive rock musician Charly García.

Argentine folk music is uniquely vast. Beyond dozens of regional dances, a national folk style emerged in the 1930s. Perón's Argentina would give rise to Nueva Canción, as artists began expressing in their music objections to political themes. Atahualpa Yupanqui, the greatest Argentine folk musician, and Mercedes Sosa would be defining figures in shaping Nueva Canción, gaining worldwide popularity in the process. The style found a huge reception in Chile, where it took off in the 1970s and went on to influence the entirety of Latin American music. Today, Chango Spasiuk and Soledad Pastorutti have brought folk back to younger generations. Leon Gieco's *folk-rock* bridged the gap between argentine folklore and argentine rock, introducing both styles to millions overseas in successive tours.

Other notable musicians include Gato Barbieri with his seductive saxophone and free jazz compositions, and Jaime Torres and his spacious andean music.

## Religion



Carlos Gardel, still the standard among Tango vocalists.



Argentines are predominantly Roman Catholic. Around 93% declare themselves Roman Catholic according to different surveys; the Church estimates an affiliation of 70%. According to the Constitution, the Argentine government should support Roman Catholicism. However, this does not imply that it is the official religion of the Argentine Republic, nor does it imply that people working in the government should have this faith.

Evangelical churches have gained a foothold in Argentina since the 1980s, and their followers now number more than 3.5 million, about 10% of the total population. Traditional Protestant communities are present in most communities.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) numbering over 330,300, the seventh-largest concentration in the world, are also present.

The country also hosts the largest Jewish population in all of Latin America, about 2 percent of the population.

Islam in Argentina constitutes approximately 1.5% of the population, or an estimated 500,000-600,000 (93% Sunni). Argentina is also home to one of the largest mosques in Latin America, serving Argentina's Muslim community.

Approximately 12% of Argentines can be considered agnostic, and 4% are atheists.

## Language



*Cafe de los Angelitos*, like many Argentine coffee houses, a meeting point for musical and literary talent.

The official language of Argentina is Spanish, usually called "Castellano" (Castilian) by Argentines.

A phonetic study conducted by the Laboratory for Sensory Investigations of CONICET and the University of Toronto showed that the accent of the inhabitants of Buenos Aires (known as *porteños*) is closer to the Neapolitan dialect of Italian than any other spoken language. Italian immigration and other European immigrations influenced *Lunfardo*, the slang spoken in the Río de la Plata region, permeating the vernacular vocabulary of other regions as well.

Argentines are the largest Spanish-speaking society that universally employs what is known as *voseo* (the use of the pronoun *vos* instead of *tú* (you), which occasions the use of alternate verb forms as well). The most prevalent dialect is Rioplatense, whose speakers are primarily located in the basin of the Río de la Plata.

Standard German is spoken by between 400,000 and 500,000 Argentines of German ancestry, though it has also been stated that there could be as much as 1,800,000. German today, is the third or fourth most spoken language in Argentina.

According to one survey, there are around 1,500,000 Italian speakers (which makes it the second most spoken language in the country) and 1,000,000 speakers of Levantine Arabic, but these numbers are probably no longer current, as the newer generations mostly switch to Spanish and do not speak the ancestral language in the home. The same phenomenon applies to the Galician language that was used by many Spanish immigrants, Yiddish, and Japanese. The usage of these languages is in decline, as the respective immigration waves ended in the first half of the 20th century.



The Cathedral of Córdoba, dating back to the seventeenth century.



Some indigenous communities have retained their original languages. Guaraní is spoken by some in the northeast, especially in Corrientes (where it enjoys official status) and Misiones. Quechua is spoken by some in the northwest, and has a local variant in Santiago del Estero. Aymara is spoken by members of the Bolivian community who migrated to Argentina from Bolivia. In Patagonia there are several Welsh-speaking communities. More recent immigrants have brought Chinese and Korean, mostly to Buenos Aires. English, Brazilian Portuguese and French are also spoken. English is commonly taught at schools, with Portuguese and French behind.

## Education

After independence, Argentina constructed a national public education system in comparison to other nations, placing the country high up in the global rankings of literacy. Today the country has a literacy rate of 97% (2003 Est.)

School attendance is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 17. The Argentine school system consists of a primary or lower school level lasting six or seven years, and a secondary or high school level lasting between five to six years. In the 1990s, the system was split into different types of high school instruction, called *Educacion Secundaria* and the *Polimodal*. Some provinces adopted the *Polimodal* while others did not. A project in the Executive to repeal this measure and return to a more traditional secondary level system was approved in 2006. President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento is overwhelmingly credited in pushing and implementing a free, modern education system in Argentina. The 1918 University reform shaped the current tripartite representation of most public universities.



The ubiquitous white uniform of Argentine school children; it is a national symbol of learning.

Education is funded by tax payers at all levels except for the majority of graduate studies. There are many private school institutions in the primary, secondary and university levels. Around 11.1 million people were enrolled in formal education of some kind:

- 9,551,728 people attended either kindergarten, primary (lower school), or secondary (high school) establishments;
- 494,461 people attended non-university level establishments (such as training or technical schools);
- 1,125,257 people attended colleges or universities.

Education in public schools (primary, secondary and tertiary) is free. Public education, which was perceived to be of the best quality during the mid 20th century, is now often perceived to be bad and in continuous decline because of lack of funding. This has helped private education to flourish, albeit it has also caused an imbalance in terms of who can afford it (usually middle and upper classes), as often private schools have no scholarship systems in place.

There are thirty-eight public universities across the country, as well as several private. The Universities of Buenos Aires (the largest one, has 300,000 students), Córdoba (110,000 students and one of the oldest in the continent), Rosario (75,000 students), La Plata (75,000 students) and UTN (National Technological University, 70,000 students) are among the most important. Public universities faced cutbacks in spending during the 1980s and 1990s, which led to a decline in overall quality.



## Holidays

Public holidays include most of the Catholic holidays, though holidays of other faiths are respected. The main historic holidays include the anniversaries of the May Revolution ( May 25), the Independence Day ( July 9), National Flag day ( June 20), and the death of the hero José de San Martín ( August 17).

On Christmas Eve, the extended family gathers around 9 p.m. for dinner, music, and often dancing. Candies are served just before midnight, when fireworks displays begin. The evening also includes opening gifts from Papá Noel (Father Christmas or "Santa Claus"). New Year's Day is marked with fireworks as well. Other holidays include Good Friday and Easter; Labor Day ( 1 May), and sovereignty Day (former Malvinas Day) ( 2 April).

## Science and technology

Argentina has contributed many distinguished doctors, scientists, and inventors to the world, including three Nobel Prize laureates in sciences.

Argentines have been responsible for major breakthroughs in world medicine. Domingo Liotta designed and developed the first artificial heart successfully implanted in a human being in 1969. René Favaloro developed the techniques and performed the world's first ever coronary bypass surgery, and Francisco de Pedro invented a more reliable artificial cardiac pacemaker. Medicine's Nobel laureate Bernardo Houssay, the first Latin American awarded with a Nobel Prize, discovered the role of pituitary hormones in regulating glucose in animals; Medicine's Nobel laureate César Milstein did extensive research in antibodies; and Chemistry's Nobel laureate Luis Leloir discovered how organisms store energy converting glucose into glycogen, and the compounds which are fundamental in metabolizing carbohydrates. Dr. Luis Agote devised the first safe method of blood transfusion and Dr. Domingo Liotta the first purely artificial heart. Enrique Finochietto designed operating table tools such as the surgical scissors that bear his name ("Finochietto scissors"), and a rib-spreader. Roberto Zaldívar is a pioneer in laser-eye procedures and research. Argentine research has led to advancement in wound-healing therapies, heart disease, and in several forms of cancer.



The Nueve de Julio Avenue, sometimes referred to as "the world's widest street". Its name honours Argentine Independence Day ( July 9, 1816).



Luis Federico Leloir won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1970.



Dr. Luis Agote (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) overseeing history's first safe and effective blood transfusion, 1914.

Argentina's nuclear program is highly advanced. Argentina developed its nuclear program without being overly dependent on foreign technology. Nuclear facilities with Argentine technology have been built in Peru, Algeria, Australia, and Egypt. In 1983, the country admitted having the capability of producing weapon-grade uranium, a major step to assemble nuclear weapons. Since then Argentina has pledged to use nuclear power only for peaceful purposes.

In other areas, Juan Vucetich, a Croatian immigrant, was the father of modern fingerprinting (dactiloscopia). (see fingerprint), Raúl Pateras de Pescara demonstrated the world's first flight of a helicopter, Hungarian-Argentine László Bíró mass-produced the first modern ball point pens and Eduardo Taurozzi developed the more efficient pendular combustion engine. Juan Maldacena, an Argentine-American scientist, is a leading figure in string theory. An Argentine satellite, the PEHUENSAT-1 was successfully launched on January 10, 2007 using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

## International rankings

Organization	Survey	Ranking
Heritage Foundation/ <i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	Index of Economic Freedom	107 out of 157
<i>The Economist</i>	Worldwide Quality-of-life Index, 2005	40 out of 111
Reporters Without Borders	Worldwide Press Freedom Index	76 out of 167
Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index	105 out of 163
United Nations Development Programme	Human Development Index	38 out of 177

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# Aruba

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

**Aruba** is a 33-kilometre (21 mi)-long island of the Lesser Antilles in the southern Caribbean Sea, 27 km (17 mi) north of the Paraguaná Peninsula, Falcón State, Venezuela. A country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Aruba has no administrative subdivisions. Unlike much of the Caribbean region, Aruba has a dry climate and an arid, cactus-strewn landscape. This climate has helped tourism as visitors to the island can reliably expect warm sunny weather. It has a land area of 193 km<sup>2</sup> (75 sq mi) and lies outside the hurricane belt.

## History

Aruba's first inhabitants were the Caquetios Amerindians from the Arawak tribe, who migrated there from Venezuela to escape attacks by the Caribs. Fragments of the earliest known Indian settlements date back from 1,000 AD. The Caquetios remained more tied to South America than the Caribbean, due to Aruba's distance from other Caribbean islands and sea currents which made canoe travel to other islands difficult.






The capital Oranjestad

Europeans first learned of Aruba when Amerigo Vespucci and Alonso de Ojeda came across it in August 1499. Vespucci in one of his four letters to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici described his voyage to the islands along the coast of Venezuela. He wrote about an island where most trees are of brazilwood and, from this island, he went to one ten leagues away, where they had houses built as in Venice. In another letter he described a small island inhabited by very large people, which the expedition thought was not inhabited.

Aruba was colonized by Spain for over a century.

The Cacique or Indian Chief in Aruba, Simas, welcomed the first priests in Aruba and received from

Aruba	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> "One happy Island"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Aruba Dushi Tera</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Oranjestad
<b>Official languages</b>	Dutch, Papiamentu <sup>1</sup>
<b>Demonym</b>	Aruban
<b>Government</b>	Constitutional monarchy
- Monarch	Queen Beatrix
- Governor	Fredis Refunjol





them a wooden cross as a gift. In 1508, Alonso de Ojeda was appointed as Spain's first Governor of Aruba, as part of "Nueva Andalucia."

Another governor appointed by Spain was Juan Martinez de Ampues. A "cédula real" decreed in November 1525 gave Ampués, factor of Española, the right to repopulate the depopulated islands of Aruba, Curaçao and Bonaire. The natives under Spanish rule enjoyed more liberty than the average northern European farmer of the period.

In 1528, Ampues was replaced by a representative of the "House of Welser". Aruba has been under Dutch administration since 1636, initially under Peter Stuyvesant. Stuyvesant was on a special mission in Aruba in November and December 1642. Under the Dutch W.I.C. administration, as "New Netherland and Curaçao" from 1648 to 1664 and the Dutch government regulations of 1629, also applied in Aruba. The Dutch administration appointed an Irishman as "Commandeur" in Aruba in 1667.

Great Britain occupied Aruba from the years 1799 to 1802, and from 1805 to 1816.

In August 1806, General Francisco de Miranda and a group of 200 freedom fighters on their voyage to liberate Venezuela from Spain stayed in Aruba for several weeks.

In 1933 Aruba sent its first petition for Aruba's separate status and autonomy to the Queen.

During World War II, together with Curaçao the then world-class exporting oil refineries were the main suppliers of refined products to the Allies. Aruba became a British protectorate from 1940 to 1942 and a US protectorate from 1942 to 1945. On February 16, 1942, its oil processing refinery was attacked by a German submarine ( U-156) under the command of Werner Hartenstein. Miraculously, the mission failed. The U-156 was later destroyed by a US plane as the crew was sunbathing; only one survived. In March 1944, Eleanor Roosevelt briefly visited American troops stationed in Aruba. In attendance were: His Excellency, Dr. P. Kasteel, the Governor of Curaçao, and his aide, Lieutenant Ivan Lansberg; Rear Admiral T. E. Chandler and his Aide, Lieutenant W. L. Edgington; Captain Jhr. W. Boreel and his aide, Lieutenant E. O. Holmberg; and the Netherlands aide to Mrs. Roosevelt, Lieutenant Commander v.d. Schatte Olivier.

The island's economy has been dominated by five main industries: gold mining, phosphate mining (The Aruba Phosphaat Maatschappij), aloe export, petroleum (The Lago Oil & Transport Company and the Arend Petroleum Maatschappij Shell Co.), and tourism.

## Politics

- Prime Minister	Nelson O. Oduber
- Vice-Prime Minister	Marisol Lopez-Tromp
<b>Independence</b>	from Netherlands Antilles
- Date	1 January 1986
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	193 km <sup>2</sup> 74.5 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- 2006 estimate	± 112,000 ( 195th)
- Density	571/km <sup>2</sup> ( 18th) 1,479/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$2.400 billion ( 182nd)
- Per capita	\$23,831 ( 32nd)
<b>Currency</b>	Aruban florin ( <span>AWG</span> <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Time zone</b>	AST ( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.aw
<b>Calling code</b>	+297
<p><sup>1</sup> Spanish and English also spoken.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> <i>Arubaanse Waarde Geld</i>.</p>	



As a Constituent Country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Aruba's politics take place within a framework of a 21-member Parliament and an eight-member Cabinet. The governor of Aruba is appointed for a six-year term by the monarch, and the prime minister and deputy prime minister are elected by the Staten (or "Parlamento") for four-year terms. The Staten is made up of 21 members elected by direct, popular vote to serve a four-year term.

Together, the State of the Netherlands, the State of the Netherlands Antilles, and the State of Aruba form a Commonwealth. As they share the same Dutch citizenship, these three countries still also share the Dutch passport as the Kingdom of the Netherlands passport. As Aruba and the Antilles have small populations, the two countries had to limit immigration. To protect their population, they have the right to control the admission of Netherlands nationals. There is the supervision of the admission and expulsion of Netherlands nationals and the setting of general conditions for the admission and expulsion of aliens.

## The move towards independence

In August 1947, Aruba presented its first "Staatsreglement (constitution)", for Aruba's "status aparte" as the status of a completely separate and autonomous state within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, under the authority of the Dutch crown. This is the same as in the UK's Statute of Westminster, an equal status of the Dominion Parliaments with the British Parliament, where the Dominions were under the authority of the crown and not of the government of the UK.

In November 1955, J. Irausquin of Aruba's PPA political party spoke in front of the United Nations Trust Committee. He ended his speech saying that in the future there will be changes to come.

In 1972, at a conference in Suriname, Betico Croes (MEP) proposed a "sui-generis" Dutch Commonwealth of four states: Aruba, the Netherlands, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles, each with its own nationality. Mr. C. Yarzagaray, a parliamentary member representing the AVP political party, proposed a referendum for the people of Aruba to determine Aruba's separate status or "Status Aparte" as a full autonomous state under the crown. He proclaimed: "Aruba shall never accept a federation and a second class nationality."

Betico Croes worked in Aruba to inform and prepare the people of Aruba for independence. In 1976, a committee appointed by Croes introduced the national flag and anthem as the symbols of Aruba's sovereignty and independence, and he also set 1981 as a target for Aruba's independence. In March of 1977, the first Referendum for Self Determination was held with the support of the United Nations and 82% of the participants voted for independence.

The Island Government of Aruba assigned the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague to prepare a study of Aruba's independence, which was published in 1978, titled "Aruba en Onafhankelijkheid, achtergronden, modaliteiten en mogelijkheden; een rapport in eerste aanleg".

At the conference in the Hague in 1981, Aruba's independence was then set for the year 1991. In March 1983, based on the Referendum, Aruba finally reached an official (de-colonization) agreement with the State of the Netherlands, the State of the Netherlands Antilles and the Island Governments, for Aruba's Independence, first becoming an autonomous country and member state of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with its own constitution, unanimously approved



Parliament of Aruba in Oranjestad.



and proclaimed in August 1985, and after an election held for Aruba's first parliament, Aruba officially became a member state of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on January 1, 1986, with full independence set for 1996, within a Dutch Commonwealth of sovereign states. This achievement is largely due to the late Betico Croes and the political support of other nations like the USA, Panama, Venezuela and various European countries. Croes was later proclaimed "Libertador di Aruba" after his tragic death in 1986.

In 1990, movement toward independence was postponed upon the request of Aruba's Prime Minister, Nelson O. Oduber. The article scheduling Aruba's complete independence was rescinded in 1995, although the process can begin again after a referendum.

Since January 1, 1986, the Kingdom has consisted of three completely autonomous, constitutionally equal countries: the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles, and Aruba.

Although the "equal status" of the countries is explicitly laid down in the preamble to the Charter, which states "...considering that they have expressed freely their will to establish a new constitutional order in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in which they will conduct their internal interests autonomously and their common interests on a basis of equality, and in which they will accord each other reciprocal assistance, have resolved by mutual consent", in practice, the Netherlands has considerably more power than either the Netherlands Antilles or Aruba.

## Law

Legal jurisdiction lies with a *Gerecht in Eerste Aanleg* ( Court of First Instance) on Aruba, a *Gemeenschappelijk Hof van Justitie voor de Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba* ( Common Court of Justice of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba) and the *Hoge Raad der Nederlanden* (Supreme Court of Justice of the Netherlands).

## Education

Aruba's educational system, patterned after the Dutch system, provides for education at all levels. The Government finances the national education system, except for private schools, such as the International School of Aruba (ISA), which finance their own activities. The percentage of money earmarked for education is higher than the average for the Caribbean/Latin American region.

Arubans benefit from a strong primary school education. A segmented secondary school program includes vocational training (VMBO), basic education (MAVO), college prep (HAVO) and advanced placement (VWO).

Higher education goals can be pursued through the Professional Education program (EPI), the teachers college (IPA) as well as through the University of Aruba (UA) which offers bachelors and masters programs in law, finance and economics and hospitality and tourism management. Since the choice for higher education on the island itself is limited, many students choose to study abroad in countries in North America, South America as well as Europe.

There are 68 schools for primary education, 12 schools for secondary education and 5 Universities.

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## Geography

Aruba is a generally flat, riverless island in the Leeward Antilles island arc of the Lesser Antilles. Aruba is renowned for its white, sandy beaches on the western and southern coasts of the island, relatively sheltered from fierce ocean currents. The northern and eastern coasts, lacking this protection, are considerably more battered by the sea and have been left largely untouched by humans. The interior of the island features some rolling hills, the better two of which are called Hooiberg at 165 meters (541 ft) and Mount Jamanota, the highest on the island at 188 metres (617 ft) above sea level. Oranjestad, the capital, is located at .

To the east of Aruba are Bonaire and Curaçao, two island territories which form the southwest part of the Netherlands Antilles; Aruba and these two Netherlands Antilles islands are sometimes called the ABC islands.

The isothermal temperature of Aruba's pleasantly tropical marine climate attracts tourists to the island all year round. Temperature varies little from 28 °C (82 °F), moderated by constant trade winds from the Atlantic Ocean. Yearly precipitation barely reaches 500 mm (19.7 in), most of it falling in late autumn.

Most tourist hotels are located on the leeward side of the island, providing better weather and enjoyment of beaches and ocean.

## Economy

Aruba enjoys one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean region; the low unemployment rate is also positive for Aruba. About three-quarter of the Aruban gross national product is earned through tourism or related activities. Most of the tourists are from Venezuela and the United States (predominately from eastern and southern states), Aruba's largest trading partner. Before the "Status Aparte", (a separate completely autonomous country/state within the Kingdom), oil processing was the dominant industry in Aruba despite expansion of the tourism sector. Today, the influence of the oil processing business is minimal. The size of the agriculture and manufacturing sectors also remains minimal.

The G.D.P. per capita for Aruba is calculated to be \$23,831 in 2007; among the highest in the Caribbean and the Americas.

Deficit spending has been a staple in Aruba's history, and modestly high inflation has been present as well. Recent efforts at tightening monetary policy are correcting this and will have its first balanced budget in 2009. Aruba receives some development aid from the Dutch government each year, which will cease in 2009 as part of a deal (signed as "Aruba's Financial Independence") in which the Netherlands gradually reduces its financial help to the island each successive year. The Aruban florin is pegged to the United States dollar, with a fixed exchange rate where 1.79 Florin equals 1 U.S. dollar.

In 2006 the Aruban government has also changed several tax laws in order to further reduce the deficit. Direct taxes have been converted to indirect taxes as

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Map of Aruba



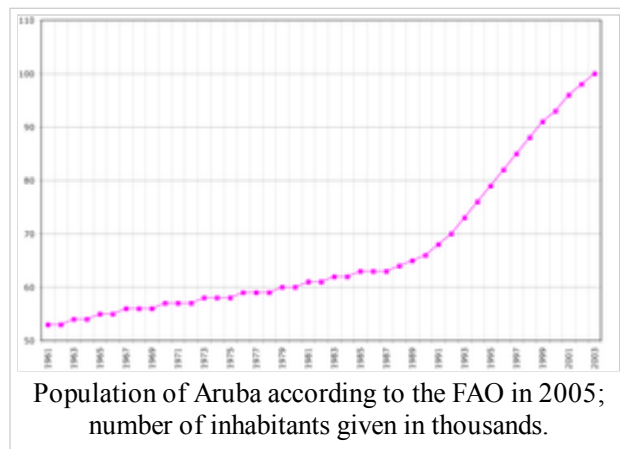
A sunset in Aruba.



proposed by the IMF. A 3% tax has been introduced on sales and services, while income taxes have been lowered and revenue taxes for business reduced with 20%. The government compensated workers with 3.1% for the effect that the B.B.O. would have on the inflation for 2007. The inflation on Aruba in 2007 was 8,7%.

Aruba has the third largest seawater desalination plant in the world after Saudi Arabia and Curaçao.

## Demographics



Aruba is situated in the deep southern part of the Caribbean. Because of almost no rainfall, Aruba was saved from plantation and the economics of the slave trade.

Aruba's population is estimated to be 80% mestizo and 20% other ethnicities. Arawaks spoke the "broken Spanish" which their ancestors had learned on Hispaniola. The Dutch took control almost two centuries after the Spanish, and left the Arawaks to farm and graze livestock, and used the island as a source of meat for other Dutch possessions in the Caribbean. The Arawak heritage is stronger on Aruba than on most Caribbean islands. Although no full-blooded Aborigines remain, the features of the islanders clearly indicate their genetic Arawak heritage. Most of the population is descended mostly from Arawak, and to a lesser extent Spanish, Italian and Dutch and a few French, British and African ancestors.

Recently there has been substantial immigration to the island from neighboring American and Caribbean nations, possibly attracted by the higher paid jobs. In 2007, new immigration laws were introduced to help control the growth of the population by restricting foreign workers to a maximum of 3 years residency on

the island.

## Culture



On March 18 Aruba celebrates its National Day. In 1976, Aruba presented its National Anthem (Aruba Dushi Tera) and Flag.

The origins of the population and location of the island give Aruba a mixed culture. Dutch influence can still be seen, as in the celebration of " Sinterklaas" on December 5 and 6 and other national holidays like April 30, when in Aruba and the rest of the Kingdom of the Netherlands the Queen's birthday or "Dia di La Reina" ( Koninginnedag) is celebrated.

Christmas and New Year are celebrated with the typical music and songs of gaitas for Christmas and the Dande for New Year, and the "ayaca", the "ponchi crema" and "ham", and other typical foods and drinks. Millions of dollars worth of fireworks are burnt at midnight on New Year's.

On January 25, Betico's Croes birthday is celebrated.

The holiday of Carnival is also an important one in Aruba, as it is in many Caribbean and Latin American countries, and, like Mardi Gras, that goes on for weeks. Its celebration in Aruba started, around the 1950s, influenced by the inhabitants from the nearby islands (Venezuela, St Vincent, Trinidad, Barbados and Amquilla) who came to work for the Oil refinery. Over the years the Carnival Celebration has changed and now starts from the beginning of January till the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday with a large parade on the last Sunday of the festivities (Sunday before Ash Wednesday).

In June there is the celebration of the "Dia di San Juan", with the song of "Dera Gai".

Tourism from the United States has recently also increased the visibility of American culture on the island, with such celebrations as Halloween and Thanksgiving Day in November.

Religion also has its influences; the days of Ascension and Good Friday are also two holidays on the island.

According to the *Bureau Burgelijke Stand en Bevolkingsregister* (BBSB), as of 2005 there are ninety-two different nationalities living on the island.

## Language

Language can be seen as an important part of island culture in Aruba. The cultural mixture has given rise to a linguistic mixture known as Papiamentu, the predominant language on Aruba. The two official languages are the Dutch language and Papiamentu. Papiamentu is a language that has been evolving through the centuries and absorbed many words from other languages like Dutch, English, diverse African dialects, and most importantly, from Portuguese and Spanish. However, like many islands in the region, Spanish is also often spoken. English has historical connections (with the British Empire) and is known by many; English usage has also grown due to tourism. Other common languages spoken based on the size of their community are Portuguese, Chinese, German and French. The latter is offered in high school and college, since a high percentage of Aruban students continue their studies in Europe.

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Oranjestad, Aruba



In recent years, the government of Aruba has shown an increased interest in acknowledging the cultural and historical importance of its native language. Although spoken Papiamentu is fairly similar among the several Papiamentu-speaking islands, there is a big difference in written Papiamentu. The orthography differs per island and even per group of people. Some are more oriented towards the Portuguese roots and use the equivalent spelling (e.g. "y" instead of "j"), where others are more oriented towards the Dutch roots.

In a book *The Buccaneers of America* first published in 1678, is stated by eyewitness account that the Indians on Aruba spoke "Spanish". The oldest government official statement written in Papiamentu dates from 1803.

Aruba has four newspapers published in Papiamentu: *Diario*, *Bon Dia*, *Solo di Pueblo* and *Awe Mainta* and two in English : *Aruba Today* and *The News*. Aruba also has 18 Radio Stations (2 AM and 16 FM) and three local Television stations (Tele-Aruba, Aruba Broadcast Company and Star Television).

## Infrastructure

Aruba's Queen Beatrix International Airport is located near Oranjestad. This airport has daily flights to various cities across the United States, to San Juan, Puerto Rico; Miami, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; Philadelphia and Pittsburgh Pennsylvania; Houston, Texas; Atlanta, Georgia; Charlotte, North Carolina; Washington DC; New York, and Boston, Massachusetts. It also connects Aruba with Canada and South America, with daily flights to the international airports of Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Germany, France, Spain, England and most of Europe through the Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands. Direct flight from Italy will start in November 2008.

According to the Aruba Airport Authority, in 2005 almost 1.7 million travelers used the airport, of which 61% were Americans.

U.S. Immigration and Nat. Services (INS) full pre-clearance in Aruba has been in effect since February 1, 2001 at the Queen Beatrix Airport and since 2008, the only island to have this service for private flights. Since 1999, the US defense department established a Forward Operating Location at the airport.

## Utilities on the island

Electricity is produced by the Water- en Energiebedrijf Aruba (WEB) N.V. The total power generating capacity of the steam turbines amounts to 149 megawatts. There is also a 22 megawatt gas turbine as a backup unit, while a 6.5 MW diesel generator serves as an emergency unit. WEB N.V. produces an average of 60 MW, which together with a contracted supply from the refining company, is sufficient to comply with the average demand of 77 MW.

WEB N.V. delivers electricity to the distribution company N.V. Electriciteit-Maatschappij Aruba (Elmar). Electricity is supplied at a 60-hertz frequency, and at 127 and 220 volts. Consumption of electricity has increased steadily since 1986 from 219,000 MW·h to 759,336 MW·h in 2005.

Water: Potable industrial water is produced from seawater by the Water- en Energiebedrijf Aruba (WEB) N.V., the world's second largest desalination plant. The total installed desalination capacity of the water plant (Multi Stage Flash) units is 42,000 metric tons per day . Average daily consumption in 2005 was about 37,043 metric tons.

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## Places of interest

- Alto Vista Chapel
- Arikok National Park
- Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations
- Bushiribana and Balashi
- California Lighthouse
- Frenchman's Pass
- Hooiberg
- Lourdes Grotto
- Natural Bridge\*
- Natural Pool
- Palm Beach
- Eagle Beach
- Arashi
- Caves of Aruba
- Baby Beach, Aruba
- Aruba Aloe Factory
- Palm Island

\* Collapsed September 2, 2005

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# Barbados

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

**Barbados** (Portuguese word for *bearded-ones*, pronounced /barˈbeɪdɒz, -dəs/), situated just east of the Caribbean Sea, is an independent island nation in the western Atlantic Ocean. At roughly 13° North of the equator and 59° West of the prime meridian, the country lies in the southern Caribbean region, where it is considered a part of the Lesser Antilles. Its closest island neighbours are Saint Vincent & the Grenadines and Saint Lucia to the west. To the south lies Trinidad and Tobago—with which Barbados now shares a fixed official maritime boundary—and also the South American mainland. Barbados's total land area is about 430 square kilometres (166 square miles), and is primarily low-lying, with some higher regions in the country's interior. The highest point in Barbados is Mount Hillaby in the parish of Saint Andrew. The geological composition of Barbados is thought to be of non-volcanic origin and is predominantly composed of limestone- coral formed by subduction of the South American plate colliding with the Caribbean plate. The island's climate is tropical, with constant trade winds off the Atlantic Ocean serving to keep temperatures mild. Some less developed areas of the country contain tropical woodland and mangroves. Other parts of the interior which contribute to the agriculture industry are dotted with large sugarcane estates and wide, gently sloping pastures, with panoramic views down to the coast.




Barbados's human development index ranking is consistently among the top 50 in the world. For example, in 2006, it was ranked 31st in the world, and third in the Americas, behind Canada and the United States.

## History

### Etymology

According to accounts by descendants of the aboriginal Arawak tribes on other local islands, the original name for Barbados was **Ichirouganaim**.

The origin of the name "Barbados" is controversial. The Portuguese, en route to Brazil are credited as the first Europeans to discover and name the island. It is a matter of conjecture whether the word "bearded"

<b>Barbados</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> "Pride and Industry"	
<b>Anthem:</b> In Plenty and In Time of Need	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Bridgetown
<b>Official languages</b>	English
Recognised regional languages	Barbadian Dialect
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	90% Afro-Caribbean, 4% European, 6% Asian and Multiracial



refers to the long, hanging roots of the bearded fig-tree (*Ficus citrifolia*), indigenous to the island, to bearded Caribs inhabiting the island, or to the foam spraying over the outlying reefs giving the impression of a beard. In 1519, a map produced by the Genoese mapmaker Vesconte de Maggiola showed and named Barbados in its correct position north of the island of Dominica.

## Early history

The first indigenous people were Amerindians who arrived here from Venezuela around approximately 350-400 B.C. The Arawak people were the second wave of migrants, arriving from South America around 800. In the thirteenth century, the Caribs arrived from South America in the third wave, displacing both the Arawak and the Salodoid-Barrancoid . For the next few centuries, the Caribs — like the Arawak and the Salodoid-Barrancoid — lived in isolation on the island.

The Portuguese then briefly claimed Barbados from the mid 1500s to the 1600s; and may have seized the indigenous Caribs on Barbados and used them as slave labour. Other Caribs are believed to have fled the island to neighbouring islands. Apart from possibly displacing the Caribs, the Portuguese left little impact and by the 1610s, they left for South America leaving the island uninhabited.

## British colonial rule

British sailors who landed on Barbados in 1625 arrived at the site of present-day Holetown. At the time it was inhabited only by the feral pigs descended from those left behind by the Portuguese. From the arrival of the first British settlers in 1627–1628 until independence in 1966, Barbados was under uninterrupted British control. Nevertheless, Barbados always enjoyed a large measure of local autonomy. Its House of Assembly began meeting in 1639. Among the initial important British figures was Sir William Courten.

With the increased implementation of slave codes, which created differential treatment between Africans and the white settlers, the island became increasingly unattractive to poor whites. Black or slave codes were implemented in 1661, 1676, 1682, and 1688. In response to these codes, several slave rebellions were attempted or planned during this time, but none succeeded. However, an increasingly repressive legal system caused the gap between the treatment of typically white indentured servants and black slaves to widen. Imported slaves became much more attractive for the rich planters who would increasingly dominate the island not only economically but also politically. Some have speculated that, because the Africans could withstand tropical diseases and the climate much better than the white slave population, the white population decreased. This is inconsistent with the fact that many poor whites simply migrated to neighbouring islands and remained in tropical climates. Nevertheless, as those poor whites who had or acquired the means to emigrate often did so, and with the increased importation of African slaves, Barbados turned from mainly Celtic in the seventeenth century to overwhelmingly black by the nineteenth

<b>Demonym</b>	Barbadian (Official) Bajan (Slang)
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
<span> </span> - Monarch	Elizabeth II
<span> </span> - Governor-General	Clifford Husbands
<span> </span> - Prime Minister	David Thompson
<b>Independence</b>	From the United Kingdom
<span> </span> - Date	30 November 1966
<b>Area</b>	
<span> </span> - Total	431 km <sup>2</sup> ( 199th) 167 sq mi
<span> </span> - Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
<span> </span> - July 2006 estimate	279,000 ( 174th)
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$4.9 billion ( 149th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$17,610 ( 39th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.892 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 31st)
<b>Currency</b>	Barbadian dollar (\$) ( <span>BBD</span> )
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.bb
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 (246)



century.

Barbados eventually had one of the world's biggest sugar industries after Jews from Brazil introduced the sugarcane to the island in the mid 1600s. This quickly replaced tobacco plantations on the islands which were previously the main export. As the sugar industry developed into its main commercial enterprise, Barbados was divided into large plantation estates that replaced the smallholdings of the early British settlers. Some of the displaced farmers moved to British colonies in North America, most notably North and South Carolina, Panama and British Guiana. To work the plantations, West Africans were transported and enslaved on Barbados and other Caribbean islands. The British abolished the slave trade in 1807. In 1816, the continuation of slavery caused the largest major slave rebellion in the island's history. 20,000 slaves from over seventy plantations rebelled. Whites were driven off of plantations, yet mass killings were avoided. Later termed "Bussa's Rebellion" after the slave ranger Bussa who with his assistants hated slavery, found the treatment of slaves on Barbados to be "intolerable," and believed the political climate in the UK made the time ripe to peacefully negotiate with planters for freedom (Davis, p. 211, Northrup, p. 191). Brussa's Rebellion failed. One hundred and twenty died in combat or were immediately executed; another 144 were brought to trial and executed; remaining rebels were shipped off the island (Davis, pp. 212-213). Slavery was abolished in the British Empire eighteen years later in 1834. In Barbados and the rest of the British West Indian colonies, full emancipation from slavery was preceded by an apprenticeship period that lasted four years.



Statue of Nelson in National Heroes Square which predates the more famous Nelson's Column by some 27 years.

In 1884, the Barbados Agricultural Society sent a letter to Sir Francis Hincks requesting his private and public views on whether the Dominion of Canada would favourably entertain having the then colony of Barbados admitted as a member of the Canadian Confederation. Asked of Canada were the terms of the Canadian side to initiate discussions, and whether or not the island of Barbados could depend on the full influence of Canada in getting the change agreed to by the United Kingdom. Then in 1952 the Barbados Advocate newspaper polled several prominent Barbadian politicians, lawyers, businessmen, the Speaker of the Barbados House of Assembly and later as first President of the Senate, Sir Theodore Branker, Q.C. and found them to be in favour of immediate federation of Barbados along with the rest of the British Caribbean with complete Dominion Status within five years from the date of inauguration of the West Indies Federation with Canada.

However, plantation owners and merchants of British descent still dominated local politics, owing to the high income qualification required for voting. More than 70% of the population, many of them disenfranchised women, were excluded from the democratic process. It was not until the 1930s that the descendants of emancipated slaves began a movement for political rights. One of the leaders of this movement, Sir Grantley Adams, founded the Barbados Labour Party, then known as the Barbados Progressive League, in 1938. A staunch supporter of the monarchy, Adams and his party demanded more rights for the poor and for the people. Progress toward a more democratic government in Barbados was made in 1942, when the exclusive income qualification was lowered and women were given the right to vote. By 1949 governmental control was wrested from the planters and, in 1958, Adams became Premier of Barbados.

From 1958 to 1962, Barbados was one of the ten members of the West Indies Federation, an organisation doomed by nationalistic attitudes and by the fact that its members, as British colonies, held limited legislative power. Adams served as its first and only "Premier", but his leadership failed in attempts to form similar unions, and his continued defence of the monarchy was used by his opponents as evidence that he was no longer in touch with the needs of his country. Errol Walton Barrow, a fervent reformer, became the new people's advocate. Barrow had



left the BLP and formed the Democratic Labour Party as a liberal alternative to Adams' conservative government. Barrow instituted many progressive social programmes, such as free education for all Barbadians, and the School Meals system. By 1961, Barrow had replaced Adams as Premier and the DLP controlled the government.

With the Federation dissolved, Barbados had reverted to its former status, that of a self-governing colony. The island negotiated its own independence at a constitutional conference with the United Kingdom in June 1966. After years of peaceful and democratic progress, Barbados finally became an independent state within the Commonwealth of Nations on November 30, 1966, with Errol Barrow its first Prime Minister.

## Government and politics

Barbados has been an independent state in the Commonwealth since November 30, 1966. It functions as a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy, modeled on the British Westminster system, with Elizabeth II, Queen of Barbados, as head of state and the Prime Minister as the head of the government. Its Parliament comprises thirty seats. It has been proposed that Barbados become a republic with a president replacing the Barbadian sovereign; this issue is still being debated, as the island has been stable and governmentally autonomous for decades.

Barbados is a full and participating member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Caribbean (CARICOM) Single Market and Economy (CSME), the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), which pertains only to Barbados and Guyana but is expected to replace the UK Privy Council for the entire English-speaking Caribbean eventually, and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

Barbados has a two party system, the two dominant parties being the ruling Democratic Labour Party and the Barbados Labour Party. The Barbados Labour Party (BLP) had been in government for fifteen years, since 1993 until the 2008 general election. Under this administration, the Former Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Owen S. Arthur also acted as the Regional Leader of the CSM (Caribbean Single Market). The Right Honorable David Thompson is the Prime Minister of Barbados.



Parliamentary building.

## Geography



Beach near Bridgetown,  
Barbados.

Barbados is a relatively flat island, rising gently to the central highland region, the highest point being Mount Hillaby, in the Scotland District , at 340 metres (1,100 ft) above sea level. The island is located in the Atlantic Ocean, to the east of the other Caribbean islands. The climate is tropical, with a rainy season from June to October.

Barbados is often spared the worst effects of the region's tropical storms and hurricanes during the rainy season as its far eastern location in the Atlantic Ocean puts it just outside the principal hurricane strike zone, and a hurricane hits about every 26 years.

In the parish of Saint Michael lies Barbados' capital and main city, Bridgetown. Locally Bridgetown is sometimes referred to as "The City", but the most common reference is simply "Town". Other towns scattered across the island include Holetown, in the parish of Saint

James; Oistins, in the parish of Christ Church, and Speightstown, in the parish of Saint Peter.

It is geologically composed of coral (90 m/300 ft thick). The land falls in a series of "terraces" in the west and goes into an incline in the east. Most of Barbados is circled by coral reefs.

The climate is moderate tropical with two seasons; dry and wet. The dry season (Dec-May) and wet season (June- Nov) gives an annual rainfall of 40-90 inches (1,000–2,300 mm).

## Parishes

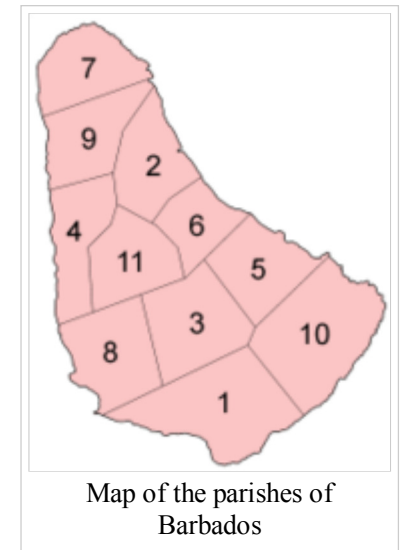


Map of Barbados



Barbados is divided into eleven administrative parishes:

1. Christ Church
2. Saint Andrew
3. Saint George
4. Saint James
5. Saint John
6. Saint Joseph
7. Saint Lucy
8. Saint Michael ( The Saint Michael in is capital Bridgetown. )
9. Saint Peter
10. Saint Philip
11. Saint Thomas



## Economy

Historically, the economy of Barbados had been dependent on sugarcane cultivation and related activities, but in recent years it has diversified into the manufacturing and tourism sectors. Offshore finance and information services have become important foreign exchange earners, and there is a healthy light manufacturing sector. In recent years the Government has been seen as business-friendly and economically sound. Since the late 1990s the island has seen a construction boom, with the development and redevelopment of hotels, office complexes, and homes.

The government continues its efforts to reduce unemployment, encourage direct foreign investment, and privatize remaining state-owned enterprises. Unemployment has been reduced from around 14 percent in the past to under 10 percent.

The economy contracted in 2001 and 2002 due to slowdowns in tourism, consumer spending and the impact of the September 11, 2001 attacks, but rebounded in 2003 and has shown growth since 2004. Traditional trading partners include Canada, the Caribbean Community (especially Trinidad and Tobago), the United Kingdom and the United States.

Business links and investment flows have become substantial: as of 2003 the island saw from Canada C\$25 billion in investment holdings, placing it as one of Canada's top five destinations for Canadian Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Businessman Eugene Melnyk of Toronto, Canada, is said to be Barbados' richest permanent resident.



It is thought that the year 2006 will turn out to have been one of the busiest years for building construction ever in Barbados, as the building-boom on the island has entered a final stage for several multi-million dollar projects across the island..

## Transport

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Transport on the island is good, with 'route taxis', called "ZR's" (pronounced "Zed-Rs" not "Zee-Rs"), travelling to most points on the island. These small buses can at times be crowded, but will usually take the more scenic routes to destinations. They generally depart from the capital Bridgetown or from Speightstown in the northern part of the island.



A Mini Moke at Speightstown beach

The island of Barbados's lone airport is the *Sir Grantley Adams International Airport (GAIA)* ( IATA identifier BGI). It receives daily flights by several major airlines from points around the globe, as well as several smaller regional commercial airlines and charters. The airport serves as the main air-transportation hub for the Eastern Caribbean. It is undergoing a US\$100 million upgrade and expansion.

There are three bus systems running seven days a week (though less frequently on Sundays), and a ride on any of them costs \$1.50 BBD. The smaller buses from the two privately-owned systems ("ZR's" and "minibuses") can give change; the larger blue and yellow buses from the government-operated Barbados Transport Board system cannot. Most routes require a connection in Bridgetown. Some drivers within the competitive privately owned systems are reluctant to advise persons to use competing services, even if those would be more suitable.

Some hotels also provide visitors with shuttles to points of interest on the island from outside the hotel lobby. The island also has plenty of taxis for hire, though they can be expensive. Visitors also have the option of transport by car, presuming that they have a driver's licence (issued in their native country). There are several locally-owned and -operated vehicle rental agencies in Barbados but there are no multi-national car-rental agencies such as Avis, Europcar or Hertz.

There is also a helicopter shuttle service, which offers air taxi services to a number of sites around the island, mainly on the West Coast tourist belt. Air and water traffic is regulated by the Barbados Port Authority.

## Tourist information

The island is well developed, and there are internationally-known hotels offering world-class accommodation. Time-shares are available, and many of the smaller local hotels and private villas which dot the island have space available if booked in advance. The southern and western coasts of Barbados are popular, with the calm light blue Atlantic Ocean and their fine white and pinkish sandy beaches. Along the island's east coast the Atlantic Ocean side are tumbling waves which are perfect for light surfing, but a little bit risky due to under-tow currents.

Shopping districts are popular in Barbados, with ample duty-free shopping. There is also a festive night-life in mainly tourist areas such as the Saint Lawrence Gap. Other attractions include wildlife reserves, jewellery stores, scuba diving, helicopter rides, golf, festivals (the largest being the annual crop over festival July/Aug), sightseeing, cave exploration, exotic drinks and fine clothes shopping.



Chamberlain Bridge,  
Bridgetown

## Attractions, landmarks and points of interest

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Tourism accounts for almost one half of the economy. Name / Parish Location:

**- Christ Church**

- Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary
- St. Lawrence Gap

**- St. Andrew**

- Cherry Tree Hill
- Morgan Lewis Windmill
- Chalky Mount potteries

**- St. George**

- Gun Hill Signal Station
- Francia Great House
- Orchid World

**- St. James**

- Folkestone Marine Park

**- St. John**

- Codrington College
- St. John Parish Church

**- St. Joseph**

- Andromeda Gardens
- Flower Forest
- Hackleton's Cliff

**- St. Lucy**

- Animal Flower Cave
- Little Bay, Barbados|Little Bay

**- St. Michael**

- Barbados Historical Museum
- Bridgetown Synagogue and Cemetery
- Bussa Emancipation Statue
- Garrison Savannah
- Kensington Oval

**- St. Peter**

- Barbados Wildlife Reserve
- Farley Hill National Park

**- St. Philip**

- Sunbury Plantation

**- St. Thomas**

- Harrison's Cave
- Welchman Hall Gully
- Sharon Moravian Church
- Clifton Hill Moravian Church

*List of:* Cities, towns and villages in Barbados.

- Bridgetown
- Speightstown
- Holetown
- Oistins

## Demographics





Barbados has a population of about 279,000 and a population growth rate of 0.33% (Mid-2005 estimates). Close to 90 percent of all Barbadians (also known colloquially as *Bajan*) are of African descent ("Afro-Bajans"), mostly descendants of the slave labourers on the sugar plantations. The remainder of the population includes groups of Europeans ("Anglo-Bajans" / "Euro-Bajans") mainly from the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Chinese locally known as Bajan-Chiney, Bajan Hindus from India and Muslims from Bangladesh and Pakistan, and an influential "Arab-Bajans" group mainly of Christian Syrians and Lebanese descent. On the island are many people of Creole descent, a mixture of Afro-Caribbean and European descent (Primarily British, Irish and Portuguese).

Other groups in Barbados include people from the United Kingdom ( Barbadian Britons), United States and Canada. Barbadians who return after years of residence in the U.S. are called "Bajan Yankees"; this term is considered derogatory by some.

The country's official language is English, the local dialect of which is referred to as Bajan, spoken by most. In religion, most Barbadians are Protestant Christians (67%), chiefly of the Anglican Church, but there are other Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jehovah's Witness, Hindu, Muslim and Jewish minorities. Barbados is a chief destination for emigrants from the South American nation of Guyana. The biggest communities outside the Afro-Caribbean community are:

1. The Indo-Guyanese, an important part of the economy due to the increase of immigrants from partner country Guyana. There are reports of a growing Indo-Bajan diaspora originating from Guyana and India. They introduced soca-chutney , roti and many Indian dishes to Barbados' culture. Mostly from southern India and Hindu states, these 'Desi' peoples are growing in size but smaller than the equivalent communities in Trinidad & Guyana; Hinduism is one of Barbados' growing religions.
2. Euro-Bajans have settled in Barbados since the 1500s, originating from England, Portugal, Ireland and Scotland. More commonly they are known as " White Bajans", although some carry Afro-Caribbean traces and vice-versa. Euro-Bajans introduced folk music, such as Irish music and Highland music, and certain place names, such as "Scotland", a mountainous region, and "Trafalgar Square" in Bridgetown, now renamed "Heroes Square".
3. Chinese-Barbadians (or, as they are known on the island, "Bajan-Chineys") are a small portion of Barbados' Asian demographics, smaller than the equivalent communities of Jamaica and Trinidad. Most if not all first arrived in the 1940s during the Second World War, originating mainly from the then British territory of Hong Kong. Many Chinese-Bajans have the surnames Chin, Chynn or Lee, although other surnames prevail in certain areas of the island. Chinese food and culture is becoming part of everyday Bajan culture.
4. Lebanese and Syrians form the Middle Eastern community on the island and make up 89% of the Muslim population. Middle-Eastern Barbadians are often perceived to be the most successful group in business, along with the Chinese Bajans. During the Arab Israeli Wars, many Syrians and Lebanese headed for the West Indies to escape conflict and poverty in the Middle East. Also Jewish people arrived in Barbados around the same time, creating the biggest synagogue in the West Indies.
5. Latin Americans have been migrating to the island since the 18th century, due to the close proximity, many Venezuelans had migrated to Barbados as labourers via Trinidad. Brazilian Jews, Colombians and Panamanians have also lived on the island. The Spanish language is now being encouraged to be taught in Barbadian schools over French.



A bus stop in Barbados



High Street



## Culture

The influence of the English on Barbados is more noticeable than on other islands in the West Indies. A good example of this is the island's national sport: cricket. Barbados has brought forth several great cricket players, including Garfield Sobers and Frank Worrell.

Citizens are officially called Barbadians; Barbados' residents, however, colloquially refer to themselves or the products of the country as "Bajan". The term "Bajan" may have come from a localized pronunciation of the word Barbadian which at times can sound more like "Bar-bajan".

The largest carnival-like cultural event which takes place on the island is the *Crop Over* festival. As in many other Caribbean and Latin American countries, *Crop Over* is an important event for many people on the island, as well as the thousands of tourists that flock to the island to participate in the annual events. The festival includes musical competitions and other traditional activities. It gets under way from the beginning of July, and ends with the costumed parade on Kadooment Day, held on the first Monday of August.

Barbados retains a strong British influence and is referred to by its neighbours as "Little England".

Another name associated with Barbados is "Bim" or "Bimshire". According to the National Cultural Foundation of Barbados, "Bim" was a word commonly used by slaves. It derives from the phrase "bi mu" from an Igbo phrase, meaning "my people." In colloquial or literary contexts, "Bim" can also take a more deific tone, referring to the "goddess" Barbados.

## Sports in Barbados

As in other Caribbean countries of British descent, cricket is a favourite sport. In addition to several warm-up matches and six "Super Eight" matches, Barbados hosted the final of the 2007 Cricket World Cup.

In golf, the Barbados Open is an annual stop on the European Seniors Tour. In December 2006 the WGC-World Cup took place at the country's Sandy Lane resort on the Country Club course, an eighteen-hole course designed by Tom Fazio.

Motorsports also play a role, with Rally Barbados occurring each summer and currently being listed on the FIA NACAM calendar.

Netball is also popular with women in Barbados.

## National symbols



## Flower

The national flower is the Pride of Barbados or *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* (L.) Sw., which grows across the island.

## Flag

The trident centered within the flag is a representation of the mythological Neptune, god of the sea. The trident in its original unbroken form was taken from the former colonial seal, which itself was replaced by the current coat of arms. Used within the national flag, the left and right shafts of the trident were then designed as 'broken' representing the nation of Barbados breaking away from its historical and constitutional ties as a former colony.

The three points of the trident represent in Barbados the three principles of democracy - "government of, for and by the people." The broken trident is set in a centered vertical band of gold representing the sands of Barbados' beaches. The gold band itself is surrounded on both sides by vertical bands of ultramarine (blue) representing the sea and sky of Barbados.

The design for the flag was created by Grantley W. Prescod and was chosen from an open competition arranged by the Barbados government. Over a thousand entries were received.

## Golden Shield

The Golden Shield in the coat of arms carries two "Pride of Barbados" flowers and the "bearded" fig tree (*Ficus citrifolia* or *Ficus barbata*), which was common on the island at the time of its settlement by the British and may have contributed to Barbados being so named.

## Coat of arms

The coat of arms depicts two animals which are supporting the shield. On the left is a "dolphin", symbolic of the fishing industry and sea-going past of Barbados. On the right is a pelican, symbolic of a small island named Pelican Island that once existed off the coast of Bridgetown. Above the shield is the helmet of Barbados with an extended arm clutching two sugar-cane stalks. The "cross" formation made by the cane stalks represents the saltire cross upon which Saint Andrew was crucified. On the base of the Coat of Arms reads "Pride and Industry" in reference to the country's motto.

## International rankings

- - GDP - (PPP) per capita:
  - 2004: ranked 59 of 232 countries & territories -- \$ 15,700 59th
- Economist, The, Worldwide quality-of-life index:



A yellow and red Pride of Barbados.



- 2005 ranked 33 out of 111 countries 33rd
- Heritage Foundation/The Wall Street Journal, Index of Economic Freedom countries:
  - 2005 ranked 32 of 155 countries 32nd
- International Telecommunication Union, Digital Access Index (Top 10 in Americas):
  - 2002: ranked 45 of 178 countries 45th
- Literacy rate, countries by literacy rate - by UNDP
  - 2005: ranked 23rd of 177 countries -- 99.7%
- Reporters without borders:
  - 2004: N/A
- Save the Children, State of the World's Mothers:
  - 2004: N/A
- Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index:
  - 2004: ranked 21 out of 146 countries surveyed 21st
- UN, Human Development Index (HDI):
  - 2006: ranked 31st out of 177 countries 31st (3rd in the Americas, after Canada and the United States).
  - 2005: ranked 30th out of 177 countries 30th
  - 2004: ranked 29th out of 177 countries 29th
  - 2003: ranked 27th out of 175 countries 27th
  - 2002: ranked 31st out of 173 countries 31st
  - 2001: ranked 31st out of 162 countries 31st
  - 2000: ranked 30th out of 174 countries 30th
  - 1999: ranked 29th out of 174 countries 29th
  - 1998: N/A
- World Economic Forum, Global Competitiveness Report/Growth Competitiveness Index:
  - 2006-2007: ranked 31st out of 125 countries 31st (Barbados' debut to the list)
- World Economic Forum, The Global Information Technology Report 2006-2007's " Networked Readiness Index":
  - 2006-2007: ranked 40th out of 122 countries 40th (Barbados' debut to the list)
- World Bank:
  - Total GDP per capita
    - 2003 (World Bank): ranked 38 -- \$ 15,712
  - Total GDP (nominal)
    - 2003: ranked 138 -- \$ 2,628

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# Belize

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

**Belize** (pronounced /bəˈliːz/), formerly British Honduras, is a country in Central America. Once part of the Mayan and Spanish empires, it was most recently a British colony, gaining its independence in 1981. The country is bordered to the south and west by Guatemala, to the north by Mexico, and to the east by the Caribbean Sea.

Belize has a diverse society, composed of many cultures and speaking many languages; it is the only country in Central America where English is an official language, and both Spanish and Kriol are also widely spoken. With 8,867 square miles (22,960 km<sup>2</sup>) of territory and 301,270 people (2008 est.), the population density is the lowest in the Central American region and one of the lowest in the world. The country's growth rate, 2.207% (2008 est.), is the highest in region and one of the highest in the western hemisphere.

## History

<b>Belize</b>	
 <p>Flag</p>	 <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p><b>Motto:</b> <i>Sub Umbra Floreo</i> (Latin) "Under the Shade I Flourish"</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> " Land of the Free" <b>Royal anthem:</b> " God Save the Queen"</p>	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Belmopan
<b>Largest city</b>	Belize City
<b>Official languages</b>	English (official)
Recognised regional languages	Kriol, Spanish
<b>Demonym</b>	Belizean



<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
- Monarch	Elizabeth II
- Governor-General	Sir Colville Young
- Prime Minister	Dean Barrow
<b>Independence</b>	from the United Kingdom
- Date	September 21, 1981
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	22,966 km <sup>2</sup> ( 150th) 8,867 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.7
<b>Population</b>	
- (July 2008 est.) estimate	301,270 ( 173rd <sup>2</sup> )
- Density	13/km <sup>2</sup> ( 202nd <sup>2</sup> ) 34/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$2.098 billion ( 163rd)
- Per capita	\$8,400 ( 76th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.777 (medium) ( 80th)
<b>Currency</b>	Dollar ( BZD)
<b>Time zone</b>	central time ( UTC-6)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.bz
<b>Calling code</b>	+501
<sup>1</sup> These ranks are based on the 2007 figures.	



The origin of the name Belize is unclear, but one idea is that the name is from the Maya word *belix*, meaning "muddy water," applied to the Belize River. Before the arrival of Europeans, Belize was part of the territory of the Maya. The Mopan Maya were the original inhabitants of Belize. The Maya civilization spread itself over Belize beginning around 1500 BC and flourished until about AD 900. In the late classic period of Maya civilization (before ad 1000), as many as 400,000 people may have lived in the area that is now Belize. Some lowland Maya still occupied the area when Europeans arrived in the 1500s. Spanish colonists tried to settle the inland areas of Belize, but they abandoned these efforts following Maya rebellion against Spanish authority.



Caana, a Mayan pyramid at Caracol, Cayo District.

English buccaneers first settled on the coast of Belize in 1638, seeking a sheltered region from which they could attack Spanish ships. The settlers turned to cutting logwood during the 1700s. The wood yielded a fixing agent for clothing dyes that was vital to the European woolen industry. The Spanish granted the British settlers the right to occupy the area and cut logwood in exchange for an end to piracy. Historical accounts from the early 1700s note that Africans were brought to the settlement from Jamaica to work as slaves and cut timber. As early as 1800 Africans outnumbered Europeans by about four to one. By then the settlement's primary export had shifted from logwood to mahogany.

For fear of provoking Spanish attack, the British government did not initially recognize the settlement in Belize as a colony. It allowed the settlers to establish their own laws and forms of government. During this time a few wealthy settlers gained control of the local legislature, known as the Public Meeting, as well as of most of the settlement's land and timber. The British first appointed a superintendent over the area in 1786.

The Spanish, who claimed sovereignty over the whole of Central America, tried often to gain control by force over Belize, but they were not successful. Spain's last attack ended on September 10, 1798, when the people of Belize decisively defeated a Spanish fleet at the Battle of St. George's Cay. The anniversary of the battle is now a national holiday in Belize.

In the early 1800s the British sought greater control over the settlers, threatening to suspend the Public Meeting unless it observed the government's instructions to abolish slavery. Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1838, but this did little to change working conditions for laborers in the Belize settlement. Because a small elite controlled the settlement's land and commerce, former slaves had no choice but to continue to work in timber cutting.



Xunantunich, Belize.

In 1836, after the emancipation of Central America from Spanish rule, the British claimed the right to administer the region. In 1862 Great Britain formally declared it a British colony, subordinate to Jamaica, and named it British Honduras. As a colony Belize began to attract British investors. Among the British firms that dominated the colony in the late 1800s was the Belize Estate and Produce Company, which eventually acquired half of all the privately held land in the colony. Belize Estate's influence accounts in part for the colony's reliance on the mahogany trade throughout the rest of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.

The Great Depression of the 1930s caused a near-collapse of the colonial economy as British demand for timber plummeted. The effects of widespread unemployment were worsened by a devastating hurricane that struck the colony in 1931.

Perceptions of the government's relief effort as inadequate were aggravated by its refusal to legalize labor unions or introduce a minimum wage. Demonstrations and riots in 1934 marked the beginning of an independence movement. In response, the government repealed criminal





penalties for workers who broke their labor contracts and granted workers the right to join unions.

Economic conditions improved during World War II (1939-1945), when many Belizean men entered the armed forces or otherwise contributed labor to the war effort. Following the war the colony's economy again stagnated. Britain's decision to devalue the British Honduras dollar in 1949 worsened economic conditions and led to the creation of the People's Committee, which demanded independence. The People's Committee's successor, the People's United Party (PUP), sought constitutional reforms that would expand voting rights to all adults.

Constitutional reforms were initiated in 1954 and resulted in a new constitution ten years later. Britain granted British Honduras self-government in 1964, and the head of the PUP—independence leader George Price—became the colony's prime minister. British Honduras was officially renamed Belize in 1973. Progress toward independence, however, was hampered by an old Guatemalan claim to sovereignty over the territory of Belize. When Belize finally attained full independence on September 21, 1981, Guatemala refused to recognize the new nation. About 1,500 British troops remained to protect Belize from the Guatemalan threat.

With Price at the helm, the PUP won all elections until 1984. In that election, first national election after independence, the PUP was defeated by the United Democratic Party (UDP), and UDP leader Manuel Esquivel replaced Price as prime minister. Price returned to power after elections in 1989. Guatemala's president formally recognized Belize's independence in 1992. The following year the United Kingdom announced that it would end its military involvement in Belize. All British soldiers were withdrawn in 1994, apart from a small contingent of troops who remained to train Belizean troops.

The UDP regained power in the 1993 national election, and Esquivel became prime minister for a second time. Soon afterward Esquivel announced the suspension of a pact reached with Guatemala during Price's tenure, claiming Price had made too many concessions in order to gain Guatemalan recognition. The pact would have resolved a 130-year-old border dispute between the two countries. Border tensions continued into the early 2000s, although the two countries cooperated in other areas.

The PUP won a landslide victory in the 1998 national elections, and PUP leader Said Musa was sworn in as prime minister. In the 2003 elections the PUP maintained its majority, and Musa continued as prime minister. He pledged to improve conditions in the underdeveloped and largely inaccessible southern part of Belize.

Throughout Belize's history, Guatemala has claimed ownership of all or part of the territory. This claim is occasionally reflected in maps showing Belize as Guatemala's twenty-third province. As of March 2007, the border dispute with Guatemala remains unresolved and quite contentious; at various times the issue has required mediation by the United Kingdom, Caribbean Community heads of Government, the Organisation of American States, and the United States. Since independence, a British garrison has been retained in Belize at the request of the Belizean government. Notably, both Guatemala and Belize are participating in the confidence-building measures approved by the OAS, including the Guatemala-Belize Language Exchange Project.

In 2005, Belize was the site of unrest caused by discontent with the People's United Party government, including tax increases in the national budget. On February 8, 2008, Dean Barrow was sworn in as Belize's first black prime minister.



# Geography



The north of Belize consists mostly of flat, swampy coastal plains, in places heavily forested. The flora is highly diverse considering the small geographical area. The south contains the low mountain range of the Maya Mountains. The highest point in Belize is Doyle's Delight at 3,688 ft. (1,124 m.). The Caribbean coast is lined with a coral reef and some 450 islets and islands known locally as *cayes* (pronounced "keys"), forming the approximately 200 mile (322 km) long Belize Barrier Reef, the longest in the Western Hemisphere and the second longest in the world after the Great Barrier Reef. Three of the four coral atolls in the Western Hemisphere are also located off the coast of Belize. Belize is also the only Central American country without a coast on the Pacific Ocean.

The climate is tropical and generally very hot and humid. The rainy season lasts from June to November and hurricanes and floods are frequent natural hazards.

According to the most recent vegetation surveys, about sixty percent (60%) of Belize is forested, with only about twenty percent (20%) of the country's land subject to human uses (such as agricultural land and human settlements). Savanna, scrubland and wetland constitute extensive parts of the land. As a result, Belize's biodiversity is rich, both marine and terrestrial, with a host of flora and fauna. About thirty-seven percent (37%) of Belize's land territory falls under some form of official protected status.

## Politics

Belize is a parliamentary democracy, or a constitutional monarchy and a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

The structure of government is based on the British parliamentary system, and the legal system is modeled on the common law of England. The current head of state is the Queen of Belize, Elizabeth II, who is represented in the country by the Governor-General. However, the cabinet, led by a prime minister, who is head of government, acting as advisors to the Governor-General, in practice exercise executive authority. Cabinet ministers are members of the majority political party in parliament and usually hold elected seats within it concurrent with their cabinet positions.

The bicameral National Assembly of Belize is composed of a House of Representatives and a Senate. The twenty-nine members of the House are popularly elected to a maximum five-year term and introduce legislation affecting the development of Belize. The Governor-General appoints the twelve members of the Senate, with a Senate president selected by the members. The Senate is responsible for debating and approving bills passed by the House.

Belize is a full participating member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).



Protest on 21 January 2005.



## Districts and constituencies

Belize is divided into 6 districts:

1. Belize District
2. Cayo District
3. Corozal District
4. Orange Walk District
5. Stann Creek District
6. Toledo District

These districts are further divided into 31 constituencies.

## Demographics

Colonisation, slavery, and immigration have played major roles in affecting the ethnic composition of the population and as a result, Belize is a country with numerous cultures, languages, and ethnic groups. According to the latest census, the country's population is a little over 300,000.

The Mayan are thought to have been in Belize and the Yucatán region since the 500s AD; however, much of Belize's original Maya population was wiped out by disease and conflicts between tribes and with Europeans. Three Maya groups now inhabit the country: Yucatecs (who came from Yucatán, Mexico to escape the Caste War), Mopans (indigenous to Belize but were forced out by the British; they returned from Guatemala to evade slavery), and Kekchi (also fled from slavery in Guatemala).

White, initially Spanish and later English and Scottish, settlers entered the area in the 15th and 16th century respectively. The first African slaves began arriving from elsewhere in the Caribbean and began intermarrying with many of the other ethnic groups in the country. Intermingling with whites was not common; however, this mixture created the Belizean Kriol people ethnic group. After 1800, Mestizo settlers from Mexico and Guatemala began to settle in the north; the Garifuna, a mix of African, Arawak, and Carib ancestry, settled in the south by way of Honduras not long after that. During the 1860s, a large influx of Indians and American Civil War veterans from Louisiana and other Southern states established Confederate settlements in British Honduras and introduced commercial sugar cane production to the colony, establishing eleven settlements in the interior.

The 1900s saw the arrival of Asian settlers from mainland China, India, Taiwan, Korea, Syria, and Lebanon. Central American immigrants and expatriate Americans and Africans also began to settle in the country. Meanwhile, Kriols and other ethnic groups immigrated to the United States and elsewhere for better opportunities. Estimates have generally placed the number of the Belizean diaspora, consisting mainly of Kriols and Garinagu, at a number roughly equal to the current residents of Belize.





Self-identified Mestizos comprise 49% of the population, Kriols 25%, indigenous Mayan 11%, and Garinagu 6%. The rest is a mix of Mennonite German farmers, East Indians, Chinese, other Central Americans, whites from the United States, and many other foreign groups brought to assist the country's development. Racial tension is rare because of constant admixture among the various ethnic groups.

## Languages

English is the only official language of Belize due to being a former British colony; however, it is only spoken as a first or only language by a small percent of the population. Most Belizeans use the more familiar Belize Kriol, an English-based creole. Spanish is the mother tongue of Mestizo and Central American settlers and is a second language for much of the multilingual country. Less well known are the ancient Maya dialects, Garifuna (which is Arawakan based, with elements of the Carib language, French, and Spanish) and the Plautdietsch dialect of the Mennonites. Literacy currently stands at nearly 80%. In 2001, UNESCO declared the Garifuna language, dance, and music a " Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity."

**Languages in Belize according to 2000 census**

Language	Mother tongue speakers	Percentage	Current users	Percentage
Chinese	1,607	(0.8%)	1,529	(0.7%)
Creole	67,527	(32.9%)	75,822	(37.0%)
English	7,946	(3.9%)	11,551	(5.6%)
Garifuna	6,929	(3.4%)	4,071	(2.0%)
German	6,783	(3.3%)	6,624	(3.2%)
Hindi	280	(0.1%)	193	(0.1%)
Maya Ketchi	10,142	(4.9%)	9,314	(4.5%)
Maya Mopan	6,909	(3.4%)	6,093	(3.0%)
Maya Yucateco	1,176	(0.6%)	613	(0.3%)
Spanish	94,422	(46.0%)	88,121	(43.0%)
Others / no answer	1,402	(0.7%)	1,192	(0.6%)

## Religion

Religious freedom is guaranteed in Belize. It is a predominantly Christian society with 49.6% of Belizeans Roman Catholic, and 27% Protestant. Hinduism is

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followed by most Indian immigrants, while Islam is common among Middle Eastern immigrants and has gained a following among Kriols and Garifuna. Catholics frequently visit the country for special gospel revivals. The Greek Orthodox Church has a presence in Santa Elena. Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced a significant increase in membership in recent years. According to the Witnesses, around 3% of the population attended at least one religious meeting in 2007.

## Birth and death rates and life expectancy



Caye Caulker

Belize's birth rate currently stands at nearly 25 per 1,000. Nearly 6 people die per year out of 1,000 members of the population; this figure includes murders, accidents, and death from natural causes. Infant mortality, now at 24 deaths per 1,000 people, has been decreasing over the last century. Male babies are more likely to die than females. The life expectancy of a typical male is 66 years, while for a female it is 70. HIV/AIDS, while not a serious threat to national stability, does affect enough of the population to give Belize a high infection rating among Caribbean and Central American nations.

Belize has a relatively young and growing population. Its birth rate is among the highest in the world, and there are indications that this trend will continue in the future.

## National symbols

### Black Orchid

The national flower of Belize is the black orchid ( *Prosthechea cochleata*, also known as *Encyclia cochleata*).

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A black orchid





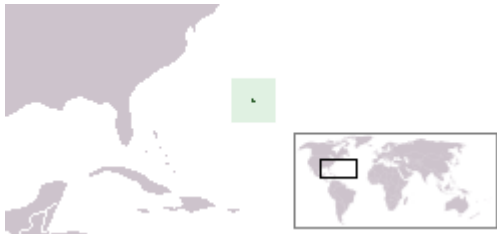
# Bermuda

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

**Bermuda** (officially, **The Bermuda Islands** or **The Somers Isles**) is a British overseas territory in the North Atlantic Ocean. Located off the east coast of the United States, it is situated around 1770 kilometres (1,100 mi) northeast of Miami, Florida, and 1350 kilometres (840 mi) south of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The nearest landmass is Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, about 1030 kilometres (640 mi) west-northwest. It is the oldest and most populous remaining British overseas territory, settled by England a century before the Acts of Union created the United Kingdom.

Although commonly referred to in the singular, the territory consists of approximately 138 islands, with a total area of 53.3 square kilometres (20.6 sq mi). Compiling a list of these islands is often complicated, as many have more than one name (as does the entire archipelago, which, in addition to its two official names, has historically been known as "*La Garza*", "*Virgineola*", and the *Isle of Devils*). Despite the limited land mass, there has also been a tendency for place names to be repeated; there are, for instance, two islands named *Long Island*, three bays known as *Long Bay*, and *St. George's Town* is located on *St. George's Island* within *St. George's Parish* (each known as *St. George's*), whereas Bermuda's capital, the *City of Hamilton*, lies in Pembroke Parish, not in *Hamilton Parish*, on the largest island, *Main Island*, which itself is sometimes called *Bermuda*.

Bermuda has a highly affluent economy, with a large financial sector and tourism industry giving it the world's highest GDP per capita in 2005. It has a subtropical climate, beaches with pink sand, and cerulean blue ocean.

<b>Bermuda</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Quo Fata Ferunt</i> (Latin) "Whither the Fates Carry [Us]"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>God Save the Queen</i> (official) <i>Hail to Bermuda</i> (unofficial)	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Hamilton
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	West African, British, Portuguese
<b>Demonym</b>	Bermudian



Aerial view of Bermuda looking west: St. David's and St. George's in the foreground.

<b>Government</b>	British Overseas Territory
- Monarch	Queen Elizabeth II
- Governor	Sir Richard Gozney
- Premier	Ewart Brown
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	53.3 km <sup>2</sup> ( 224th) 20.6 sq mi
- Water (%)	26%
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	66,163 ( 205th <sup>1</sup> )
- Density	1,239/km <sup>2</sup> ( 8th) 3,196/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$4.857 billion ( 165th)
- Per capita	\$76,403 ( 1st)
<b>HDI (2003)</b>	n/a (n/a) ( n/a)
<b>Currency</b>	Bermudian dollar <sup>2</sup> ( BMD)
<b>Time zone</b>	Atlantic ( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.bm
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 441
	<sup>1</sup> Rank based on 2005 figures.
	<sup>2</sup> On par with US dollar.

## History

Bermuda was discovered by Europeans in the early 1500s, probably in 1503, according to some sources. It was certainly known by 1511, when Peter Martyr d'Anghiera published his *Legatio Babylonica*, which mentioned Bermuda, and the island was also included on Spanish charts of this year. The discovery is attributed to a Spanish explorer, Juan de Bermúdez. Both Spanish and Portuguese ships used the islands as a replenishment spot for fresh meat and water, but



legends of spirits and devils, now thought to have stemmed only from the callings of raucous birds (most likely the Bermuda Petrel, or *Cahow*), and of perpetual, storm-wracked conditions (most early visitors arrived under such conditions), kept them from attempting any permanent settlement on the **Isle of Devils**.

Bermúdez and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo ventured to Bermuda in 1514 or 1515 with the intention to drop off a breeding stock of hogs on the island as a future stock of fresh meat for passing ships. However, the inclement weather prevented them from landing.

Some years later, a Portuguese ship on the way home from San Domingo wedged itself between two rocks on the reef. The crew tried to salvage as much as they could and spent the next four months building a new hull from Bermuda cedar to return to their initial departure point. One of these stranded sailors is most likely the person who carved the initials "R" and "P", "1543" into Spanish Rock. The initials probably stood for "Rex Portugaline" and later were incorrectly attributed to the Spanish, leading to the misnaming of this rocky outcrop of Bermuda.

For the next century, the island is believed to have been visited frequently but not permanently settled. The first two British colonies in Virginia had failed, and a more determined effort was initiated by King James I of England (and VI of Scotland), who granted a Royal Charter to The Virginia Company. In 1609, a flotilla of ships left England under the Company's Admiral, Sir George Somers, to relieve the colony of Jamestown, settled two years before. Somers had previous experience sailing with both Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh. The flotilla was broken up by a storm, and the flagship, the *Sea Venture*, was wrecked off Bermuda (as depicted on the territory's Coat of Arms), leaving the survivors in possession of a new territory. (William Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* is thought to have been inspired by William Strachey's account of this shipwreck.) The island was claimed for the English Crown, and the charter of the Virginia Company was extended to include it. In 1615, the colony was passed to a new company, the Somers Isles Company (*The Somers Isles* remains an official name for the colony), formed by the same shareholders. The close ties with Virginia were commemorated even after Bermuda's separation by reference to the archipelago in many Virginian place names, such as Bermuda City, and Bermuda Hundred. The first British coins in America were struck here.





John Smith wrote one of the first Histories of Bermuda (in concert with Virginia and New England).

Most of the survivors of the *Sea Venture* had carried on to Jamestown in 1610 aboard two Bermuda-built ships. Among these was John Rolfe, who left a wife and child buried in Bermuda, but in Jamestown would marry Pocahontas, a daughter of Powhatan. Rolfe was also single-handedly responsible for beginning Virginia's tobacco industry (the economic basis of the colony had been intended to be lumber). Intentional settlement of Bermuda began with the arrival of the *Plough*, in 1612.

With its limited land area, Bermuda has had difficulty since then with its population growth. In the first two centuries of settlement, it relied on steady emigration to keep the population manageable. Before the American Revolution, more than ten thousand Bermudians emigrated, primarily to the American South, where Great Britain was displacing Spain as the dominant European imperial power. A steady trickle of outward migration continued as, by the end of the 18th century, with seafaring being the only real industry, at least a third of the island's manpower was at sea at any one time. This limited land area and resources led to the creation of what may have been the earliest conservation laws of the New World, when in 1616 and 1620 Acts were passed banning the hunting of certain birds and young tortoises

In 1649, the English Civil War raged and King Charles I was beheaded in Whitehall, London. The execution resulted in the outbreak of a Bermudian Civil War; it was ended by embodied militias. This created a strong sense of devotion to the crown for the majority of colonists and it forced those who would not swear allegiance, such as Puritans and Independents, into exile in the Bahamas.

In the 17th century, the Somers Isles Company suppressed shipbuilding as it needed Bermudians to farm if it were to generate income from the land. Agricultural production met with only limited success, however. The Bermuda cedar boxes used to ship tobacco to England were reportedly worth more than their contents. The colony of Virginia far surpassed Bermuda in both

quality and quantity of tobacco produced. After the dissolution of the Somers Isle Company, Bermudians rapidly abandoned agriculture for shipbuilding, replanting farmland with the native juniper (*Juniperus bermudiana*, also called *Bermuda cedar*) trees that grew thickly over the whole island. Establishing effective control over the Turks Islands, Bermudians deforested their landscape to begin the salt trade that would become the world's largest, and remained the cornerstone of Bermuda's economy for the next century. Bermudian sailors would turn their hands to far more trades than supplying salt, however. Whaling, privateering, and the merchant trade were all pursued vigorously. Vessels would sail the normal shipping routes, but had to engage an enemy vessel no matter the size or strength, and as a result many ships were destroyed. The Bermuda sloop became highly regarded for its speed and manoeuvrability. In fact it was the Bermuda sloop HMS *Pickle*, one of the fastest vessels in the Royal Navy, that brought the news of the victory at Trafalgar and the death of Admiral Nelson back to England.



After the American Revolution, the Royal Navy began improving the harbours and built the large dockyard on Ireland Island, in the west of the chain, as its principal naval base guarding the western Atlantic Ocean shipping lanes. During the American War of 1812, the British attacks on Washington D.C. and the Chesapeake, that would result in the writing of "The Star-Spangled Banner", were planned and launched from Bermuda, the Royal Navy's 'North American Station'. It was here that the British soldiers assembled before being sent to attack Baltimore and Washington. In 1816, Bermuda's Royal Naval Dockyard was fortified against possible US attacks by James Arnold. Arnold was the son of famed US traitor Benedict Arnold. Today, the "Maritime Museum" occupies on the Keep of the Royal Naval Dockyard, including the Commissioner's House, and exhibits artifacts of the base's military history.

As a result of Bermuda's proximity to the southeastern U.S. coast, it was regularly used by Confederate States blockade runners during the American Civil War to evade Union naval vessels and bring desperately needed war goods to the South from England. The old Globe Hotel in St. George's, which was a centre of intrigue for Confederate agents, is preserved as a museum open to the public.

In the early 20th century, as modern transport and communication systems developed, Bermuda became a popular destination for wealthy American, Canadian and British tourists. In addition, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act enacted by the United States against its trading partners in 1930 cut off Bermuda's once-thriving agricultural export trade (primarily fresh vegetables to the US) spurring the overseas territory to develop its tourist industry, which is second behind international business in terms of economic importance to the island. In 1949, Henry Vasse, then Chairman of the Bermuda Trade Development Board, urged the House of Assembly of Bermuda to pursue a political union with Canada. Four Methodist Church congregations in Bermuda are part of The United Church of Canada, forming Bermuda Presbytery of the United Church's Maritime Conference headquartered in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada.

## Politics



Bermuda Gazette of 12 November, 1796, calling for privateering against Spain and its allies, and with advertisements for crew for two privateer vessels.



Executive authority in Bermuda is vested in The Queen and is exercised on her behalf by the Governor. The governor is appointed by the Queen on the advice of the British Government. The current governor is Sir Richard Hugh Turton Gozney KCMG; he was sworn-in on December 12, 2007. There is also a Deputy Governor (currently Mark Andrew Capes JP). Defence and foreign affairs remain the responsibility of the United Kingdom, which also retains responsibility to ensure good government. It must approve any changes to the Constitution of Bermuda. Bermuda now exists as an overseas territory of Britain, but it is the oldest British colony. In 1620, a Royal Assent granted Bermuda limited self-governance, thus making Bermuda's Parliament the fifth oldest in the world, behind only England, the Isle of Man, Iceland and Poland

The Constitution of Bermuda came into force on June 1, 1967 and has been amended in 1989 and 2003. The head of government is the premier. A cabinet is nominated by the premier and appointed officially by the governor. The legislative branch consists of a bicameral parliament modeled on the Westminster system. The Senate is the upper house consisting of eleven members appointed by the governor on the advice of the premier and the leader of the opposition. The House of Assembly, or lower house, has thirty-six members elected by the eligible voting populace in secret ballot to represent geographically defined constituencies. Elections must be called at no more than five-year intervals. The Progressive Labour Party won the most recent general election held on December 18, 2007, winning 22 of 36 seats in the House of Assembly.

Following his victory over former Premier Alex Scott at the Progressive Labour Party delegates' conference in October 2006, the current premier is Ewart Brown. The United Bermuda Party serves in opposition. The Progressive Labour Party leadership favours independence from the United Kingdom, although polls have indicated that this is not supported by the population. While a referendum in 1995 on independence was defeated by a substantial margin, the Bermuda Industrial Union and the Progressive Labour Party (then in the Opposition) had called for a boycott of the referendum, having an unquantified impact on the result.

There are few accredited diplomats in Bermuda. The United States maintains the largest diplomatic mission in Bermuda - comprising both the United States Consulate and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Services at the Bermuda International Airport. U.S. Consul General Gregory W. Slayton is the U.S. Chief of Mission in Bermuda. Given that the United States is by far Bermuda's largest trading partner - providing over 71% of total imports, 85% of tourist visitors while there is an estimated \$163 billion of U.S. capital in the Bermuda insurance/re-insurance industry alone - and the fact that an estimated 5% of Bermuda residents are U.S. citizens which represents 14% of all foreign born persons - American diplomatic presence is seen as an important element in the Bermuda political landscape.

## Parishes and municipalities



The State House, the home of  
Bermuda's parliament  
1620–1815



Bermuda is divided into nine parishes and two municipalities.

Bermuda's nine parishes:

- Devonshire
- Hamilton
- Paget
- Pembroke
- St George's
- Sandys
- Smith's
- Southampton
- Warwick

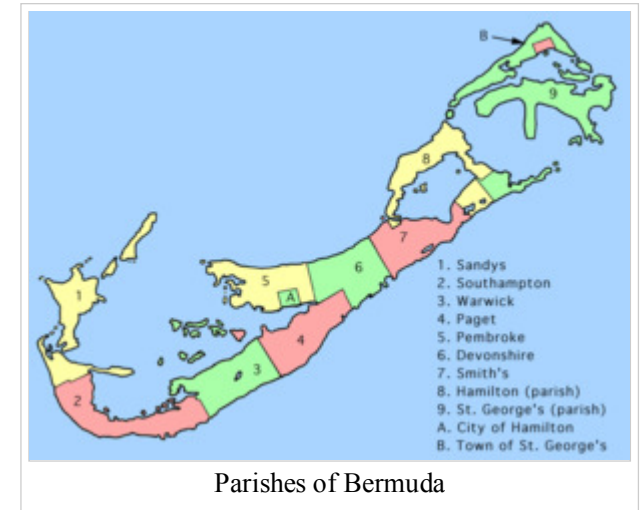
Bermuda's two incorporated municipalities:

- Hamilton (city)
- St. George's (town)

Bermuda's two unincorporated municipalities:

- Flatts Village
- Somerset Village

## Military





Once known as *the Gibraltar of the West*, the defence of Bermuda remains the responsibility of the British government. Until the American Revolutionary War, following which Bermuda became the Royal Navy's Western Atlantic headquarters, the Bermuda government had maintained militia for the defence of the colony. Once the Royal Navy established a base and dockyard defended by regular soldiers, however, these militias became superfluous and were disbanded following the War of 1812. At the end of the 19th century, the colony did raise volunteer units to form a reserve for the military garrison.

Due to its strategic location in the North Atlantic Ocean, Bermuda was vital to the Allies' war effort during both World Wars of the 20th century, serving as a marshalling point for trans-Atlantic convoys, as well as a naval and air base (during the Second World War).

In May 1940, the U.S. requested base rights in Bermuda from the United Kingdom, but British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was initially unwilling to accede to the American request without getting something in return. In September, 1940, as part of the Destroyers for Bases Agreement, the United Kingdom granted the U.S. base rights in Bermuda. Bermuda and Newfoundland were not originally included in the agreement, but both were added to it, with no war material received in exchange. However, one of the terms of the agreement was that the airfield the US Army was to build in Bermuda would be used jointly by the US and the UK (which it was for the duration of the war, with RAF Transport Command relocating there from Darrell's Island in 1943). Construction began in 1941 of two airbases consisting of 5.8 km<sup>2</sup> (2¼ mi<sup>2</sup>, 1,400 acres) of land, largely reclaimed from the sea. For many years, Bermuda's bases were used by U.S. Air Force and, later, U.S. Navy planes patrolling the Atlantic for enemy submarines, first German and, later, Soviet. Although leased for 99 years, U.S. forces withdrew in 1995, as part of the wave of base closures following the end of the Cold War.

Canada, which had operated a war-time naval base, *HMCS Somers Isles*, on the old Royal Navy base at Convict Bay, St. George's, also established a radio-listening post at Daniel's Head, in the *West End* of the islands during this time.

In the 1950s, after the end of World War II, the Royal Naval dockyard and the military garrison were closed. A small supply base continued to operate within the dockyard area until it, too, was closed in 1995, along with the American and Canadian bases.

In both World War I and World War II, Bermudians served in the British armed forces. Amongst the latter was Major-General Glyn Charles Anglim Gilbert, Bermuda's highest ranking soldier. After the war, he was instrumental in developing the Bermuda Regiment. A number of other Bermudians and children of Bermudians had preceded him into senior ranks, including Bahamian-born Admiral Lord Gambier, and Bermudian-born Royal Marines Brigadier Harvey, who, when promoted to that rank at age 39, following his wounding at the Anzio landings, became the youngest-ever Royal Marine Brigadier. The Cenotaph in front of the Cabinet Building (in Hamilton) was erected in tribute to Bermuda's Great War dead (the tribute was later extended to Bermuda's Second World War dead) and is the site of the annual Remembrance Day commemoration (see photo, above).

Today, the only military unit remaining in Bermuda is the Bermuda Regiment, an amalgam of the voluntary units originally formed toward the end of the 19th century. Although the Regiment consists of 'voluntary units' there still exists conscription in which balloted males are required to serve for three years, two months part time, once they turn eighteen.



Remembrance Day Parade, Hamilton, Bermuda.



## Role in International Relations

As an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, Bermuda has no seat in the United Nations and is represented by the UK in foreign affairs. Bermuda's close proximity to the United States has made it the site of past summit conferences between British Prime Ministers and U.S. Presidents. The first summit was held in December, 1953, at the insistence of Prime Minister Winston Churchill to discuss relations with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Participants at the conference included Churchill, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and French Premier Joseph Laniel. In 1957, a second summit conference was held, this time Harold Macmillan was the British Prime Minister and he arrived earlier than President Eisenhower to make it clear that they were meeting on British territory, as tensions were still high regarding the conflict over the Suez Canal in the previous year. It was said the two discussed the general situation of the world. Macmillan would return in 1961 for the third summit with President John F. Kennedy, who was familiar with Bermuda having made numerous personal visits. The meeting was called to discuss the Cold War tensions arising from construction of the Berlin Wall. The most recent summit conference in Bermuda between the two powers occurred in 1971, when British Prime Minister Edward Heath met U.S. President Richard Nixon.

## Geography

Bermuda is located in the North Atlantic Ocean, roughly 580 nautical miles (1070 km, 670 mi) east-southeast of Cape Hatteras on the Outer Banks of North Carolina and roughly 590 nautical miles (1100 km, 690 mi) southeast of Martha's Vineyard. The island lies due east of Fripp Island, South Carolina. It has 103 km (64 mi) of coastline. There are two incorporated municipalities in Bermuda: the City of Hamilton and the Town of St. George. Bermuda is divided into various "parishes", in which there are some localities called "villages", such as Flatts Village, Tucker's Town and Somerset Village.

Although Bermuda's latitude is similar to that of Savannah, Georgia, it is much warmer in winter, and slightly cooler in summer. Its subtropical climate is warmed by the nearby Gulf Stream, thanks to the westerlies, which carry warm, humid air eastwards over Bermuda, helping to keep winter temperatures above freezing. The climate is humid and, as a result, the summertime heat index can be high, even though mid-August temperatures rarely exceed 30 °C (86 °F). Winters are mild, with average daytime temperatures in January and February around 20°C (68°F), although cold fronts, which dominate the local weather for most of the year, bring arctic air masses that can result in rapid temperature drops. Atlantic winter storms, often associated with these cold fronts, can produce powerful, gusting winds and heavy rain. Factoring in the wind chill, the felt air temperature in winter can fall below freezing, 0°C (32°F), even though the actual temperature rarely drops below 10°C (50°F).

The only source of fresh water in Bermuda is rainfall, which is collected on roofs and catchments (or drawn from underground lenses) and stored in tanks. Each dwelling usually has at least one of these tanks forming part of its foundation.

## Economy

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 86 of 637





Bermuda's currency is the Bermudian dollar, which is pegged to the US dollar. US notes and coins are used interchangeably with Bermudian notes and coins within the islands for most practical purposes; however, banks levy a small exchange rate for the purchase of US dollars with Bermudian dollars. Bermudian notes carry the image of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The Bermuda Monetary Authority is the issuing authority for all banknotes and coins, as well as being responsible for the regulation of financial institutions. There is a permanent exhibition of Bermuda notes and coins at the Royal Naval Dockyard Museum.

Bermuda's per-capita income is approximately 50% higher than that of the United States; according to the Bermuda Government's Economic Statistics Division, Bermuda's GDP was \$4.857 billion in 2005, or \$76,403 per-capita, giving Bermuda the highest GDP per capita in the world.

The affordability of housing has become a prominent issue over the past few years. The CIA World Factbook lists the average cost of a house in June 2003 as \$976,000, while real estate agencies have claimed that this figure had risen to \$1.6 million by 2006, and to \$1.845 million by early 2007, though such high figures have been disputed.

Bermuda is an Offshore financial centre, which results from its low direct taxation on personal or corporate income. The local tax system is based upon import duties, payroll taxes and consumption taxes. The legal system is derived from that of the United Kingdom, with recourse to English courts of final appeal.

As the offshore domicile of many foreign companies, Bermuda has a highly-developed international business economy; it is a financial exporter of financial services (primarily insurance, reinsurance, investment funds and special purpose vehicles (SPV) ).

Large numbers of leading international insurance companies are based in Bermuda making the territory one of the world's largest reinsurance centres. Those internationally owned and operated businesses that are physically based in Bermuda - of which there are around four hundred - are represented by the Association of Bermuda International Companies (ABIC). In total, over 1,500 exempted or international companies are currently registered with the Registrar of Companies in Bermuda.

Thanks to its favourable tax regime and a highly reactive regulatory framework Bermuda is the domicile of choice for the implementation of insurance related innovative solutions also known as Alternative Risk Transfer (ART). ART includes captive insurances, Finite Risk insurance and insurance securitisation such as Cat bonds.

The Bermuda Stock Exchange (BSX) first established in 1971 is now the world's largest fully electronic offshore securities market, with a current market capitalisation (excluding mutual funds) in excess of US\$ 330 billion. There are four hundred securities listed on the stock exchange, of which almost three hundred are offshore funds and alternative investment structures, attracted by Bermuda's regulatory environment. The Exchange specialises in listing and trading of capital market instruments such as equities, debt issues, funds (including Hedge Fund structures) and depository receipt programmes.

The BSX is a full member of the World Federation of Exchanges and is located in an OECD member nation. It also has Approved Stock Exchange status under Australia's Foreign Investment Fund (FIF) taxation rules and Designated Investment Exchange status by the UK's Financial Services Authority.

Tourism is Bermuda's second largest industry, with the island attracting over one-half million visitors annually, of whom more than 80% are from the United States. Other significant sources of visitors are Canada and the United Kingdom. Tourists arrive either by cruise ship or by air at Bermuda International Airport,



the only airport on the island.

## Education

The Bermuda Education Act 1996 requires that only three categories of schools can operate in the Bermuda Education system:

- *aided school*, has all or a part of its property vested in a body of trustees or board of governors and is partially maintained by public funding or, since 1965 and the desegregation of schools, has received a grant-in-aid out of public funds.
- *maintained school*, has the whole of its property belonging to the Government and is fully maintained by public funds.
- *private school*, not maintained by public funds and has not, since 1965 and the desegregation of schools, received any capital grant-in-aid out of public funds. The private school sector consists of 6 traditional private schools, two of which are religious schools, and the remaining four are secular with one of these being a single gender school. Also, within the private sector there are a number of home schools which must be registered with the government and receive minimal government regulation. The only boys' school opened its doors to girls in the 1990s and in 1996, one of the maintained public schools became a private school.

Prior to 1965, the Bermuda school system was racially segregated and when the desegregation of schools was enacted in 1965, two of the formally maintained “white” schools and both single gender schools opted to become private schools. The rest became part of the public school system and were either aided or maintained.

At present there are 26 schools in the Bermuda Public School System, eighteen of which are primary schools, five are middle schools, two senior schools and one special school. There is also an Alternative Programme provided for students with behavioural challenges who cannot function in the public mainstream. There are two aided primary schools, two aided middle schools and one aided senior school.

For higher education, the Bermuda College offers various associate degrees and other certificate programmes. Bermuda does not have any four-year colleges or universities.

## Sightseeing and attractions





Renowned for its pink sand beaches and natural beauty, Bermuda offers a number of other attractions, as well. Historic St. George's is a designated World Heritage Site. Scuba divers can explore numerous wrecks and coral reefs in relatively shallow water (typically 30–40 ft/9–12 m in depth) with virtually unlimited visibility. Many nearby reefs are readily accessible from shore by snorkellers, especially at Church Bay.

Bermuda's most popular visitor attraction is the Royal Navy Dockyard and Museum. Other attractions include the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum and Zoo, Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute, the Botanical Gardens, lighthouses, and the Crystal Caves with its impressive stalactites and underground saltwater pools.

It is not possible to rent a car on the island; however, visitors can hire scooters for use as private transport, or use public transport.



Bermuda's pink sand, Astwood Park beach

## Arts and culture

Bermuda's culture is a mixture of the various sources of its population, though little trace remains of the various Native American, Spanish-Caribbean, African, Irish or Scots cultures that would have been evident in the 17th century, with Anglo-Saxon culture becoming dominant. Today, the only language other than English that is spoken by any substantial part of the population is actually Portuguese, following one hundred and sixty years of immigration from Portuguese Atlantic islands (primarily the Azores, though also from Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands). There are strong British influences, together with Afro-Caribbean. A second wave of immigration from the West Indies has been sustained throughout the 20th century, although, unlike the Africans who immigrated from that area as indentured servants (or who were imported as slaves) in the 17th century, the more recent arrivals have mostly come from English speaking countries (albeit, most of the West Indian islands whose populations now speak English were then part of the Spanish Empire). This new infusion of West Indians has both accelerated social and political change, and diversified Bermuda's culture. West Indian musicians introduced calypso music when Bermuda's tourist industry was expanded with the increase of visitors brought by post Second World War aviation. While calypso music appealed more to the visitors than to the locals, Reggae has been embraced since the 1970s with the influx of Jamaican immigration.

Bermuda's literary history was largely limited to non-Bermudian writers commenting on the island. In the 20th century, a large number of books were written and published locally, though few were aimed at a wider market than Bermuda (most of these being scholarly reference books, rather than creative writing). One Bermudian novelist, Brian Burland, has achieved a degree of success and acclaim internationally, although the first (and undoubtedly the most important, historically) notable book credited to a Bermudian was the *History of Mary Prince*, a slave narrative by a Bermudian woman, Mary Prince, which helped to end slavery in the British Empire. Bermuda's proximity to the United States means that many aspects of US culture are reflected or incorporated into Bermudian culture. Many non-Bermudian writers have also made Bermuda their home, or have had homes here, including A.J. Cronin and F. Van Wyck Mason, who wrote on Bermudian subjects.

Dance and music are important in Bermuda. The dances of the colourful *Gombey Dancers*, seen at many events, were influenced by imported Native American and African slaves.



Bermuda has produced, or been home, to actors (such as Earl Cameron, Diana Dill, and most famously, Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones). Noted musicians have included local icons The Talbot Brothers, who performed for many decades in both Bermuda and The United States (and appearing on Ed Sullivan's televised variety show), jazz pianist Lance Hayward, pop singer Heather Nova and more recently dancehall artist Collie Buddz. In 1979, Gina Swainson was crowned "Miss World".

Every year Bermuda hosts an international film festival, which shows many independent and interesting films. One of the festival's founders is film producer and director Arthur Rankin, Jr., co-founder of the Rankin/Bass production company.

Bermuda watercolours painted by local artists are sold at various galleries and elaborately hand-carved cedar sculptures are another speciality. One such 7 ft (2.1 m) sculpture created by Bermudian artisan Chesley Trott is on display at the airport's baggage claim area. Local artwork may also be viewed at several galleries around the island. Alfred Birdsey was one of the more famous and talented watercolourists, his impressionistic landscapes of Hamilton, St. George's and the surrounding sailboats, homes, and bays of Bermuda are world-renowned. He also painted some sailboat artwork that was used to promote the America's Cup when it is sailed from Newport, Rhode Island, USA to Bermuda.

Every Easter, Bermudians of all ages build kites, usually of a traditional Bermudian type, which are flown to symbolize Christ's ascent. A Bermudian kite is made to geometric designs, quite colourful, and is an art form as much as a recreational tool. Despite this, Bermudian kites are very airworthy, holding world records for altitude and duration of flight.

## Sports

Sport is a popular pastime in Bermuda, especially sailing, cricket, golf, football (soccer), and rugby.

Bermuda's national cricket team participated in the Cricket World Cup 2007 in the West Indies. Their most famous player is a 130 kg (290 lbs, 20½ stone) police officer named Dwayne Leverock. He took a catch against India on the 20 March 2007. However, they now hold the world record for conceding the highest number of runs ever in the history of the World Cup. They conceded 413 runs in a 50 overs, one-day international, game against India. Also very well known is David Hemp, who is the current Glamorgan captain in English first class cricket. The annual "Cup Match" cricket tournament between rival parishes St. George's in the east and Somerset in the west is the occasion for a popular national holiday.

Bermuda has the world's highest acreage of golf courses as a percentage of its total landmass. In 2007 Bermuda hosted the 25th PGA Grand Slam of Golf. This 36-hole event was held on October 16-17, 2007, at the Mid Ocean Club in Tucker's Town. This season ending tournament is between only four golfers - the winners of the Masters, U.S. Open, British Open and PGA Championship. The event returns to Bermuda again in 2008.



An IOD racer on a mooring in Hamilton Harbour, Bermuda

The Government announced in 2006 that it will provide substantial financial support to Bermuda's cricket and football teams. Bermuda's most prominent footballers include Clyde Best and Shaun Goater. In 2006, the Bermuda Hogges were formed as the nation's first professional football team in order to raise the standard of play for the Bermuda national football team. The team plays in the United Soccer Leagues Second Division.

Sailing, fishing, and equestrian sports are popular with both residents and visitors alike. The prestigious Newport–Bermuda Yacht Race is a more than 100-year old tradition. In 2007, the 16th biennial Marion-Bermuda yacht race occurred. A sport unique to Bermuda is racing the Bermuda Fitted Dinghy. International One Design racing also originated in Bermuda.

At the 2004 Summer Olympics, Bermuda competed in sailing and equestrian events. Bermuda has had one Olympic medallist, Clarence Hill, who won a bronze medal in boxing. Bermuda also recently competed in Men's Skeleton (head first luge) at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy. Patrick Singleton placed 19th, with a final time of 1:59.81. Bermuda also competes in the bi-annual Island Games, which it will host in 2013.

## Demographics

Population: 65,365 (July 2005 est.). 54.8% is listed as black, 34.1% as white and 6.4% as multiracial. The islands have a small but growing Asian community. A significant segment of the population is also of Portuguese ancestry (10%), the result of immigration from Portuguese-held islands (especially the Azores) during the past 160 years.

Some islanders, especially in St. David's, trace their ancestry to Native Americans. Hundreds were shipped to Bermuda, possibly from as far as Mexico. The best known examples were the Algonquian peoples who were exiled from the New England colonies and sold into slavery in the 17th century, notably in the aftermaths of the Pequot War, and King Philip's War.

Several thousand expatriate workers, principally from the UK, Canada, the West Indies, and the U.S., also reside in Bermuda, primarily engaged in specialised professions such as accounting, finance, and insurance. Others are employed in various trades, such as hotels, restaurants, construction, and landscaping services. Of the total workforce of 38,947 persons in 2005, Government employment figures state that 11,223 (29 percent) are non-Bermudians.

## Holidays

Date	Holiday	
1 January	New Year's Day	
varies	Good Friday	Bermudians fly home-made kites to celebrate Easter



24 May	Bermuda Day	Originally celebrated Queen Victoria's birthday as Empire Day; later changed to "Bermuda Day" to provide an official opportunity to celebrate the islands' heritage and culture. On September 18th, the government officially changed the Bermuda Day holiday to National Heroes' Day in an attempt to create greater national pride and in memory of Dame Lois Browne-Evans. It was recently changed back to Bermuda Day.
Second Monday in June	Queen's Official Birthday	
Thursday before the First Monday in August	Emancipation Day	First day of Cup match
Friday before the First Monday in August	Somer's Day	Second day of Cup match
First Monday in September	Labour Day	
11 November	Remembrance Day	
25 December	Christmas Day	
26 December	Boxing Day	

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# Bolivia

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The **Republic of Bolivia** (Spanish: *República de Bolivia*, Spanish pronunciation: [reˈpuβlika ðe βoˈliβja]), named after Simón Bolívar, is a landlocked country in central South America. It is bordered by Brazil on the north and east, Paraguay and Argentina on the south, and Chile and Peru on the west. From 1839 Sucre was the seat of government until the administrative capital was moved to La Paz in 1898. Sucre remains the constitutional capital and seat of the Supreme Court (*Corte Suprema de Justicia*).

## History

### Colonial period

The territory now known as Bolivia was called "Upper Peru" and was under the authority of the Viceroy of Lima. Local government came from the Audiencia de Charcas located in Chuquisaca (La Plata—modern Sucre). By the late 16th century Bolivian silver was an important source of revenue for the Spanish empire. A steady stream of natives served as labor force (the Spanish employed the pre-Columbian draft system called the mita). As Spanish royal authority weakened during the Napoleonic wars, sentiment against colonial rule grew.

### The Republic and economic instability (1809)

The struggle for independence started in 1809, and after 16 years of war the republic was proclaimed on August 6, 1825, named for Simón Bolívar (see Bolivian War of Independence).

In 1836, Bolivia, under the rule of Marshal Andres de Santa Cruz, invaded Peru to reinstall the deposed president, General Luis Orbegoso. Peru and Bolivia formed the Peru-Bolivian Confederation, with de Santa Cruz as the *Supreme Protector*. Following tensions between the Confederation and Chile, Chile declared war on December 28, 1836. Argentina, Chile's ally, declared war on the Confederation on May 9, 1837. The Peruvian-Bolivian forces achieved several major victories: the defeat of the Argentinian

***República de Bolivia*** (Spanish)  
***Bulibya Republika*** (Quechua)  
***Wuliwya Suyu*** (Aymara)  
**Republic of Bolivia**



Flag



Coat of arms

**Motto:** *¡La unión es la fuerza!* (Spanish)  
 "Unity is strength!"

**Anthem:** *Bolivianos, el hado propicio* (Spanish)



**Capital**

Sucre (constitutional, judicial)

La Paz (administrative)



expedition and the defeat of the first Chilean expedition on the fields of Paucarpata near the city of Arequipa.

On the same field the Paucarpata Treaty was signed with the unconditional surrender of the Chilean and Peruvian rebel army. The treaty stipulated that Chile withdraw from Peru-Bolivia, return captured Confederate ships, economic relations would be normalized, and the Confederation would pay Peruvian debt to Chile. Public outrage over the treaty forced the government to reject it. Chile organized a second attack on the Confederation, and defeated it on the fields of Yungay using the same arms and equipment Santa Cruz had allowed them to retain. After this defeat, Santa Cruz fled to Ecuador, and the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation was dissolved.

Following the independence of Peru, General Gamarra, the Peruvian president, invaded Bolivia, under the Peruvian flag. The Peruvian army was decisively defeated at the Battle of Ingaví on November 20, 1841, where Gamarra was killed. The Bolivian army under General José Ballivián then mounted a counter-offensive managing to capture the Peruvian port of Arica. Later, both sides signed a peace in 1842 putting a final end to the war.

A period of political and economic instability in the early to mid-19 century weakened Bolivia. Then in the War of the Pacific (1879–83) against to Chile, it lost its access to the sea, and the adjoining rich nitrate fields, together with the port of Antofagasta. Since independence, Bolivia has lost over half of its territory to neighboring countries because of wars. It also lost the state of Acre (known for its production of rubber) when Brazil persuaded the state of Acre to secede from Bolivia in 1903 (see the Treaty of Petrópolis).

In the late 1800s, an increase in the world price of silver brought Bolivia relative prosperity and political stability. During the early 20th century, tin replaced silver as the country's most important source of wealth. A succession of governments controlled by the economic and social elite followed laissez-faire capitalist policies through the first thirty years of the 20th century.

Living conditions of the native people, who constituted most of the population, remained deplorable. Forced to work under primitive conditions in the mines and in nearly feudal status on large estates, they were denied access to education, economic opportunity, and political participation. Bolivia's defeat by Paraguay in the Chaco War (1932–35) marked a turning-point.

## Rise of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (1951)

<b>Largest city</b>	Santa Cruz de la Sierra
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish, Quechua, Aymara
<b>Demonym</b>	Bolivian
<b>Government</b>	Republic
- President	Evo Morales
- Vice President	Álvaro García
<b>Independence</b>	
- from Spain	August 6, 1825
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	1,098,581 km <sup>2</sup> ( 28th) 424,163 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.29
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2007 estimate	9,119,152 ( 84th)
- census	8,857,870
- Density	8.4/km <sup>2</sup> ( 210th) 21.8/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	estimate
- Total	\$25.684 billion ( 101st)
- Per capita	\$2,817 ( 125th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$12.8 billion ( 108rd)
- Per capita	\$1,422 ( 121st)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	60.1 (high)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.695 (medium) ( 117th)
<b>Currency</b>	Boliviano ( BOB)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)



The Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR) emerged as a broadly based party. Denied its victory in the 1951 presidential elections, the MNR led the successful 1952 revolution. Under President Víctor Paz Estenssoro, the MNR, having strong popular pressure, introduced universal suffrage into his political platform, and carried out a sweeping land-reform promoting rural education and nationalization of the country's largest tin-mines.

Twelve years of tumultuous rule left the MNR divided. In 1964, a military junta overthrew President Estenssoro at the outset of his third term. The 1969 death of President René Barrientos Ortuño, a former member of the junta elected President in 1966, led to a succession of weak governments. Alarmed by public disorder and the rising Popular Assembly, the military, the MNR, and others installed Colonel (later General) Hugo Banzer Suárez as President in 1971. Banzer ruled with MNR support from 1971 to 1974. Then, impatient with schisms in the coalition, he replaced civilians with members of the armed forces and suspended political activities. The economy grew impressively during most of Banzer's presidency, but human rights violations and eventual fiscal crises undercut his support. He was forced to call elections in 1978, and Bolivia again entered a period of political turmoil.

<b>Internet TLD</b>	.bo
<b>Calling code</b>	+591



The llama is one of the icons of the Bolivian altiplano.

### **Military governments: García Meza and Siles Zuazo (1978)**

Elections in 1979 and 1981 were inconclusive and marked by fraud. There were coups d'état, counter-coups, and caretaker governments. In 1980, General Luis García Meza Tejada carried out a ruthless and violent coup d'état that did not have popular support. He pacified the people by promising to remain in power only for one year. (At the end of the year, he staged a televised rally to claim popular support and announced, "*Bueno, me quedo,*" or, "All right; I'll stay [in office].") He was deposed shortly thereafter.) His government was notorious for human-rights-abuses, narcotics-trafficking, and economic mismanagement; during his presidency, the inflation that later crippled the Bolivian economy could already be felt. Later convicted in absentia for various crimes, including murder, García Meza was extradited from Brazil and began serving a 30-year sentence in 1995.

After a military rebellion forced out García Meza in 1981, three other military governments in 14 months struggled with Bolivia's growing problems. Unrest forced the military to convoke the Congress elected in 1980 and allow it to choose a new chief executive. In October 1982, Hernán Siles Zuazo again became President, 22 years after the end of his first term of office (1956-60).

### **Sánchez de Lozada and Banzer: Liberalizing the economy (1993-2001)**

Sánchez de Lozada pursued an aggressive economic and social reform agenda. The most dramatic reform was the "capitalization" program, under which investors, typically foreign, acquired 50% ownership and management control of public enterprises, such as the state oil corporation, telecommunications system, airlines, railroads, and electric utilities, in return for agreed upon capital investments. The reforms and economic restructuring were strongly opposed by certain segments of society, which instigated frequent and sometimes violent protests, particularly in La Paz and the Chapare coca-growing region, from 1994 through 1996. The de Lozada government pursued a policy of offering monetary compensation for voluntary eradication of illegal coca by its growers in the Chapare region. The policy produced little net reduction in coca, and in the mid-1990s Bolivia accounted for about one-third of the world's coca that was being



processed into cocaine.

During this time, the umbrella labor-organization of Bolivia, the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB), became increasingly unable to effectively challenge government policy. A teachers' strike in 1995 was defeated because the COB could not marshal the support of many of its members, including construction- and factory-workers. The state also used selective martial law to keep the disruptions caused by the teachers to a minimum. The teachers were led by Trotskyites, and were considered to be the most militant union in the COB. Their downfall was a major blow to the COB, which also became mired in internal corruption and infighting in 1996.

In the 1997 elections, General Hugo Banzer, leader of the Nationalist Democratic Action party (ADN) and former dictator (1971-1978), won 22% of the vote, while the MNR candidate won 18%. General Banzer formed a coalition of the ADN, MIR, UCS, and CONDEPA parties, which held a majority of seats in the Bolivian Congress. The Congress elected him as president, and he was inaugurated on August 6, 1997. During the election-campaign, Banzer had promised to suspend the privatization of the state-owned oil-company, YPFB. But this seemed unlikely to happen, considering Bolivia's the weak position vis-à-vis international corporations. The Banzer government basically continued the free-market and privatization-policies of its predecessor. The relatively robust economic growth of the mid-1990s continued until about the third year of its term in office. After that, regional, global and domestic factors contributed to a decline in economic growth. Financial crises in Argentina and Brazil, lower world prices for export-commodities, and reduced employment in the coca-sector depressed the Bolivian economy. The public also perceived a significant amount of public-sector corruption. These factors contributed to increasing social protests during the second half of Banzer's term.

At the outset of his government, President Banzer launched a policy of using special police-units to physically eradicate the illegal coca of the Chapare region. The policy produced a sudden and dramatic four-year decline in Bolivia's illegal coca-crop, to the point that Bolivia became a relatively small supplier of coca for cocaine. Those left unemployed by coca-eradication streamed into the cities, especially El Alto, the slum-neighbourhood of La Paz. The MIR of Jaime Paz Zamora remained a coalition-partner throughout the Banzer government, supporting this policy (called the Dignity Plan).

On August 6, 2001, Banzer resigned from office after being diagnosed with cancer. He died less than a year later. Banzer's Vice President, Jorge Fernando Quiroga Ramírez, completed the final year of his term.

## 2002 elections

Quiroga was constitutionally prohibited from running for national office in 2002.

In the June 2002 national elections, former President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (MNR) placed first with 29.5% of the vote, followed by coca-advocate and native peasant-leader Evo Morales ( Movement Toward Socialism, MAS) with 20.9%. Morales edged out populist candidate Manfred Reyes Villa of the New Republican Force (NFR) by just 700 votes nationwide, earning a spot in the congressional run-off against Sánchez de Lozada on August 4, 2002.

A July agreement between the MNR and the fourth-place MIR, which had again been led in the election by former president Jaime Paz Zamora, virtually ensured the election of Sánchez de Lozada in the congressional run-off, and on August 6 he was sworn in for the second time. The MNR platform featured three overarching objectives: economic reactivation (and job creation), anti- corruption, and social inclusion.

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## 2005 elections

The 2005 Bolivian presidential election was held on December 18, 2005. The two main candidates were Juan Evo Morales Ayma of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) Party, and Jorge Quiroga, leader of the Democratic and Social Power (PODEMOS) Party and former head of the Acción Democrática Nacionalista (ADN) Party.

Morales won the election with 53.740% of the votes, an absolute majority unusual in Bolivian elections. He was sworn in on January 22, 2006 for a five-year term. Prior to his official inauguration in La Paz, he was inaugurated in an Aymara ritual at the archeological site of Tiwanaku before a crowd of thousands of Aymara people and representatives of leftist movements from across Latin America. Though highly symbolic, this ritual was not historically based and primarily represented native Aymaras — not the main Quechua-speaking population. Since the Spanish conquest in the early 1500s, this region of South America, with a majority native population, has been ruled mostly by descendants of European immigrants, with only a few mestizo (mixed European and indigenous) rulers. Morales, an Aymara, has stated that the 500 years of colonialism are now over and that the era of autonomy has begun.



Central La Paz

His recent presidential election victory has also brought new attention to the US drug-war in South America and its heavy emphasis on coca-crop-eradication. The US-supported "Plan Dignidad" (dignity-plan), which seeks to reduce cocaine-production to zero, is seen by many Bolivians as an attack on their livelihoods and way of life. Morales, a leader among coca-growers, has said his government will try to interdict drugs, but he wants to preserve the legal market for coca-leaves and promote export of legal coca-products.



Current president Evo Morales

On May 1, 2006, Morales announced his intent to re-nationalize Bolivian hydrocarbon assets. While stating that the initiative would not be an expropriation, Morales sent Bolivian troops to occupy 56 gas-installations simultaneously. Troops were also sent to the two Petrobras-owned refineries in Bolivia, which provide over 90% of Bolivia's refining-capacity. A deadline of 180 days was announced, by which all foreign energy-firms were required to sign new contracts giving Bolivia majority ownership and as much as 82% of revenues (the latter for the largest natural-gas-fields). All such firms signed contracts. Reports from the Bolivian government and the companies involved are contradictory as to plans for future investment. By far the biggest customer for Bolivian hydrocarbons has been Brazil, which imports two-thirds of Bolivia's natural gas via pipelines operated by the huge semi-private Petrobras (PBR). Since gas can only be exported from landlocked Bolivia via PBR's large (and expensive) pipelines, the supplier and customer are strongly linked. PBR has announced plans to produce enough natural gas by 2011 to replace that now supplied by Bolivia. Bolivia's position is strengthened by the knowledge that hydrocarbon reserves are more highly valued now than at the times of previous nationalizations, and by the pledged support of President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela.

Fulfilling a campaign promise, Morales opened on August 6, 2006 the Bolivian Constituent Assembly to begin writing a new constitution aimed at giving more power to the indigenous majority. Problems immediately arose when, unable to garner the two-thirds votes needed to include controversial provisions in the constitutional draft, Morales' party announced that only a simple majority (50%+) would be



needed to draft individual articles while two-thirds needed to pass the document in full. Violent protests arose in December 2006 in parts of the country for both two-thirds and departmental autonomy; mostly in the eastern third of the country, where much of the hydrocarbon wealth is located. Conservative sectors in this region threaten to secede from the nation if their demands are not met. MAS and its supports believed two-thirds voting rules would give an effective veto for all constitutional changes to the conservative minority. In August 2007, more conflicts arose in Sucre, as the city demanded the discussion of the seat of government inside the assembly, hoping the executive and legislative branch could return to the city, but assembly and the government said this demand was overwhelmingly impractical and politically undesirable. The conflict turned into violence, and the assembly was moved to a military area in Oruro. Although the main opposition party boycotted the session, a constitutional draft was approved on November 24. Subsequent riots, whipped up by opposition mercenary groups, left three dead.

In January 2007, a clash between middle class city dwellers and poorer rural campesinos killed 2 people and injured over 130 in the central city of Cochabamba. The campesinos had paralyzed the city by blockading the highways, bridges, and main roads, and days earlier had set fire to the departmental seat of government. The fire aimed to force the resignation of the elected Prefect of Cochabamba, Manfred Reyes Villa after he demanded a re-vote on departmental autonomy having been previously defeated by popular vote. The city dwellers broke up the blockade and routed the protesters, while the police did little to interfere on either side. Further attempts by the campesinos to reinstate the blockade and threaten the government were unsuccessful, but the underlying tensions have not been resolved.

## Politics

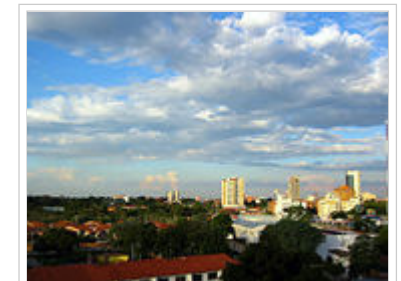
The 1967 constitution, amended in 1994, provides for balanced executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The traditionally strong executive, however, tends to overshadow the Congress, whose role is generally limited to debating and approving legislation initiated by the executive. The judiciary, consisting of the Supreme Court and departmental and lower courts, has long been riddled with corruption and inefficiency. Through revisions to the constitution in 1994, and subsequent laws, the government has initiated potentially far-reaching reforms in the judicial system and processes.

Bolivia's nine departments received greater autonomy under the Administrative Decentralization law of 1995. Departmental autonomy further increased with the first popular elections for departmental governors (*prefectos*) on 18 December 2005, after long protests by pro-autonomy-leader department of Santa Cruz. Bolivian cities and towns are governed by directly elected mayors and councils. Municipal elections were held on 5 December 2004, with councils elected to five-year terms. The Popular Participation Law of April 1994, which distributes a significant portion of national revenues to municipalities for discretionary use, has enabled previously neglected communities to make striking improvements in their facilities and services.

The president is elected to a five-year term by popular vote. Elected president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada resigned in October 2003, and was substituted by Vice-president Carlos Mesa. Mesa was in turn replaced by chief justice of the Supreme Court Eduardo Rodríguez in June 2005. Six months later, on December 18, 2005, the Socialist native leader, Evo Morales, was elected president.

## Legislative branch

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Santa Cruz de la Sierra



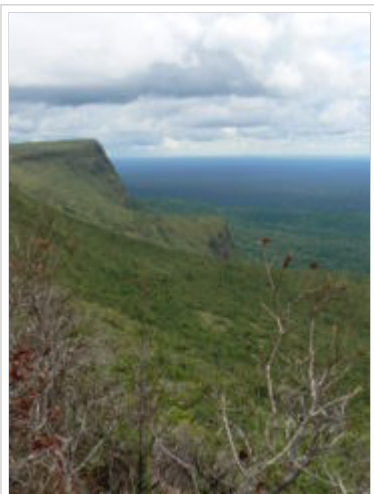
Bolivia's government is a republic. The *Congreso Nacional* ( National Congress) has two chambers. The *Cámara de Diputados* ( Chamber of Deputies) has 130 members elected to five-year terms, seventy from single-member districts (*circunscripciones*) and sixty by proportional representation. The *Cámara de Senadores* ( Chamber of Senators) has twenty-seven members (three per department), elected to five-year terms.

Bolivia has had a total of 193 coups d'etat from independence until 1981, thereby averaging a change of government once every ten months. Credit for the past quarter century of relative political stability is largely attributed to President Víctor Paz Estenssoro, who ceded power peacefully after cutting hyperinflation which reached as high as 14,000 percent.

## Military

The Bolivian military comprises three branches: an Army, Navy and Air Force. The legal age for voluntary admissions is 18; however, when the numbers are small the government recruits anyone as young as 14. It is estimated that 20% of the Bolivian army is between the ages 14 and 16 while another 20% is from 16 to 18. The tour of duty is generally 12 months. The Bolivian government annually spends \$130 million on defense.

## Departments and provinces



Scenery in the Noel Kempff Mercado National Park in the Santa Cruz Department

Bolivia is divided into nine departments (*departamentos*); capitals in parentheses:

- Beni ( Trinidad)
- Chuquisaca (Sucre)
- Cochabamba ( Cochabamba)
- La Paz (La Paz)
- Oruro ( Oruro)
- Pando ( Cobija)
- Potosí ( Potosí)
- Santa Cruz ( Santa Cruz de la Sierra)
- Tarija ( Tarija)

Additionally, the departments are further divided into 100 provinces (*provincias*), and the provinces are each divided into municipalities (*municipios*) and cantons (*cantones*), which handle local affairs.

## Geography



The government building of the National Congress of Bolivia at the Plaza Murillo in central La Paz



Map of the departments of Bolivia



At 1,098,580 km<sup>2</sup> (424,135 mi<sup>2</sup>), Bolivia is the world's 28th-largest country (after Ethiopia). It is comparable in size to Mauritania, and it has about 1.5 times the area of the US state of Texas.



Colours of Altiplano Boliviano

Bolivia has been a landlocked nation since 1879, when it lost its coastal department of Litoral to Chile in the War of the Pacific. However, it does have access to the Atlantic via the Paraguay River.

An enormous diversity of ecological zones are represented within Bolivia's territory. The western highlands of the country are situated in the Andes Mountains and include the Bolivian Altiplano. The eastern lowlands include large sections of Amazonian rainforests and Chaco. The highest peak is Nevado Sajama at 6,542 metres (21,463 ft) located in the department of Oruro. Lake Titicaca is located on the border between Bolivia and Peru. The Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt flat, lies in the southwest corner of the country, in the

department of Potosí.

Major cities are La Paz, El Alto, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and Cochabamba.

## Economy

Bolivia has the lowest GDP per capita figures in South America. The country is rich in natural resources, and has been called a "donkey sitting on a gold-mine" because of this.

Bolivia's 2002 gross domestic product (GDP) totaled USD \$7.9 billion. Economic growth is about 2.5% a year, and inflation was expected to be between 3% and 4% in 2002 (it was under 2% in 2001).

Bolivia's current lackluster economic situation can be linked to several factors from the past three decades. The first major blow to the Bolivian economy came with a dramatic fall in the price of tin during the early 1980s, which impacted one of Bolivia's main sources of income and one of its major mining-industries. The second major economic blow came at the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s as economic aid was withdrawn by western countries who had previously tried to keep a market-liberal regime in power through financial support.

Since 1985, the government of Bolivia has implemented a far-reaching program of macroeconomic stabilization and structural reform aimed at maintaining price-stability, creating conditions for sustained growth, and alleviating scarcity. A major reform of the customs-service in recent years has significantly improved transparency in this area. The most important structural changes in the Bolivian economy have involved the capitalization of numerous public-sector enterprises.



Map of Bolivia from the CIA World Factbook.



Cochabamba



Parallel legislative reforms have locked into place market-liberal policies, especially in the hydrocarbon- and telecommunication-sectors, that have encouraged private investment. Foreign investors are accorded national treatment, and foreign ownership of companies enjoys virtually no restrictions in Bolivia.



The Central Bank of Bolivia

The government has a long-term sales-agreement to sell natural gas to Brazil through 2019. The government expects to hold a binding referendum in 2004 on plans to export natural gas.

In April 2000, Bechtel signed a contract with Hugo Banzer, the former president of Bolivia, to privatize the water-supply in Bolivia's third-largest city, Cochabamba. Shortly thereafter, the company tripled the water-rates in that city, an action which resulted in protests and rioting among those who could no longer afford clean water. Drawing water from community wells or gathering rainwater was made illegal. Amidst Bolivia's nationwide economic collapse and growing national unrest over the state of the economy, the Bolivian government was forced to withdraw the water contract.

Bolivian exports were \$1.3 billion in 2002, from a low of \$652 million in 1991. Imports were \$1.7 billion in 2002. Bolivian tariffs are a uniformly low 10%, with capital equipment charged only 5%. Bolivia's trade-deficit was \$460 million in 2002.

Bolivia's trade with neighboring countries is growing, in part because of several regional preferential trade-agreements it has negotiated. Bolivia is a member of the Andean Community and enjoys nominally free trade with other member countries.



Salt mounds in Salar de Uyuni

The United States remains Bolivia's largest trading-partner. In 2002, the United States exported \$283 million of merchandise to Bolivia and imported \$162 million.



Camino a Samaipata Santa Cruz Bolivia

Agriculture accounts for roughly 15% of Bolivia's GDP. Soybeans are the major cash crop, sold into the Andean Community market.

Bolivia's government remains heavily dependent on foreign assistance to finance development-projects. At the end of 2002, the government owed \$4.5 billion to its foreign creditors, with \$1.6 billion of this amount owed to other governments and most of the balance owed to multilateral development-banks. Most payments to other governments have been rescheduled on several occasions since 1987 through the Paris Club mechanism. External creditors have been willing to do this because the Bolivian government has generally achieved the monetary and fiscal targets set by IMF programs since 1987, though economic crises in recent years have undercut Bolivia's normally good record. The rescheduling of agreements granted by the Paris Club has allowed the individual creditor-countries to apply very soft terms to the rescheduled debt. As a result, some countries have forgiven substantial amounts of Bolivia's bilateral debt. The U.S. government reached an agreement at the Paris Club meeting in December 1995 that reduced by 67% Bolivia's existing debt-stock. The Bolivian government continues

to pay its debts to the multilateral development banks on time. Bolivia is a beneficiary of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and Enhanced HIPC debt-relief-programs, which by agreement restricts Bolivia's access to new soft loans.



## Demographics



People in La Paz city centre

Bolivia's ethnic distribution is estimated to be 30% Quechua-speaking and 25% Aymara-speaking Amerindians. The largest of the approximately three-dozen native groups are the Quechuas (2.5 million), Aymaras (2 million), then Chiquitano (180,000), and Guaraní (125,000). So the full Amerindian population is at 55% and the remaining 30% is Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and European) and around 15% are Whites.

The white population consists mostly of *criollos*, which in turn consist of families of relatively unmixed Spanish ancestry, descended from the early Spanish colonists. These have formed much of the aristocracy since independence. Other smaller groups within the white population are Germans who founded the national airline Lloyd Aereo Boliviano, as well as Italian, American, Basque, Croatian, Russian, Polish and other minorities, many of whose

members descend from families that have lived in Bolivia for several generations.



Miners at work in Potosí

Also noteworthy is the Afro-Bolivian community that numbers more than 0.5% of the population, descended from African slaves that were transported to work in Brazil and then migrated westward into Bolivia. They are mostly concentrated in the Yungas region ( Nor Yungas and Sud Yungas provinces) in the department of La Paz, some three hours from La Paz city. There are also Japanese who are concentrated mostly in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and Middle Easterners who became prosperous in commerce.

Bolivia is one of the least developed countries in South America. Almost two-thirds of its people, many of whom are subsistence farmers, live in poverty. Population-density ranges from less than one person per square kilometer in the southeastern plains to about ten per square kilometer (twenty-five per sq. mi) in the central highlands. As of 2006, the

population is increasing about 1.45% per year.

The great majority of Bolivians are Roman Catholic (the official religion), although Protestant denominations are expanding strongly. According to a 2001 survey conducted by the National Statistical Institute, 78 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 16 percent is Protestant and 3 percent follow other religions of Christian origin. Islam practiced by the descendants of Middle Easterners is almost nonexistent. There is also a small Jewish community that is almost all Ashkenazi in origin. More than 1% of Bolivians practice the Bahá'í Faith (giving Bolivia one of the largest percentages of Bahá'ís in the world).



Cristo de la Concordia in Cochabamba.



There are colonies of Mennonites in the department of Santa Cruz. Many Native communities interweave pre-Columbian and Christian symbols in their worship. About 80% of the people speak Spanish as their first language, although the Aymara and Quechua languages are also common. Approximately 90% of the children attend primary-school but often for a year or less. The literacy-rate is low in many rural areas, but, according to the CIA, the literacy rate is 87% nationwide, a rate similar to Brazil's, but below the South American average.

## Culture

Bolivian culture has been heavily influenced by the Quechua, the Aymara, as well as by the popular cultures of Latin America as a whole.

The cultural development of what is present-day Bolivia is divided into three distinct periods: pre-Columbian, colonial, and republican. Important archaeological ruins, gold and silver ornaments, stone monuments, ceramics, and weavings remain from several important pre-Columbian cultures. Major ruins include Tiwanaku, Samaipata, Incallajta, and Iskanawayaya. The country abounds in other sites that are difficult to reach and have seen little archaeological exploration.



Traditional Bolivian dance

The Spanish brought their own tradition of religious art which, in the hands of local native and mestizo builders and artisans, developed into a rich and distinctive style of architecture, painting, and sculpture known as "Mestizo Baroque". The colonial period produced not only the paintings of Pérez de Holguín, Flores, Bitti, and others but also the works of skilled but unknown stonecutters, woodcarvers, goldsmiths, and silversmiths. An important body of native baroque religious music of the colonial period was recovered in recent years and has been performed internationally to wide acclaim since 1994.

Bolivian artists of stature in the twentieth century include Guzmán de Rojas, Arturo Borda, María Luisa Pacheco, and Marina Núñez del Prado.

Bolivia has a rich folklore. Its regional folk music is distinctive and varied. The "devil dances" at the annual carnival of Oruro are one of the great folkloric events of South America, as is the lesser known carnival at Tarabuco.

The best known of the various festivals found in the country is the "Carnaval de Oruro", which was among the first 19 "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity," as proclaimed by the UNESCO in May of 2001.

Entertainment includes football, which is the national sport, as well as table football, which is played on street-corners by both children and adults.

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Festival time in Sucre



Carnaval de Oruro 2007



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# Brazil

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**Brazil** (Portuguese: *Brasil*), officially the **Federative Republic of Brazil** (Portuguese: *República Federativa do Brasil*) listen , is a country in South America. It is the fifth largest country by geographical area, the fifth most populous country, and the fourth most populous democracy in the world. Bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the east, Brazil has a coastline of over 7,491 kilometers (4,655 mi). It is bordered on the north by Venezuela, Suriname, Guyana and the overseas department of French Guiana; on the northwest by Colombia; on the west by Bolivia and Peru; on the southwest by Argentina and Paraguay and on the south by Uruguay. Numerous archipelagos are part of the Brazilian territory, such as Fernando de Noronha, Rocas Atoll, Saint Peter and Paul Rocks, and Trindade and Martim Vaz.

Brazil was a colony of Portugal from the landing of Pedro Álvares Cabral in 1500 until its independence in 1822. Initially independent as the Brazilian Empire, the country has been a republic since 1889, even though its bicameral legislature (now called Congress) dates back to 1824, when the first constitution was ratified. Its current Constitution defines Brazil as a Federal Republic. The Federation is formed by the union of the Federal District, the 26 States, and the 5,564 Municipalities.

Brazil is the world's tenth largest economy at market exchange rates and the ninth largest in purchasing power. Economic reforms have given the country new international projection. It is a founding member of the United Nations and of the Union of South American Nations. A Portuguese-speaking and multiethnic society, Brazil is also home to a diversity of wildlife, natural environments, and extensive natural resources in a variety of protected habitats. Its population is predominantly Roman Catholic.

## History

### Origins

### *República Federativa do Brasil* Federative Republic of Brazil




Flag



Coat of arms

**Motto:** *"Ordem e Progresso"*  
(Portuguese)  
"Order and Progress"

**Anthem:** Hino Nacional Brasileiro  
(Portuguese)  
"National Anthem of Brazil"

**National seal**  
Selo Nacional do Brasil   
(Portuguese)  
"National Seal of Brazil"





Yanomani indigenous people;  
shot from the film *Yanomamo: A Multidisciplinary Study*

Within Brazil's current borders, most native tribes who were living in the land by the year 1500 are thought to have descended from the first wave of migrants from North Asia ( Siberia), who are believed to have crossed the Bering Land Bridge at the end of the last Ice Age, around 9000 BC. At the time of European discovery, the territory of modern Brazil had as many as 2,000 nations and tribes, an estimated total population of nearly 3 million Amerindians. A somewhat dated linguistic survey found 188 living indigenous languages with 155,000 total speakers. On 18 January 2007, Fundação Nacional do Índio reported that it had confirmed the presence of 67 different uncontacted tribes in Brazil, up from 40 in 2005. With this addition, Brazil is now confirmed as having the largest number of uncontacted peoples in the world, even more than the island of New

Guinea. When the Portuguese arrived in 1500, the Amerindians were mostly semi- nomadic tribes, living mainly on the coast and along the banks of major rivers.

Unlike Christopher Columbus who thought he had reached the East Indies, the Portuguese, most notably by Vasco da Gama, had already reached India via the Indian Ocean route when they reached Brazil. Nevertheless, the word *índios* ("Indians") was by then established to designate the peoples of the New World and stuck being used today in the Portuguese language, while the people of India are called *indianos* in order to distinguish the two peoples. Initially, the Europeans saw the natives as noble savages, and miscegenation of the population began right away. Tribal warfare, cannibalism, and the pursuit of brazilwood for its treasured red dye convinced the Portuguese that they should " civilize" the Amerindians.

## Colonization

<b>Capital</b>	Brasília
<b>Largest city</b>	São Paulo
<b>Official languages</b>	Portuguese
<b>Demonym</b>	Brazilian
<b>Government</b>	Presidential Federal republic
- President	Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva
- Vice-President	José Alencar
- President of the Chamber of Deputies	Arlindo Chinaglia
- President of the Senate	Garibaldi Alves Filho
- Chief Justice	Gilmar Mendes
<b>Independence</b>	from Portugal
- Declared	September 7, 1822
- Recognized	August 29, 1825
- Republic	November 15, 1889
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	8,514,877 km <sup>2</sup> ( 5th) 3,287,597 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.65
<b>Population</b>	
- 2008 estimate	186,757,608 ( 5th)
- 2007 census	183,987,291
- Density	22/km <sup>2</sup> ( 182nd) 57/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	USD 1,804 trillion ( 9th)
- Per capita	USD 11,873 ( 65)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate



Map of Brazil issued by the Portuguese explorers in 1519.

Initially Portugal had little interest in Brazil, mainly because of high profits gained through commerce with Indochina. After 1530, the Portuguese Crown devised the Hereditary Captaincies system to effectively occupy its new colony, and later took direct control of the failed captaincies. Although temporary trading posts were established earlier to collect brazilwood, used as a dye, with permanent settlement came the establishment of the sugar cane industry and its intensive labor. Several early settlements were founded across the coast, among them the colonial capital, Salvador, established in 1549 at the Bay of All Saints in the north, and the city of Rio de Janeiro on March 1567, in the south. The Portuguese colonists adopted an economy based on the production of agricultural goods that were exported to Europe. Sugar became by far the most important Brazilian colonial product until the early 18th century. Even though Brazilian sugar was reputed as being of high quality, the industry faced a crisis during the 17th and 18th centuries when the Dutch and the French started producing sugar in the Antilles, located much closer to Europe, causing sugar prices to fall.

- Total	USD 1,313 trillion ( 10th)
- Per capita	USD 6,842 ( 61st)
<b>Gini</b> (2008)	▼ 50.5
<b>HDI</b> (2005)	▲ 0.800 (high) ( 70th)
<b>Currency</b>	Real (R\$) ( <small>BRL</small> )
<b>Time zone</b> - Summer ( DST)	BRT ( UTC -2 to -5) BRST ( UTC -2 to -5)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.br
<b>Calling code</b>	+55
<b>Footnotes:</b>	[ Hide ]

During the 18th century, private explorers who called themselves the Bandeirantes found gold and diamond deposits in the state of Minas Gerais. The exploration of these mines were mostly used to finance the Portuguese Royal Court's expenditure with both the preservation of its Global Empire and the support of its luxury lifestyle at mainland. The way in which such deposits were exploited by the Portuguese Crown and the powerful local elites, however, burdened colonial Brazil with excessive taxes. Some popular movements supporting independence came about against the taxes established by the colonial government, such as the Tiradentes in 1789, but the secessionist movements were often dismissed by the authorities of the ruling colonial regime. Gold production declined towards the end of the 18th century, starting a period of relative stagnation of the Brazilian hinterland. Both Amerindian and African slaves' man power were largely used in Brazil's colonial economy.

In contrast to the neighbouring Spanish possessions in South America, the Portuguese colony of Brazil kept its territorial, political and linguistic integrity due to the action of the Portuguese administrative effort. Although the colony was threatened by other nations across the era of Portuguese rule, in particular by Dutch and French powers, the authorities and the people ultimately managed to protect its borders from foreign attacks. Portugal even had to send bullion to Brazil, a spectacular reversal of the colonial trend, in order to protect the integrity of the colony.

## Empire



In 1808, the Portuguese court, fleeing from Napoleon's troops who had invaded Portugal, established themselves in the city of Rio de Janeiro, which thus became the seat of government of Portugal and the entire Portuguese Empire, even though being located outside of Europe. Rio de Janeiro was the capital of the Portuguese empire from 1808 to 1815. After then the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves (1815-1825) was created with Lisbon as its capital. After João VI returned to Portugal in 1821, his heir-apparent Pedro became regent of the Kingdom of Brazil, within the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves. Following a series of political incidents and disputes, Brazil achieved its independence from Portugal on September 7, 1822. On October 12, 1822, Dom Pedro became the first Emperor of Brazil, being crowned on December 1, 1822. Portugal would recognize Brazil as an independent country in 1825.

In 1824, Pedro closed the Constituent Assembly, stating that the body was "endangering liberty". Pedro then produced a constitution modeled on that of Portugal (1822) and France (1814). It specified indirect elections and created the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government; however, it also added a fourth branch, the "moderating power", to be held by the Emperor. Pedro's government was considered economically and administratively inefficient. Political pressures eventually made the Emperor step down on April 7, 1831. He returned to Portugal leaving behind his five-year-old son Pedro II. Until Pedro II reached maturity, Brazil was governed by regents from 1831 to 1840. The regency period was turbulent and marked by numerous local revolts including the Male Revolt, the largest urban slave rebellion in the Americas, which took place in Bahia in 1835.



Emperor Dom Pedro II of  
Brazil in 1873.

On July 23, 1840, Pedro II was crowned Emperor. His government was marked by a substantial rise in coffee exports, the War of the Triple Alliance, and the end of slave trade from Africa in 1865, although slavery in Brazilian territory would only be abolished in 1888. Brazil stopped trading slaves from Africa in 1850, with the Eusébio de Queirós law, and abandoned slavery altogether in 1888, thus becoming the last country of the Americas to ban slavery. When slavery was finally abolished, a large influx of European immigrants took place. By the 1870s, the Emperor's control of domestic politics had started to deteriorate in face of crises with the Catholic Church, the Army and the slaveholders. The Republican movement slowly gained strength. In the end, the empire fell due to a military coup d'etat and because the dominant classes no longer needed it to protect their interests and deeply resented the abolition of slavery. Indeed, imperial centralization ran counter to their desire for local autonomy. By 1889 Pedro II had stepped down and the Republican system had been adopted to Brazil.

## Republic



Pedro II was deposed on November 15, 1889 by a Republican military coup led by general Deodoro da Fonseca, who became the country's first *de facto* president through military ascension. The country's name became the *Republic of the United States of Brazil*. From 1889 to 1930, the dominant states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais alternated control of the presidency. A military junta took control in 1930. Getúlio Vargas took office soon after, and would remain as dictatorial ruler (with a brief democratic period in between), until 1945. He was re-elected in 1951 and stayed in office until his suicide in 1954. After 1930, successive governments continued industrial and agricultural growth and the development of the vast interior of Brazil. Juscelino Kubitschek's office years (1956-1961) were marked by the political campaign motto of plunging *50 anos em 5* (English: fifty years of development in five).

The military took office in Brazil in a coup d'état in 1964, and remained in power until March 1985, when it fell from grace because of political struggles between the regime and the Brazilian elites. In 1967 the name of the country was changed to *Federative Republic of Brazil*. Just as the Brazilian regime changes of 1889, 1930, and 1945 unleashed competing political forces and caused divisions within the military, so too did the 1964 regime change. Democracy was re-established in 1988 when the current Federal Constitution was enacted. Fernando Collor de Mello was the first president truly elected by popular vote after the military regime. Collor took office in March 1990. In September 1992, the National Congress voted for Collor's impeachment after a sequence of scandals were uncovered by the media. The vice-president, Itamar Franco, assumed the presidency. Assisted by the Minister of Finance at that time, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Itamar Franco's administration implemented the Plano Real economic package, which included a new currency temporarily pegged to the U.S. dollar, the *real*. In the elections held on October 3, 1994, Fernando Henrique Cardoso ran for president and won, being reelected in 1998. Brazil's current president is Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, elected in 2002 and reelected in 2006.



The Chamber of Deputies of Brazil the lower house of the National Congress.

## Government and politics



The National Congress in Brasília, the capital of Brazil.

The Brazilian Federation is based on the union of three autonomous political entities: the States, the Municipalities and the Federal District. A fourth entity originated in the aforementioned association: the Union. There is no hierarchy among the political entities. The Federation is set on six fundamental principles: sovereignty, citizenship, dignity of the people, social value of labor, freedom of enterprise, and political pluralism. The classic tripartite branches of government ( executive, legislative, and judicial under the checks and balances system), is formally established by the Constitution. The executive and legislative are organized independently in all four political entities, while the judiciary is organized only in the federal and state levels.

All members of the executive and legislative branches are directly-elected. Judges and other judicial officials are appointed after passing entry exams. Voting is compulsory for those aged 18 or older. Four political parties stand out among several small ones: Workers' Party (PT), Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), and Democrats (formerly Liberal Front Party - PFL). Practically all governmental and administrative functions are exercised by authorities and agencies affiliated to the Executive.

The form of government is that of a democratic republic, with a presidential system. The president is both head of state and head of government of the Union and is elected for a four-year term, with the possibility of re-election for a second successive term. The current president is Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. He was elected on October 27, 2002, and re-elected on October 29, 2006. The President appoints the Ministers of State, who assist in governing. Legislative houses in each political



entity are the main source of laws in Brazil. The National Congress is the Federation's bicameral legislature, consisting of the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate. Judiciary authorities exercise jurisdictional duties almost exclusively.

## Law

Brazilian Law is based on Roman- Germanic traditions. Thus, civil law concepts prevail over common law practices. Most of Brazilian law is codified, although non-codified statutes also represent a substantial part of the system, playing a complementary role. Court decisions set out interpretive guidelines; however, they are not binding on other specific cases except in a few situations. Doctrinal works and the works of academic jurists have strong influence in law creation and in law cases. The legal system is based on the Federal Constitution, which was promulgated on October 5, 1988, and is the fundamental law of Brazil. All other legislation and court decisions must conform to its rules. As of April 2007, it has been through 53 Amendments. States adopt their own Constitutions, but they must also not contradict the Federal Constitution. Municipalities and the Federal District do not have their own Constitutions; instead, they adopt "organic laws" (*leis orgânicas*). Legislative entities are the main source of statutes, although in certain matters judiciary and executive bodies may enact legal norms.

Jurisdiction is administered by the judiciary entities, although in rare situations the Federal Constitution allows the Federal Senate to pass on legal judgments. There are also specialized military, labor, and electoral courts. The highest court is the Supreme Federal Tribunal. This system has been criticised over the last decades due to the slow pace at which final decisions are issued. Lawsuits on appeal may take several years to resolve, and in some cases more than a decade to see definitive rulings.

## Foreign relations and the military

Brazil is sought to be a political and economic leader in Latin America, even though this claim is partially contested by Argentina and Mexico, who oppose the country's aim of obtaining a permanent seat as the representative of the region in the UN Security Council. Social and economic problems prevent Brazil from effectively exerting global power. Between World War II and 1990, both democratic and military governments sought to expand Brazil's influence in the world by pursuing a state-led industrial policy and an independent foreign policy. More recently, the country has aimed to strengthen ties with other South American countries, engage in multilateral diplomacy through the United Nations and the Organization of American States. Brazil's current foreign policy is based on the country's position as a regional power in Latin America, a leader among developing countries, and an emerging world power. Brazilian foreign policy has generally reflected multilateralism, peaceful dispute settlement, and nonintervention in the affairs of other countries. The Brazilian Constitution also determines the country shall seek the economic, political, social and cultural integration of the nations of Latin America.

The Armed forces of Brazil comprise the Brazilian Army, the Brazilian Navy, and the Brazilian Air Force. The Military Police (States' Military Police) is described as an ancillary force of the Army by constitution, but under the control of each state's governor. The Brazilian armed forces are the largest in Latin America. The Brazilian Air Force is the aerial warfare branch of the Brazilian armed forces, being the largest air force in Latin America, with about 700 manned aircraft in service. The Brazilian Navy is responsible for naval operations and for guarding Brazilian territorial waters. It is the oldest of the



The finance minister, Guido Mantega, and the former president of the Supreme Federal Court, Ellen Gracie Northfleet.



Brazilian Army troops before boarding for MINUSTAH peacekeeping mission in Haiti.



Brazilian Armed forces and the only navy in Latin America that operates an aircraft carrier, the NAeL *São Paulo* (formerly FS *Foch* of the French Navy). Finally, the Brazilian Army is responsible for land-based military operations, with a strength of approximately 190,000 soldiers.

## Subdivisions

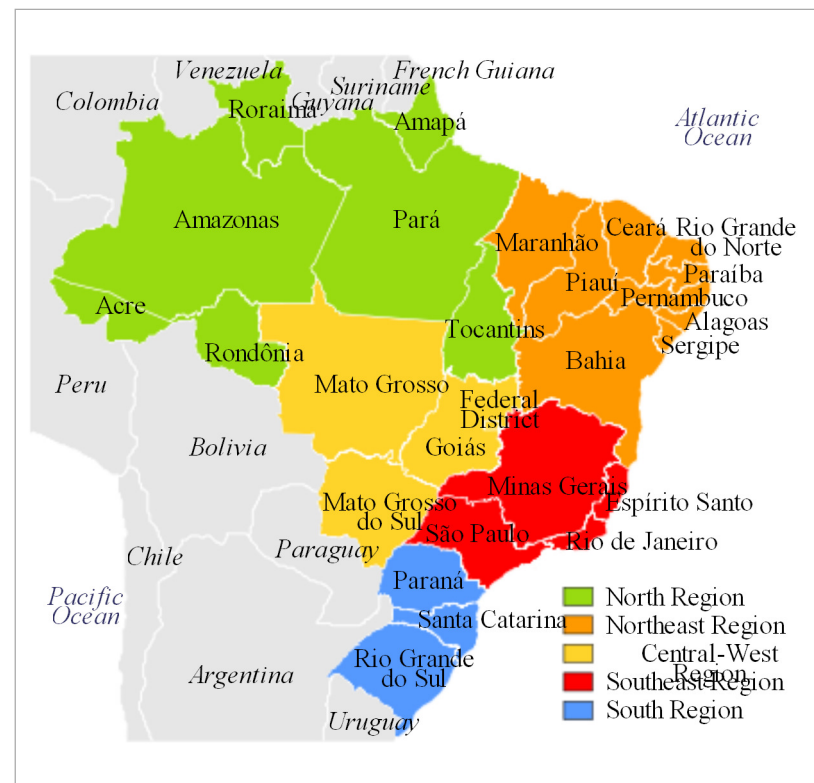
Politically, Brazil is a federation of 26 states (*estados*) and one federal district (*Distrito Federal*) which contains the capital city, Brasília. The states are subdivided into municipalities. States are based on historical, conventional borders and have developed throughout the centuries; though some boundaries are arbitrary. The federal district is not a state on its right, but shares some characteristics of a state and some of a municipality. The national territory was divided in 1969 by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), for demographic and statistical purposes, into five main regions: North, Northeast, Central-West, Southeast and South.

In 1943, with the entrance of Brazil into the Second World War, the Vargas regime detached seven strategic territories from the border of the country in order to administrate them directly: Amapá, Rio Branco, Acre, Guaporé, Ponta Porã, Iguaçú and the archipelago of Fernando de Noronha. After the war, the first three territories were retained as states, with Rio Branco and Guaporé being renamed Roraima and Rondônia, respectively. Ponta Porã and Iguaçú resorted to territorial status. In 1988, Fernando de Noronha became part of Pernambuco.

In 1960, the square-shaped *Distrito Federal* was carved out of Goiás in preparation for the new capital, Brasília. The previous federal district became the state of Guanabara until in 1975 it was merged with the state of Rio de Janeiro, becoming the municipality of Rio de Janeiro.

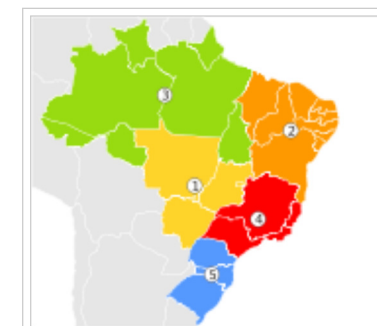
In 1977, Mato Grosso was split into two states. The northern area retained the name Mato Grosso while the southern area became the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, with Campo Grande as its capital. The new Mato Grosso do Sul incorporated the territory of Ponta Porã and the northern part of Iguaçú. Central Iguaçú went to Paraná, and southern Iguaçú went to Santa Catarina. In 1988, the northern portion of Goiás became the state of Tocantins, with Palmas as its capital.

## Regions





The North region covers 45.27% of the land area of Brazil, and has the lowest number of inhabitants. With the exception of Manaus, which hosts a tax-free industrial zone, and Belém, the biggest metropolitan area of the region, it is fairly unindustrialized and undeveloped. It accommodates most of the rainforest vegetation of the world and many indigenous tribes. The Northeast region is inhabited by about 30% of Brazil's population. It is culturally diverse, with roots set in the Portuguese colonial period, and in Amerindian and Afro-Brazilian elements. It is also the poorest region of Brazil, and suffers from long periods of dry climate. The Central-West region has low demographic density when compared to the other regions, mostly because a part of its territory is covered by the world's largest marshlands area, the Pantanal as well as a small part of the Amazon Rainforest in the northwest. However, much of the region is also covered by Cerrado, the largest savanna in the world. The central-west region contributes significantly towards agriculture.

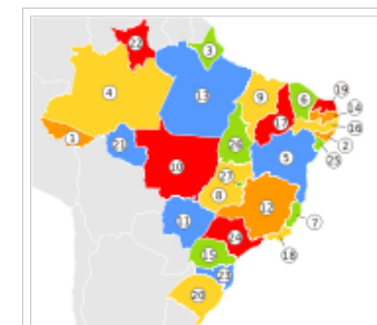


The five regions of Brazil.

The Southeast region is the richest and most densely populated. It has more inhabitants than any other South American country, and hosts one of the largest megalopolises of the world, and has the country's two largest cities; São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The region is very diverse, including the major business centre of São Paulo, the historical cities of Minas Gerais and its capital Belo Horizonte, the third-largest metropolitan area in Brazil, the beaches of Rio de Janeiro, and the coast of Espírito Santo. The South region is the wealthiest by GDP per capita, and has the highest standard of living in the country. It is also the coldest region of Brazil, with occasional occurrences of frost and snow in some of the higher altitude areas. It has been settled mainly by European immigrants, mostly of Italian, German and Portuguese ancestry, being clearly influenced by these cultures.

## States

The Equatorial line cuts through the state of Amapá in the north, and the Tropic of Capricorn line cuts through the state of São Paulo. The southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul is further to the south than the entire European continent is to the north. Acre is in the far west side of the country, covered by the Amazon forest; Paraíba is the easternmost state of Brazil; Cabo Branco, in the city of João Pessoa, is the easternmost point of Brazil and the Americas. The states of Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina all have a temperate climate.



The twenty-six states and the Federal District of Brazil.

São Paulo is the economic center of Brazil. Agriculture, industry, commerce, and services are the most diversified of Brazil. Although a large proportion is exported to other states and other countries, the consumer market of the state is also the biggest in the country. Different from other states, where settlement started in the coast and moved inwards, in São Paulo the centre of the economy was in a non-coastal city.

Rio de Janeiro, the most well known Brazilian city and with many famous landmarks, is the capital of the state of Rio de Janeiro. Older books may still reference the state of Guanabara: after the Federal District (capital of the Republic) was moved to Brasília in 1960, the city of Rio de Janeiro was elevated to the condition of state of Guanabara (name of the large bay which washes the city or Rio); however, in 1975, Guanabara was incorporated to the state of Rio and returned to the condition of municipality, with the old name of city of Rio de Janeiro.

## Geography





The Amazon Rainforest comprises the largest and most species-rich tract of tropical rainforest in the world.

Brazil occupies an immense area along the eastern coast of South America and includes much of the continent's interior region, sharing land borders with Uruguay to the south; Argentina and Paraguay to the southwest; Bolivia and Peru to the west; Colombia to the northwest; Venezuela, Suriname, Guyana and the overseas department of French Guiana to the north; stretching from the North to the Southern Hemisphere. The factors of size, relief, climate, and natural resources make Brazil geographically diverse. Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world—after Russia, Canada, the People's Republic of China and the United States—and third largest on the Americas; with a total area of 8,511,965 kilometers (5,289,090 mi), include 55,455 kilometers (34,458 mi) of water. It spans three time zones; from UTC-4, in the North (except Pará) and UTC-4, in the central states; to UTC-3, in the eastern states, the official time of Brazil, and UTC-2, in the Atlantic islands.

Brazilian topography is also diverse, including hills, mountains, plains, highlands, and scrublands. Much of Brazil lies between 200 metres (660 ft) and 800 metres (2,600 ft) in elevation. The main upland area occupies most of the southern half of the country. The northwestern parts of the plateau consist of broad, rolling terrain broken by low, rounded hills. The southeastern section is more rugged, with a complex mass of ridges and mountain ranges reaching elevations of up to 1,200 metres (3,900 ft).

These ranges include the Mantiqueira Mountains, the Espinhaço Mountains, and the Serra do Mar. In north, the Guiana Highlands form a major drainage divide, separating rivers that flow south into the Amazon Basin from rivers that empty into the Orinoco river system, in Venezuela, to the north. The highest point in Brazil is the Pico da Neblina with 3,014 metres (9,890 ft), and the lowest point is the Atlantic Ocean with 0 metres (0 ft). Brazil has a dense and complex system of rivers, one of the world's most extensive, with eight major drainage basins, all of which drain into the Atlantic Ocean. Major rivers include the Amazon, the largest river in terms of volume of water, and the second-longest in the world; the Paraná and its major tributary, the Iguaçu River, where the Iguaçu Falls are located; the Negro, São Francisco, Xingu, Madeira and the Tapajós rivers.

## Climate

The climate of Brazil comprises a wide range of weather conditions across a large geographic scale and varied topography, but the largest part of the country is tropical and covered by the Amazon Rainforest. Analysed according to the Köppen system, Brazil hosts five major climatic subtypes: equatorial, tropical, semiarid, highland tropical, and temperate; ranging from equatorial rainforests in the north and semiarid deserts in the northeast, to temperate coniferous forests in the south and tropical savannas in central Brazil. Many regions have starkly different microclimates.

A equatorial climate characterizes much of northern Brazil. There is no real dry season but there are some variations in the period of the year when most rain falls. Temperatures average 25 °C (77 °F), with more significant temperature variations between night and day than between seasons. Over central Brazil rainfall is more seasonal, characteristic of a savanna climate. This region is as large and extensive as the Amazon basin but, lying farther south and being at a moderate altitude, it has a very different climate. In the interior Northeast, seasonal rainfall is even more extreme. The semiarid climate region receives less than 800 millimetres (31 in) of rain, which falls in a period of two or three months. From the south of Bahia, near São Paulo, the distribution of rainfall changes, here some appreciable rainfall occurs in all months. The South has temperate conditions, with average temperatures below 18 °C (64 °F) and cool winters, frosts are quite common, with occasional snowfalls in the higher areas.



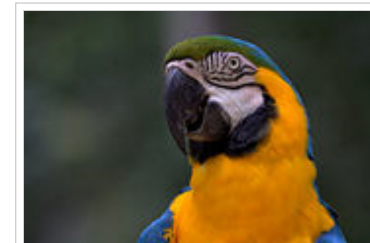
Cyclone Catarina, the first tropical cyclone in the South Atlantic Ocean, formed in 2004.



## Wildlife

Brazil's large territory comprises different ecosystems, such as the Amazon Rainforest, recognized as having the greatest biological diversity in the world; the Atlantic Forest and the Cerrado, which together sustain some of the world's greatest biodiversity. In the South, the Araucaria pine forest grows under temperate conditions. The rich wildlife of Brazil reflects the variety of natural habitats; however, remains largely unknown, and new species are found on nearly a daily basis. Scientists estimate that the total number of plant and animal species in Brazil could approach two million. Larger mammals include pumas, jaguars, ocelots, rare bush dogs, and foxes. Peccaries, tapirs, anteaters, sloths, opossums, and armadillos are abundant. Deer are plentiful in the south, and monkeys of many species abound in the northern rain forests.

Concern for the environment in Brazil has grown in response to global interest in environmental issues. It's natural heritage is extremely threatened due to cattle ranching and agriculture, logging, mining, resettlement, oil and gas extraction, over-fishing, expansion of urban centres, wildlife trade, fire, climate change, dams and infrastructure, water contamination, and invasive species. In many areas of the country, the natural environment is threatened by development. Construction of highways has opened up previously remote areas for agriculture and settlement; dams have flooded valleys and inundated wildlife habitats; and mines have scarred and polluted the landscape.



The Macaw is a typical animal of Brazil. The country has one of the world's most diverse populations of birds and amphibians.

## Economy



São Paulo, the wealthiest and largest city in South America.

Brazil is the largest national economy in Latin America, the world's tenth largest economy at market exchange rates and the ninth largest in purchasing power parity (PPP), according to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; with large and developed agricultural, mining, manufacturing and service sectors, as well as a large labor pool. The country has been expanding its presence in international financial and commodities markets, and is regarded as one of the group of four emerging economies called BRIC. Brazilian exports are booming, creating a new generation of tycoons. Major export products include aircraft, coffee, automobiles, soybean, iron ore, orange juice, steel, ethanol, textiles, footwear, corned beef and electrical equipment. The biggest investment boom in history is under way; in 2007, Brazil launched a four-year plan to spend \$300 billion to modernise its road network, power plants and ports. Brazil's booming economy is shifting into overdrive, with biofuels and deep-water oil providing energy independence and the government collecting enough cash to irrigate the desert and pave highways across the Amazon Rainforest. Brazil had pegged its currency, the real, to the U.S. dollar in 1994. However, after the East Asian financial crisis, the Russian default in 1998 and the series of adverse financial events that followed it, the Brazilian central bank

temporarily changed its monetary policy to a managed-float scheme while undergoing a currency crisis, until definitively changing the exchange regime to free-float in January 1999.

Brazil received an International Monetary Fund rescue package in mid-2002 in the amount of \$30.4 billion, a record sum at that time. The IMF loan was paid off early by Brazil's central bank in 2005 (the due date was scheduled for 2006). One of the issues the Brazilian central bank is currently dealing with is the excess of speculative short-term capital inflows to the country in the past few months, which might explain in part the recent downfall of the U.S. dollar against the real in the



period. Nonetheless, foreign direct investment (FDI), related to long-term, less speculative investment in production, is estimated to be \$193.8 billion for 2007. Inflation monitoring and control currently plays a major role in Brazil's Central Bank activity in setting out short-term interest rates as a monetary policy measure.

## Components

Brazil's "investment grade" economy is diverse, encompassing agriculture, industry, and a multitude of services. Brazil is finally punching its weight with a booming economy and stronger global leadership. The recent economic strength has been due in part to a global boom in commodities prices with exports from beef to soybeans soaring. Its prospects have been helped by huge oil and gas discoveries. A global power in agriculture and natural resources, Brazil unleash the greatest burst of prosperity has witnessed in three decades.

Agriculture and allied sectors like forestry, logging and fishing accounted for 5.1% of the gross domestic product in 2007. A performance that puts agribusiness in a position of distinction in terms of Brazil's trade balance, in spite of trade barriers and subsidizing policies adopted by the developed countries. The industry; from automobiles, steel and petrochemicals to computers, aircraft, and consumer durables; accounted for 30.8% of the gross domestic product. Industry is highly concentrated geographically, with the leading concentrations in metropolitan São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Campinas, Porto Alegre, and Belo Horizonte. Technologically advanced industries are also highly concentrated in these locations.

Brazil is the world's tenth largest energy consumer. It's energy comes from renewable sources, particularly hydroelectricity and ethanol; and nonrenewable sources, mainly oil and natural gas. Brazil will become an oil superpower, with massive oil discoveries in recent times.

## Science and technology

Brazilian science effectively began in the first decades of the 19th century, when the Portuguese Royal Family, headed by John VI, arrived in Rio de Janeiro, escaping from the Napoleon's army invasion of Portugal in 1807. Until then, Brazil was a Portuguese colony, without universities, and a lack of cultural and scientific organizations, in stark contrast to the former American colonies of the Spanish Empire, which although having a largely illiterate population like Brazil and Portugal, had, however, a number of universities since the 16th century.

Technological research in Brazil is largely carried out in public universities and research institutes. Nonetheless, more than 73% of funding for basic research still comes from government sources. Some of Brazil's most notables technological hubs are the Oswaldo Cruz Institute, the Butantan Institute, the Air Force's Aerospace Technical Centre, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation and the INPE. Brazil has the most advanced space program in Latin America, with significant capabilities to launch vehicles, launch sites and satellite manufacturing. On October 14, 1997, the Brazilian Space Agency signed an agreement with NASA to provide parts for the ISS. Uranium is enriched at the Resende Nuclear Fuel Factory to fuel the country's energy demands. Plans are on the way to build the country's first nuclear submarine. Brazil is one of the three countries in Latin America with an operational Synchrotron Laboratory, a research facility on physics, chemistry, material science and life sciences.



Itaipu Dam, the world's largest hydroelectric plant by energy generation.



An Embraer E-175 jet airliner, developed in Brazil.



## Demographics



Boa Viagem beach in Recife. Much of Brazil's population is concentrated across the coastline.

Brazil's population comes from many racial and ethnic groups. The last National Research for Sample of Domiciles (PNAD) census revealed the following: 49.7% of the population are White, about 93 million; 42.6% are Pardo (brown), about 79 million; 6.9% are Black, about 13 million; 0.5% are Asian, about 1 million; and 0.4% are Amerindian, about 519,000. Most Brazilians can trace their ancestry to the country's Indigenous peoples, Portuguese colonists, and African slaves. Since 1500, with the arrival of the Portuguese, miscegenation between these three groups took place. Over three centuries of Portuguese colonization, Brazil received more than 700,000 Portuguese settlers and 4 million African slaves.

Starting in the late 19th century, Brazil opened its doors to immigration: people of over 60 nationalities immigrated to Brazil. About 5 million European and Asian immigrants arrived from 1870 to 1953, most of them from Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Germany. In the early 20th century, people from Japan and the Middle-East also arrived. The immigrants and their descendants had an important impact in the ethnic composition of the Brazilian population, and many diasporas are present in the country. Brazil has the largest population of Italian origin outside of Italy, with over 25 million Italian Brazilians, the largest Japanese population outside of Japan, with 1.6 million Japanese Brazilians, as well the second largest German population outside of

Germany, with 12 million German Brazilians. A characteristic of Brazil is the race mixing. Genetically, most Brazilians have some degree of European, African, and Amerindian ancestry. The entire population can be considered a single "Brazilian" ethnic group, with highly varied racial types and backgrounds, but without clear ethnic sub-divisions.

The largest metropolitan areas in Brazil are São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte, respectively with 19.7, 11.4, and 5.4 million inhabitants. Almost all the capitals are the largest city in their corresponding state, except for Vitória, the capital of Espírito Santo, and Florianópolis, the capital of Santa Catarina. There are also non-capital metropolitan areas in the states of São Paulo (Campinas, Santos and the Paraíba Valley), Minas Gerais (Steel Valley), Rio Grande do Sul (Sinos Valley), and Santa Catarina (Itajaí Valley).

### Largest cities of Brazil

Municipality	Federative unit	Population	Municipality	Federative unit	Population
1 <b>São Paulo</b>	São Paulo	11,016,724	11 <b>Belém</b>	Pará	1,428,368
2 <b>Rio de Janeiro</b>	Rio de Janeiro	6,136,652	12 <b>Guarulhos</b>	São Paulo	1,283,253
3 <b>Salvador</b>	Bahia	2,892,625	13 <b>Goiânia</b>	Goiás	1,220,412
4 <b>Fortaleza</b>	Ceará	2,416,920	14 <b>Campinas</b>	São Paulo	1,059,420
5 <b>Belo Horizonte</b>	Minas Gerais	2,399,920	15 <b>São Luís</b>	Maranhão	922,458
6 <b>Brasília</b>	Distrito Federal	2,383,784	16 <b>São Gonçalo</b>	Rio de Janeiro	973,372
7 <b>Curitiba</b>	Paraná	1,788,559	17 <b>Maceió</b>	Alagoas	922,458
8 <b>Manaus</b>	Amazonas	1,644,690	18 <b>D. de Caxias</b>	Rio de Janeiro	855,010



**São Paulo**





9 Recife	Pernambuco	1,515,052	19 Nova Iguaçu	Rio de Janeiro	844,583
10 Porto Alegre	Rio Grande do Sul	1,440,939	20 Teresina	Piauí	813,992

**Rio de Janeiro**

**Source:** Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2007 Demographic Census)

<sup>^1</sup> **Metropolitan region of São Paulo** (São Paulo and Guarulhos)

<sup>^2</sup> **Metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro** (Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, São Gonçalo, Duque de Caxias and Nova Iguaçu)

## Education and health

The Federal Constitution and the 1996 *General Law of Education in Brazil* (LDB) determine how the Federal Government, States, Federal District, and Municipalities will manage and organize their respective education systems. Each of these public educational systems is responsible for its own maintenance, which manages funds as well as mechanisms and sources for financial resources. The new Constitution reserves 25% of state and municipal taxes and 18% of federal taxes for education.

Private school programs are available to complement the public school system. In 2003, the literacy rate was 88% of the population, and the youth literacy rate (ages 15–19) was 93.2%. Illiteracy is highest in the Northeast, around 27%, which has a high proportion of rural poor. Although at same year, Brazil's education had low levels of efficiency by 15-year-old students, particularly in the public school network. Higher education starts with undergraduate or sequential courses, which may offer different specialist choices such as academic or vocational paths. Depending on choice, students may improve their educational background with *Stricto Sensu* or *Lato Sensu* postgraduate courses.

The public health system is managed and provided by all levels of government, whilst private healthcare fulfills a complementary role. There are several problems in the Brazilian health system. In 2006, these were infant mortality, child mortality, maternal mortality, mortality by non-transmissible illness and mortality caused by external causes: transportation, violence and suicide.

## Language



Federal University of Paraná, in Curitiba, is regarded as the oldest Brazilian university.



Portuguese is the only official language of Brazil. It is spoken by nearly the entire population and is virtually the only language used in newspapers, radio, television, and for all business and administrative purposes. Moreover, Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking nation in the Americas, making the language an important part of Brazilian national identity and giving it a national culture distinct from its Spanish-speaking neighbors.

Brazilian Portuguese has had its own development, influenced by the Amerindian and African languages. Due to this, the language is somewhat different from that spoken in Portugal and other Portuguese-speaking countries, mainly for phonological and orthographic differences. These differences are somewhat greater than those of American and British English. Portugal may have to recognize the inevitable by bowing to the economic and cultural supremacy of Brazil, its former colony; it is considering reforming its own language to accommodate linguistic developments in the Brazilian Portuguese since the two languages diverged.

Minority languages are spoken throughout the vast national territory. Some of these are spoken by indigenous peoples: 180 Amerindian languages are spoken in remote areas. Others are spoken by immigrants and their descendants. There are important communities of speakers of German (mostly the Hunsrückisch, part of the High German languages) and Italian (mostly the Talian dialect, of Venetian origin) in the south of the country, both largely influenced by the Portuguese language.



Museum of the Portuguese Language in São Paulo, the first language museum in the world.

## Culture



Brazilian Carnival parade in Rio de Janeiro, considered one of the greatest shows on Earth.

A wide variety of elements create a society with considerable ethnic complexity. Brazilian culture has historically been influenced by European, African, and Indigenous cultures and traditions. Its major early influence derived from Portuguese culture because of strong colonial ties with the Portuguese empire. Among other inheritances, the Portuguese introduced the Portuguese language, the Catholic religion, and the colonial architectural styles. Other aspects of Brazilian culture are contributions of Italian, German, and other European immigrants who came in large numbers, and their influences are felt closer to the South and Southeast of Brazil. Amerindian peoples influenced Brazil's language and cuisine; and the Africans, brought to Brazil as slaves, influenced language, cuisine, music, dance, and religion.

Literature in Brazil dates back to the 16th century, to the writings of the first Portuguese explorers in Brazil, such as Pêro Váz de Caminha, writer of the fleet of navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral. Cuisine varies greatly by region and reflects the country's mix of native and immigrants. This has created a national cooking style marked by the preservation of regional differences. Brazil's cultural tradition extends to its music styles which include samba, bossa nova, forró, frevo, pagode, and many others. Brazil has also contributed to classical music, which can be seen in the works of many composers. In arts, important modern artists Anita Malfatti and Tarsila do Amaral were both early pioneers in Brazilian art. The Cinema has a long tradition, reaching back to the birth of the medium in the late 19th century, and gained a new level of international acclaim in recent years.

The festival of Carnival (Portuguese: *Carnaval*), with its spectacular street parades and vibrant music, has become one of the most potent images of Brazil; an annual celebration held forty days before Easter and marks the beginning of Lent. Carnival is celebrated throughout Brazil with distinct regional characteristics, but the most spectacular celebrations outside Rio de Janeiro take place in Salvador, Recife, and Olinda, although the nature of the events varies. Other regional

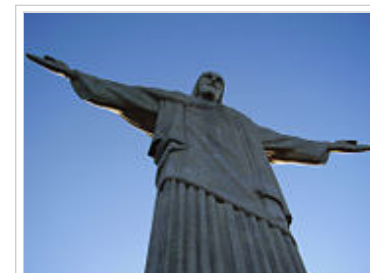


festivals include the Boi Bumbá and Festa Junina (*June Festivals*).

## Religion

Religion is very diversified in Brazil; the constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. The Roman Catholic Church is dominant, making Brazil the largest Catholic nation in the world. The formal link between the state and the Roman Catholicism was severed in the late 19th century; however, the Catholic Church has continued to exert an influence on national affairs. Adepts of Protestantism are rising in number. Until 1970, the majority of Brazilian Protestants were members of "traditional churches", mostly Lutherans, Presbyterians and Baptists. Since then, numbers of Pentecostal and Neopentecostal members have increased significantly. Traditional African beliefs, brought by slaves, have blended with Catholicism to create Afro-Brazilian religions such as Macumba, Candomblé, and Umbanda. Amerindians practice a wide variety of indigenous religions that vary from group to group. Islam in Brazil was first practiced by African slaves. Today, the Muslim population in Brazil is made up of mostly Arab immigrants. There are approximately fifty-five mosques and Muslim religious centers. A recent trend has been the increase in conversions to Islam among non-Arab citizens.

According to the 2000 Demographic Census, 73.9% of the population is Roman Catholic; 15.4% is Protestant; 0.91% from other Christian denominations; 1.33% follows Kardecist spiritism; 0.31% follows African traditional religions; 0.01% follows Amerindian traditions; 7.35% consider themselves agnostics, atheists or without a religion; and 0.81% are members of other religions such as Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and some practice a mixture of different religions.



Christ the Redeemer, one of the Seven Wonders of the World and symbol of Brazilian Christianity.

## Sport

Football (Portuguese: *futebol*) is the most popular sport in Brazil. The Brazilian national football team (*Seleção*) is currently ranked second in the world according to the FIFA World Rankings. They have been victorious in the FIFA World Cup tournament a record five times, in 1958, 1962, 1970, 1994 and 2002. Basketball, volleyball, auto racing, and martial arts also attract large audiences. Though not as regularly followed or practiced as the previously mentioned sports, tennis, team handball, swimming, and gymnastics have found a growing number of enthusiasts over the last decades. Some sport variations have their origins in Brazil. Beach football, futsal (official version of indoor football) and footvolley emerged in the country as variations of football. In martial arts, Brazilians have developed Capoeira, Vale tudo, and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. In auto racing, Brazilian drivers have won the Formula 1 world championship eight times: Emerson Fittipaldi in 1972 and 1974; Nelson Piquet in 1981, 1983 and 1987; and Ayrton Senna in 1988, 1990 and 1991.

Brazil has undertaken the organization of large-scale sporting events: the country organized and hosted the 1950 FIFA World Cup and is chosen to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup event. The circuit located in São Paulo, Autódromo José Carlos Pace, hosts the annual Grand Prix of Brazil. São Paulo organized the IV Pan American Games in 1963, and Rio de Janeiro hosted the XV Pan American Games in 2007. Brazil also tried for the fourth time to host the Summer Olympics with Rio de Janeiro candidature in 2016.

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# British Virgin Islands

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

The **British Virgin Islands (BVI)** is a British overseas territory, located in the Caribbean to the east of Puerto Rico. The islands make up part of the Virgin Islands archipelago, the remaining islands constituting the U.S. Virgin Islands. Technically the name of the Territory is simply the "Virgin Islands", but in practice since 1917 they have been almost universally referred to as the "British Virgin Islands" to distinguish the islands from the American Territory. To add to the regional confusion, the Puerto Rican islands of Culebra, Vieques and surrounding islands began referring to themselves as the "Spanish Virgin Islands" as part of a tourism drive in the early 2000s.

The British Virgin Islands consist of the main islands of Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada and Jost Van Dyke, along with over fifty other smaller islands and cays. Approximately fifteen of the islands are inhabited. The largest island, Tortola, is approximately 20 km (approx. 12 mi) long and 5 km (approx. 3 mi) wide. The islands have a total population of about 22,000, of whom approximately 18,000 live on Tortola. Road Town, the capital, is situated on Tortola.




## History

The Virgin Islands were first settled by the Arawak from South America around 100 BC (though there is some evidence of Amerindian presence on the islands as far back as 1500 BC). The Arawaks inhabited the islands until the fifteenth century when they were displaced by the more aggressive Caribs, a tribe from the Lesser Antilles islands, after whom the Caribbean Sea is named.

The first European sighting of the Virgin Islands was by Christopher Columbus in 1493 on his second voyage to the Americas. Columbus gave them the fanciful name *Santa Ursula y las Once Mil Virgenes* (Saint Ursula and her 11,000 Virgins), shortened to *Las Virgenes* (The Virgins), after the legend of Saint Ursula.

The Spanish Empire claimed the islands by discovery in the early sixteenth century, but never settled them, and subsequent years saw the English, Dutch, French, Spanish and Danish all jostling for control of the region, which became a notorious haunt for pirates. There is no record of any native Amerindian population in the British Virgin Islands during this period, although the native population on nearby St.

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British Virgin Islands	
 	
Flag	
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Vigilate</i> " (Latin) "Be Watchful"	
<b>Anthem:</b> " God Save the Queen"	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Road Town
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	83.36% African, 7.28% British, Portuguese, 5.38% Multiracial, 3.14% East Indian, 0.84% Others
<b>Government</b>	British Overseas Territory
- Head of State	Queen Elizabeth II



Croix was decimated.

The Dutch established a permanent settlement on the island of Tortola by 1648. In 1672, the English captured Tortola from the Dutch, and the British annexation of Anegada and Virgin Gorda followed in 1680. Meanwhile, over the period 1672–1733, the Danish gained control of the nearby islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix.

The British islands were considered principally a strategic possession, but were planted when economic conditions were particularly favourable. The British introduced sugar cane which was to become the main crop and source of foreign trade, and slaves were brought from Africa to work on the sugar cane plantations. The islands prospered economically until the middle of the 1800s, when a combination of the abolition of slavery in the Territory, a series of disastrous hurricanes, and the growth in the sugar beet crop in Europe and the United States significantly reduced sugar cane production and led to a period of economic decline.

In 1917, the United States purchased St. John, St. Thomas and St. Croix from Denmark for US\$25 million, renaming them the United States Virgin Islands.

The British Virgin Islands were administered variously as part of the British Leeward Islands or with St. Kitts and Nevis, with an Administrator representing the British Government on the Islands. Separate colony status was gained for the Islands in 1960 and the Islands became autonomous in 1967. Since the 1960s, the Islands have diversified away from their traditionally agriculture-based economy towards tourism and financial services, becoming one of the richest areas in the Caribbean.

## Geography

- Governor	David Pearey
- Premier	Ralph T. O'Neal
<b>British Overseas Territory</b>	
- Separate	1960
- Autonomous territory	1967
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	153 km <sup>2</sup> ( 216th) 59 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.6
<b>Population</b>	
- 2005 census	22,016
- Density	260/km <sup>2</sup> ( 68th) 673/sq mi
<b>Currency</b>	U.S. dollar ( USD)
<b>Time zone</b>	Q ( UTC-4)
- Summer ( DST)	not observed ( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.vg
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 284



The British Virgin Islands comprise around sixty semi-tropical Caribbean islands, ranging in size from the largest, Tortola 20 km (approx. 12 mi) long and 5 km (approx. 3 mi) wide, to tiny uninhabited islets. They are located in the Virgin Islands archipelago, a few miles east of the U.S. Virgin Islands. The North Atlantic Ocean lies to the north of the islands, and the Caribbean Sea lies to the south. Most of the islands are volcanic in origin and have a hilly, rugged terrain. Anegada is geologically distinct from the rest of the group and is a flat island composed of limestone and coral.

In addition to the four main islands of Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada, and Jost Van Dyke, other islands include:

- Beef Island
- Cooper Island
- Ginger Island
- Great Camanoe
- Great Thatch
- Guana Island
- Mosquito Island
- Necker Island
- Norman Island
- Peter Island
- Salt Island

See also Islands of the British Virgin Islands.

## Climate

The British Virgin Islands enjoy a tropical climate, moderated by trade winds. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. In the capital, Road Town, typical daily maxima are around 32 °C (90 °F) in the summer and 29 °C (84 °F) in the winter. Typical daily minima are around 24 °C (75 °F) in the summer and 21 °C (70 °F) in the winter. Rainfall averages about 1150 mm (45 in) per year, higher in the hills and lower on the coast. Rainfall can be quite variable, but the wettest months on average are September to November and the driest months on average are February and March. Hurricanes occasionally hit the islands, with the hurricane season running from June to November.

## Politics



Map of British Virgin Islands



The British Virgin Islands is an associated member of the OECS.

Executive authority in British Virgin Islands is invested in The Queen and is exercised on her behalf by the Governor of the British Virgin Islands. The Governor is appointed by the Queen on the advice of the British Government. Defence and Foreign Affairs remain the responsibility of the United Kingdom.

A new constitution was adopted in 2007 (the Virgin Islands Constitution Order, 2007) and came into force when the Legislative Council was dissolved for the 2007 general election. The Head of Government under the new constitution is the Premier (prior to the new constitution the office was referred to as Chief Minister), who is elected in a general election along with the other members of the ruling government as well as the members of the opposition. An Executive Council is nominated by the Premier and appointed by the Governor. There is a unicameral Legislative Council made up of 13 seats.

The current Governor is David Pearey (since 2006). The current Premier is Ralph T. O'Neal (since August 22, 2007).

## Subdivisions

## Economy

The British Virgin Islands enjoys one of the more prosperous economies of the Caribbean region, with a per capita GDP of around \$38,500 (2004 est.)

In the British Virgin Islands it has long been fashionable to talk about the "twin pillars" of the Territory's economy – tourism and financial services. Politically, tourism is the more important of the two, as it employs a greater number of people within the Territory, and a larger proportion of the businesses in the tourist industry are locally owned, as are a number of the highly tourism-dependent sole traders (e.g. taxi drivers and street vendors). Economically, however, financial services are by far the more important. Nearly 50% of the Government's revenue comes directly from licence fees for offshore companies, and considerable further sums are raised directly or indirectly from payroll taxes relating to salaries paid within the trust industry sector (which tend to be higher on average than those paid in the tourism sector).

Tourism accounts for 45% of national income. The islands are a popular destination for U.S. citizens, with around 350,000 tourists visiting annually (1997 figures). Tourists frequent the numerous white sand beaches, visit The Baths on Virgin Gorda, snorkel the coral reefs near Anegada, experience the well-known bars of Jost Van Dyke, or charter yachts to explore the less accessible islands. A substantial number of the tourists who visit the BVI are cruise ship passengers, although they produce far lower revenue per head than charter boat tourists and hotel based tourists. They are nonetheless important to the substantial (and politically important) taxi driving community.

Substantial revenues are also generated by the registration of offshore companies. As of 2004, over 550,000 companies were so registered. In 2000 KPMG reported in its survey of offshore jurisdictions for the United Kingdom government that over 41% of the world's offshore companies were formed in the British



Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands



Virgin Islands. Since 2001, financial services in the British Virgin Islands have been regulated by the independent Financial Services Commission.

Agriculture and industry account for only a small proportion of the islands' GDP. Agricultural produce includes fruit, vegetables, sugar cane, livestock and poultry, and industries include rum distillation, construction and boatbuilding.

Since 1959, the official currency of the British Virgin Islands has been the US dollar, also used by the United States Virgin Islands.

The British Virgin Islands are a major target for drug traffickers, who use the area as a gateway to the United States. According to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, drug trafficking is "potentially the most serious threat to stability in the BVI".

## Demographics

The population of the Islands is around 21,730 at 2003. The majority of the population (83%) are Afro-Caribbean, descended from the slaves brought to the islands by the British. Other large ethnic groups include those of British and other European origin.

The 1999 census reports:

- 83.36% Black
- 7.28% White\*
- 5.38% Mixed
- 3.14% East Indian
- 0.84% Others

\* includes British, Portuguese, and Syrian/Lebanese.

The islands are predominantly Protestant Christian (86%). The largest individual Christian denominations are Methodist (33%), Anglican (17%), and the Catholic (10%).

## Transport

There are 113 kilometres (70 mi) of roads. The main airport ( Terrance B. Lettsome International Airport, also known as Beef Island Airport) is located on Beef Island, which lies off the eastern tip of Tortola. Virgin Gorda and Anegada have their own smaller airports. The main harbour is in Road Town. There are also ferries that operate within the British Virgin Islands and also to the neighbouring United States Virgin Islands. As in the rest of the UK traffic in the British Virgin Islands cars drive on the left side of the road.



Tortola, British Virgin Islands



## Education

The British Virgin Islands operates several government schools as well as private schools. There is also a community college, Hamilton Lavity Stoutt Community College that is located on the eastern end of Tortola. This college was named after the late Honourable Lavity Stoutt (chief minister).

## Sport

## Music

The traditional music of the British Virgin Islands is called *fungi* after the local cornmeal dish with the same name, often made with okra. The special sound of fungi is due to a unique local fusion between African and European music. It functions as a medium of local history and folklore and is therefore a cherished cultural form of expression that is part of the curriculum in BVI schools. The fungi bands, also called "scratch bands", use instruments ranging from calabash, washboard, bongos and ukulele, to more traditional western instruments like keyboard, banjo, guitar, bass, triangle and saxophone. Apart from being a form of festive dance music, fungi often contains humorous social commentaries, as well as BVI oral history.

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# Canada




## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; North American Geography

**Canada** (IPA: /ˈkænədə/) is a country occupying most of northern North America, extending from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west and northward into the Arctic Ocean. It is the world's second largest country by total area, and shares land borders with the United States to the south and northwest.

The land occupied by Canada was inhabited for millennia by various aboriginal people. Beginning in the late 15th century, British and French expeditions explored and later settled the Atlantic coast. France ceded nearly all of its colonies in North America in 1763 after the Seven Years War. In 1867, with the union of three British North American colonies through Confederation, Canada was formed as a federal dominion of four provinces. This began an accretion of additional provinces and territories and a process of increasing autonomy from the United Kingdom, highlighted by the Statute of Westminster in 1931, and culminating in the Canada Act in 1982 which severed the vestiges of legal dependence on the British parliament.

A federation now comprising ten provinces and three territories, Canada is a parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy, with Queen Elizabeth II as its head of state. It is a bilingual and multicultural country, with both English and French as official languages at the federal level. Technologically advanced and industrialized, Canada maintains a diversified economy that is heavily reliant upon its abundant natural resources and upon trade—particularly with the United States, with which Canada has had a long and complex relationship.

## Etymology

Canada	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>A Mari Usque Ad Mare</i> (Latin) "From Sea to Sea"	
<b>Anthem:</b> "O Canada" <b>Royal anthem:</b> "God Save the Queen"	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Ottawa
<b>Largest city</b>	Toronto
<b>Official languages</b>	English, French
Recognised regional languages	Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, Cree, Dëne Sų́líné, Gwich'in,



Jacques Cartier

The name *Canada* most likely comes from a St. Lawrence Iroquoian word *kanata*, meaning "village" or "settlement". In 1535, inhabitants of the present-day Quebec City region used the word to direct explorer Jacques Cartier toward the village of Stadacona. Cartier used the word 'Canada' to refer to not only that village, but the entire area subject to Donnacona, Chief at Stadacona. By 1545, European books and maps began referring to this region as Canada.

The French colony of Canada referred to the part of New France along the Saint Lawrence River and the northern shores of the Great Lakes. Later, it was split into two British colonies, called Upper Canada and Lower Canada until their union as the British Province of Canada in 1841. Upon Confederation in 1867, the name *Canada* was adopted for the entire country, and *Dominion* was conferred as the country's title. It was frequently referred

to as the *Dominion of Canada* until the 1950s. As Canada asserted its political autonomy from Britain, the federal government increasingly used *Canada* on legal state documents and treaties. The Canada Act 1982 refers only to "Canada" and, as such, it is currently the only legal (and bilingual) name. This was reflected in 1982 with the renaming of the national holiday from Dominion Day to Canada Day.

## History



The fur trade was Canada's most important industry until the 19th century

### Pre-colonial Canada

Various groups of Inuit (formerly known as Eskimos) and First Peoples inhabited North America prehistorically. While no written documents exist, various forms of rock art, petroforms, petroglyphs, and ancient artifacts provide thousands of years of information about the past. Archaeological studies support a human presence in northern Yukon from 26,500 years ago, and in southern Ontario from 9,500 years ago. Europeans first arrived when the Vikings settled briefly at L'Anse aux Meadows around AD 1000. The next Europeans to explore Canada's

Atlantic coast included John Cabot in 1497 for England and Jacques Cartier in 1534 for France; seasonal Basque whalers and fishermen subsequently exploited the region between the Grand Banks and Tadoussac for over a century.

	Inuvialuktun, Slavey, Tłı̨chǫ Yatı̨ı
<b>Demonym</b>	Canadian
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
- Monarch	HM Queen Elizabeth II
- Governor General	Michaëlle Jean
- Prime Minister	Stephen Harper
<b>Establishment</b>	
- British North America Act	July 1, 1867
- Statute of Westminster	December 11, 1931
- Canada Act	April 17, 1982
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	9,984,670 km <sup>2</sup> ( 2nd) 3,854,085 sq mi
- Water (%)	8.92 (891,163 km <sup>2</sup> /344,080 mi <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Population</b>	
- 2008 estimate	33,343,000 ( 36th)
- 2006 census	31,612,897
- Density	3.2/km <sup>2</sup> ( 219th) 8.3/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$1.274 trillion ( 13th)
- Per capita	\$38,200 ( 21st)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$1.432 trillion ( 9th)
- Per capita	\$42,738 ( 14th)





## Colonial-era Canada

French explorer Samuel de Champlain arrived in 1603 and established the first permanent European settlements at Port Royal in 1605 and Quebec City in 1608. These would become respectively the capitals of Acadia and Canada. Among French colonists of New France, *Canadiens* extensively settled the St. Lawrence River valley, Acadians settled the present-day Maritimes, while French fur traders and Catholic missionaries explored the Great Lakes, Hudson Bay and the Mississippi watershed to Louisiana. The French and Iroquois Wars broke out over control of the fur trade.

The English established fishing outposts in Newfoundland around 1610 and colonized the Thirteen Colonies to the south. A series of four Intercolonial Wars erupted between 1689 and 1763. Mainland Nova Scotia came under British rule with the Treaty of Utrecht (1713); the Treaty of Paris (1763) ceded Canada and most of New France to Britain following the Seven Years' War.

The Royal Proclamation (1763) carved the Province of Quebec out of New France and annexed Cape Breton Island to Nova Scotia. It also restricted the language and religious rights of French Canadians. In 1769, St. John's Island (now Prince Edward Island) became a separate colony. To avert conflict in Quebec, the Quebec Act of 1774 expanded Quebec's territory to the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley and re-established the French language, Catholic faith, and French civil law in Quebec; it angered many residents of the Thirteen Colonies, helping to fuel the American Revolution. The Treaty of Paris (1783) recognized American independence and ceded territories south of the Great Lakes to the United States. Approximately 50,000 United Empire Loyalists fled the United States to Canada. New Brunswick was split from Nova Scotia as part of a reorganization of Loyalist settlements in the Maritimes. To accommodate English-speaking Loyalists in Quebec, the Constitutional Act of 1791 divided the province into French-speaking Lower Canada and English-speaking Upper Canada, granting each their own elected Legislative Assembly.

Canada (Upper and Lower) was the main front in the War of 1812 between the United States and British Empire. Its defence contributed to a sense of unity among British North Americans. Large-scale immigration to Canada began in 1815 from Britain and Ireland. The timber industry surpassed the fur trade in importance in the early nineteenth century.

<b>Gini</b>	32.1 (2005)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.961 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 4th)
<b>Currency</b>	Canadian dollar (\$) ( <small>CAD</small> )
<b>Time zone</b> - Summer ( DST)	( UTC−3.5 to −8) ( UTC−2.5 to −7)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ca
<b>Calling code</b>	+1
<b>Canada portal</b>	



*The Death of General Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham at Quebec in 1759, part of the Seven Years' War.*



Fathers of Confederation by Robert Harris, an amalgamation of Charlottetown and Quebec conference scenes.

The desire for Responsible Government resulted in the aborted Rebellions of 1837. The Durham Report subsequently recommended responsible government and the assimilation of French Canadians into British culture. The Act of Union (1840) merged The Canadas into a United Province of Canada. French and English Canadians worked together in the Assembly to reinstate French rights. Responsible government was established for all British North American provinces by 1849.

The signing of the Oregon Treaty by Britain and the United States in 1846 ended the Oregon boundary dispute, extending the border westward along the 49th parallel and paving the way for British colonies on Vancouver Island (1849) and in British Columbia (1858). Canada launched a series of western exploratory expeditions to claim Rupert's Land and the Arctic region. The Canadian population grew rapidly because of high birth rates; British immigration was offset by emigration to the United States, especially by French Canadians moving to New England.

## Confederation to World War I

Following several constitutional conferences, the Constitution Act, 1867 brought about Confederation creating "one Dominion under the name of Canada" on July 1, 1867, with four provinces: Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. Canada assumed control of Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory to form the Northwest Territories, where Métis' grievances ignited the Red River Rebellion and the creation of the province of Manitoba in July 1870. British Columbia and Vancouver Island (which had united in 1866) and the colony of Prince Edward Island joined Confederation in 1871 and 1873, respectively.

Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's Conservative Party established a National Policy of tariffs to protect nascent Canadian manufacturing industries. To open the West, the government sponsored construction of three trans-continental railways (most notably the Canadian Pacific Railway), opened the prairies to settlement with the Dominion Lands Act, and established the North-West Mounted Police to assert its authority over this territory. In 1898, after the Klondike Gold Rush in the Northwest Territories, the Canadian government created the Yukon territory. Under Liberal Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, continental European immigrants settled the prairies, and Alberta and Saskatchewan became provinces in 1905.



An animated map, exhibiting the growth and change of Canada's provinces and territories since Confederation.



Canadian soldiers won the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917.

Canada automatically entered the First World War in 1914 with Britain's declaration of war, sending volunteers to the Western Front, who played a substantial role in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The Conscription Crisis of 1917 erupted when conservative Prime Minister Robert Borden brought in compulsory military service over the objection of French-speaking Quebecers. In 1919, Canada joined the League of Nations independently of Britain; in 1931 the Statute of Westminster affirmed Canada's independence.

### **1920s to 1960s: Great Depression, World War II, and post-war period**

The Great Depression of 1929 brought economic hardship to all of Canada. In response, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in Alberta and Saskatchewan presaged a welfare state as pioneered by Tommy Douglas in the 1940s and 1950s. Canada declared war on Germany independently during World War II under Liberal Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, three days after Britain. The first Canadian Army units arrived in Britain in December 1939. Canadian

troops played important roles in the Battle of the Atlantic, the failed 1942 Dieppe Raid in France, the Allied invasion of Italy, the D-Day landings, the Battle of Normandy and the Battle of the Scheldt in 1944. Canada is credited by the Netherlands for having provided asylum and protection for its monarchy during the war after the country was occupied and the Netherlands credits Canada for its leadership and major contribution to the liberation of Netherlands from Nazi Germany. The Canadian economy boomed as industry manufactured military materiel for Canada, Britain, China and the Soviet Union. Despite another Conscription Crisis in Quebec, Canada finished the war with one of the largest armed forces in the world. In 1945, during the war, Canada became one of the first countries to join the United Nations

In 1949, Newfoundland joined Confederation. Post-war prosperity and economic expansion ignited a baby boom and attracted immigration from war-ravaged European countries.

### **1960s to 1980s: New Canadian identity, official bilingualism, and patriation of the Constitution**

Under successive Liberal governments of Lester B. Pearson and Pierre Trudeau, a new Canadian identity emerged. Canada adopted its current Maple Leaf Flag in 1965. In response to a more assertive French-speaking Quebec, the federal government became officially bilingual with the Official Languages Act of 1969. Non-discriminatory Immigration Acts were introduced in 1967 and 1976, and official multiculturalism in 1971; waves of non-European immigration had changed the face of the country. Social welfare programs such as universal health care, the Canada Pension Plan, and Canada Student Loans were initiated in the 1960s and consolidated in the 1970s; provincial governments, particularly Quebec, fought these as incursions into their jurisdictions. Finally, Prime Minister Trudeau pushed through the patriation of the constitution from Britain, enshrining a Charter of Rights and Freedoms based on individual rights in the Constitution Act of 1982. Canadians continue to take pride in their system of universal health care, their commitment to multiculturalism, and human rights.



Quebec underwent profound social and economic changes during the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. Quebec nationalists under Jean Lesage began pressing for greater autonomy. The radical Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) ignited the October Crisis in 1970 with bombings and kidnappings. The more moderate Parti Québécois of René Lévesque came to power in 1976 and held an unsuccessful referendum on a proposed "sovereignty-association" (political sovereignty and separation of Quebec from Canada while maintaining a common economy with Canada) in the 1980 Quebec referendum. An energy crisis and economic decline in the late 1970s caused the federal government of Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau to adopt price controls and redistribution of oil profits from Alberta's booming oil industry to Canada's poorer provinces as part of the National Energy Program (NEP). The NEP was fiercely opposed by Albertans and other western Canadians saw the plan as eastern Canada exploiting Alberta's oil boom which caused an increase in a sense of political and social alienation of western Canada by its residents.

### 1980s to present: Continental integration, regional tensions, and changing Aboriginal affairs

The Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney began efforts to recognize Quebec as a "distinct society" and end western alienation. The National Energy Program was scrapped and in 1987 talks began with Quebec to officially have Quebec sign the Canadian Constitution these collapsed in 1990. Under Mulroney, relations with the United States improved and both Canada and the U.S. began to grow more closely integrated. In 1986, Canada and the U.S. signed the Acid Rain Treaty to reduce acid rain. In 1989, the federal government adopted the Free Trade Agreement with the United States despite significant animosity from the Canadian public who were concerned about the economic and cultural impacts of close integration with the United States.



Signing of the initialization of the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1992 by representatives of the Canadian, Mexican, and United States governments.

In the 1990s, anger in predominantly French-speaking Quebec with the failure of constitutional reform talks, and the rising sense of alienation in Canada's western provinces due to the government's preoccupation with attempting to convince Quebec's government to officially endorse the Constitution. After Mulroney resigned as Prime Minister in 1993, Kim Campbell took over and became Canada's first woman Prime Minister. Campbell only remained in office for a few months and the 1993 election saw the collapse of the Progressive Conservative Party from government to only 2 seats, while two new regional political parties: the Quebec-based sovereigntist Bloc Québécois became the official opposition and the largely Western Canada-supported Reform Party of Canada took most of Canada's western ridings. In 1995, the government of Quebec held a second referendum on sovereignty in 1995 that was rejected by a slimmer margin of just 50.6% to 49.4%. In 1997, the Canadian Supreme Court ruled unilateral secession by a province to be unconstitutional, and Parliament passed the "Clarity Act" outlining the terms of a negotiated departure.

The 1990s was a period of economic turmoil in Canada as Canada suffered from high unemployment in the early 1990s and a large debt and deficit that had been accumulating for years. Both Progressive Conservative and Liberal governments in the federal government and Progressive Conservative governments in Alberta and Ontario made major cutbacks in social welfare spending and significant privatization of government-provided services, government-owned corporations (crown corporations), and utilities occurred during this period as a means to end government deficit and reduce government debt.



The Constitution Act, 1982 during the official signing ceremony by Queen Elizabeth II in Ottawa on April 17, 1982 which accepted the act and gave the Government of Canada full control over Canada's constitution.



A number of hostile and controversial confrontations occurred between Canadian aboriginal groups and non-aboriginals over the issue of violations of aboriginal treaty rights entered the public spotlight in the 1990s. The Oka crisis in 1990, in which the Canadian armed forces was sent in to stop a protest by aboriginals who refused to allow the building of a golf club on land claimed by aboriginals. In 1995, a controversial standoff in Ipperwash, Ontario resulted in an aboriginal protester being shot dead and a subsequent inquiry discovered prevalent racism amongst the police officers involved in the standoff. Despite this a number of high-profile changes occurred to improve aboriginal rights, such as the signing of the Nisga'a Final Agreement, a treaty between the Nisga'a people, the provincial government of British Columbia and the federal government signed in 1999 which resolved land claims issues. In the 1980s, the federal government responded to demands by the Arctic Inuit people for self-governance and in 1999 granted the creation of the territory of Nunavut, which allowed the Inuktitut language to be an official language of the new territory.

In the 2000s, significant social and political changes have occurred in Canada. Canada's border control policy and foreign policy were altered as a result of the political impact of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States in 2001 resulting in increased pressure from the U.S. and adoption by Canada of initiatives to secure Canada's side of the border to the U.S. and Canada supported U.S.-led military action against the radical Islamic militant organization Al Qaeda in Afghanistan which was determined to have been responsible for the attacks on the United States. Canada did not support the U.S.-led war in Iraq in 2003 which led to increased political animosity between the Canadian and U.S. governments at the time. Environmental issues increased in importance in Canada resulting in the signing of the Kyoto Accord on climate change by Canada's Liberal government in 2002 but recently nullified by the present government which has proposed a "made-in-Canada" solution to climate change. A merger of the Canadian Alliance and PC Party into the Conservative Party of Canada was completed in 2003, ending a ten year division of the conservative vote, and was elected as a minority government under the leadership of Stephen Harper in the 2006 federal election, ending thirteen years of Liberal party dominance in elections. In 2006, Canada's government declared that Quebec's predominantly French-speaking people, the Quebecois, constitute a nation within Canada. In 2008, Canada's government officially apologized for its endorsement of residential schools for Canada's aboriginal peoples which had promoted forced cultural assimilation oppression of aboriginal culture, and physical and emotional abuse of aboriginal people. Canada's aboriginal leaders accepted the government's apology.

## Government and politics

Canada is a constitutional monarchy with Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, as head of state and the Prime Minister as the head of the government. The country is a parliamentary democracy with a federal system of parliamentary government and strong democratic traditions.

Executive authority is formally and constitutionally vested in the monarch. However, by convention, the monarch and her appointed representative, the Governor General, act in a predominantly ceremonial and apolitical role, deferring the exercise of executive power to the Cabinet, which is made up of ministers generally accountable to the elected House of Commons, and headed by the Prime Minister, who is normally the leader of the party that holds the confidence of the House of Commons. Thus, the Cabinet is typically regarded as the active seat of executive power. This arrangement, which stems from the principals of responsible government, ensures the stability of government, and makes the Prime Minister's Office one of the most powerful organs of the system, tasked with selecting, besides the other Cabinet members, Senators, federal court judges, heads of Crown corporations and government agencies, and the federal and provincial viceroys for appointment. However, the



Parliament Hill, Ottawa.



sovereign and Governor General do retain their right to use the Royal Prerogative in exceptional constitutional crisis situations.

The leader of the party with the second most seats usually becomes the Leader of the Opposition and is part of an adversarial parliamentary system that keeps the government in check. Michaëlle Jean has served as Governor General since September 27, 2005; Stephen Harper, leader of the Conservative Party, has been Prime Minister since February 6, 2006; and Stéphane Dion, leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, has been Leader of the Opposition since December 2, 2006.



The chamber of the House of Commons.

The federal parliament is made up of the Queen (represented by the Governor General) and two houses: an elected House of Commons and an appointed Senate. Each member in the House of Commons is elected by simple plurality in a *riding* or electoral district. General elections are either every four years as determined by fixed election date legislation, or triggered by the government losing the confidence of the House (usually only possible during minority governments). Members of the Senate, whose seats are apportioned on a regional basis, are chosen by the Prime Minister and formally appointed by the Governor General, and serve until age 75.

Four parties have had substantial representation in the federal parliament since 2006 elections: the Conservative Party of Canada (governing party), the Liberal Party of Canada (Official Opposition), the New Democratic Party (NDP), and the *Bloc Québécois*. The Green Party of Canada does not have current representation in Parliament but garners a significant share of the national vote. The list of historical parties with elected representation is substantial.

In line with Canada's federalist structure, the constitution divides government responsibilities between the federal government and the ten provinces, whose unicameral provincial legislatures operate in parliamentary fashion similar to the federal House of Commons. Canada's three territories also have legislatures, but with less constitutional responsibilities than the provinces, and with some structural differences (for example, the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut has no parties and operates on consensus).

## Law



The constitution is the supreme law of the country, and consists of written text and unwritten conventions. The Constitution Act, 1867, affirmed governance based on parliamentary precedent "similar in principle to that of the United Kingdom" and divided powers between the federal and provincial governments; the Statute of Westminster, 1931, granted full autonomy; and the Constitution Act, 1982, added the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees basic rights and freedoms that usually cannot be overridden by any level of government – though a *notwithstanding clause* allows the federal parliament and provincial legislatures to override certain sections of the Charter for a period of five years – and added a constitutional amending formula.

Canada's judiciary plays an important role in interpreting laws and has the power to strike down laws that violate the Constitution. The Supreme Court of Canada is the highest court and final arbiter and is led by the Right Honourable Madam Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin, P.C. since 2000. Its nine members are appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister and Minister of Justice. All judges at the superior and appellate levels are appointed after consultation with non-governmental legal bodies. The federal cabinet also appoints justices to superior courts at the provincial and territorial levels. Judicial posts at the lower provincial and territorial levels are filled by their respective governments.

Common law prevails everywhere except in Quebec, where civil law predominates. Criminal law is solely a federal responsibility and is uniform throughout Canada. Law enforcement, including criminal courts, is a provincial responsibility, but in rural areas of all provinces except Ontario and Quebec, policing is contracted to the federal Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

## Foreign relations and military

Canada and the United States share the world's longest undefended border, co-operate on military campaigns and exercises, and are each other's largest trading partners. Canada has nevertheless maintained an independent foreign policy, most notably maintaining full relations with Cuba and declining to participate in the Iraq War. Canada also maintains historic ties to the United Kingdom and France and to other former British and French colonies through Canada's membership in the Commonwealth of Nations and La Francophonie (French-Speaking Countries). Canada is noted for having a strong and positive relationship with the Netherlands which Canada helped liberate during World War II, and the Dutch government traditionally gives tulips, a symbol of the Netherlands, to Canada each year in remembrance of Canada's contribution to its liberation.

Canada currently employs a professional, volunteer military force of about 64,000 regular and 26,000 reserve personnel. The unified Canadian Forces (CF) comprise the army, navy, and air force. Major CF equipment deployed includes 1,400 armoured fighting vehicles, 34 combat vessels, and 861 aircraft.

Strong attachment to the British Empire and Commonwealth in English Canada led to major participation in British military efforts in the Second Boer War, the First World War, and the Second World War. Since then, Canada has been an advocate for multilateralism, making efforts to resolve global issues in



The Supreme Court of Canada in Ottawa, west of Parliament Hill.



The Peacekeeping Monument in Ottawa.



collaboration with other nations. Canada joined the United Nations in 1945 and became a founding member of NATO in 1949. During the Cold War, Canada was a major contributor to UN forces in the Korean War and founded the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) in cooperation with the United States to defend against aerial attacks from the Soviet Union.

Canada has played a leading role in UN peacekeeping efforts. During the Suez Crisis of 1956, Lester B. Pearson eased tensions by proposing the inception of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force. Canada has since served in 50 peacekeeping missions, including every UN peacekeeping effort until 1989 and has since maintained forces in international missions in Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and elsewhere.

Canada joined the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1990; Canada hosted the OAS General Assembly in Windsor, Ontario, in June 2000 and the third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in April 2001. Canada seeks to expand its ties to Pacific Rim economies through membership in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC).

Since 2001, Canada has had troops deployed in Afghanistan as part of the U.S. stabilization force and the UN-authorized, NATO-commanded International Security Assistance Force. Canada's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) has participated in three major relief efforts in the past two years; the two-hundred member team has been deployed in relief operations after the December 2004 tsunami in South Asia, Hurricane Katrina in September 2005 and the Kashmir earthquake in October 2005.

In February 2007, Canada, Italy, Britain, Norway, and Russia announced their funding commitments to launch a \$1.5 billion project to help develop vaccines they said could save millions of lives in poor nations, and called on others to join them. In August 2007, Canadian sovereignty in Arctic waters was challenged following a Russian expedition that planted a Russian flag at the seabed at the North Pole. Canada has considered that area to be sovereign territory since 1925.



Canadian soldiers in  
Afghanistan.

## Provinces and territories





A geopolitical map of Canada, exhibiting its ten provinces and three territories.

Canada is a federation composed of ten provinces and three territories; in turn, these may be grouped into regions. Western Canada consists of British Columbia and the three Prairie provinces ( Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba). Central Canada consists of Quebec and Ontario. Atlantic Canada consists of the three Maritime provinces ( New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia), along with Newfoundland and Labrador. Eastern Canada refers to Central Canada and Atlantic Canada together. Three territories ( Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) make up Northern Canada. Provinces have more autonomy than territories. Each has its own provincial or territorial symbols.

The provinces are responsible for most of Canada's social programs (such as health care, education, and welfare) and together collect more revenue than the federal government, an almost unique structure among federations in the world. Using its spending powers, the federal government can initiate national policies in provincial areas, such as the Canada Health Act; the provinces can opt out of these but rarely do so in practice. Equalization payments are made by the federal government to ensure that reasonably uniform standards of services and taxation are kept between the richer and poorer provinces.

All provinces have unicameral, elected legislatures headed by a Premier selected in the same way as the Prime Minister of Canada. Each province also has a Lieutenant-Governor representing the Queen, analogous to the Governor General of Canada. The Lieutenant-Governor is appointed on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of Canada, though with increasing levels of consultation with provincial governments in recent years.

## Geography and climate



Canada occupies a major northern portion of North America, sharing land borders with the contiguous United States to the south and with the U.S. state of Alaska to the northwest, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west; to the north lies the Arctic Ocean. By total area (including its waters), Canada is the second largest country in the world—after Russia—and largest on the continent. By land area it ranks fourth. Since 1925, Canada has claimed the portion of the Arctic between 60°W and 141°W longitude, but this claim is not universally recognized. The northernmost settlement in Canada and in the world is Canadian Forces Station (CFS) Alert on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island—latitude 82.5°N—just 817 kilometres (450 nautical miles) from the North Pole. Canada has the longest coastline in the world: 243,000 kilometres.

The population density, 3.5 inhabitants per square kilometre (9.1 /sq mi), is among the lowest in the world. The most densely populated part of the country is the Quebec City-Windsor Corridor along the Great Lakes and Saint Lawrence River in the southeast. To the north of this region is the broad Canadian Shield, an area of rock scoured clean by the last ice age, thinly soiled, rich in minerals, and dotted with lakes and rivers. Canada by far has more lakes than any other country and has a large amount of the world's freshwater.



A Maritime scene at Peggys Cove, Nova Scotia, which has long been sustained by the Atlantic fishery.

In eastern Canada, most people live in large urban centres on the flat Saint Lawrence Lowlands. The Saint Lawrence River widens into the world's largest estuary before flowing into the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. The gulf is bounded by Newfoundland to the north and the Maritime provinces to the south. The Maritimes protrude eastward along the Appalachian Mountain range from northern New England and the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are divided by the Bay of Fundy, which experiences the world's largest tidal variations. Ontario and Hudson Bay dominate central Canada. West of Ontario, the broad, flat Canadian Prairies spread toward the Rocky Mountains, which separate them from British Columbia.

In northwestern Canada, the Mackenzie River flows from the Great Slave Lake to the Arctic Ocean. A tributary of a tributary of the Mackenzie is the South Nahanni River, which is home to Virginia Falls, a waterfall about twice as high as Niagara Falls.

Northern Canadian vegetation tapers from coniferous forests to tundra and finally to Arctic barrens in the far north. The northern Canadian mainland is ringed with a vast archipelago containing some of the world's largest islands.

Average winter and summer high temperatures across Canada vary depending on the location. Winters can be harsh in many regions of the country, particularly in the interior and Prairie provinces which experience a continental climate, where daily average temperatures are near  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $5^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) but can drop below  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-40^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) with severe wind chills. In non-coastal regions, snow can cover the ground almost six months of the year (more in the north). Coastal British Columbia is an exception and enjoys a temperate climate with a mild and rainy winter.

On the east and west coast, average high temperatures are generally in the low 20s  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  (70s  $^{\circ}\text{F}$ ), while between the coasts the average summer high temperature ranges from 25 to 30  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  (75 to 85  $^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) with occasional extreme heat in some interior locations exceeding 40  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  (104  $^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). For a more complete description of climate across Canada see Environment Canada's Website.



A satellite composite image of Canada. Boreal forests prevail on the rocky Canadian Shield. Ice and tundra are prominent in the Arctic. Glaciers are visible in the Canadian Rockies and Coast Mountains. Flat and fertile Prairies facilitate agriculture. The Great Lakes feed the St. Lawrence River (in the southeast) where lowlands host much of Canada's population.



## Economy

Canada is one of the world's wealthiest nations, with a high per-capita income, and is a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Group of Eight. It is one of the world's top 10 trading nations. Canada is a mixed market, ranking lower than the U.S. but higher than most western European nations on the Heritage Foundation's index of economic freedom. Since the early 1990s, the Canadian economy has been growing rapidly with low unemployment and large government surpluses on the federal level. Today Canada closely resembles the U.S. in its market-oriented economic system, pattern of production, and high living standards. As of October 2007, Canada's national unemployment rate of 5.9% is its lowest in 33 years. Provincial unemployment rates vary from a low of 3.6% in Alberta to a high of 14.6% in Newfoundland and Labrador. 2008 forbes global 2000 list of world's largest companies, Canada had 69 companies in the list ranking 5th next to France.. As of 2007, the Canada's total government debt was \$467.3 billion CAD, or 68.5% of GDP.

In the past century, the growth of the manufacturing, mining, and service sectors has transformed the nation from a largely rural economy into one primarily industrial and urban. As with other first world nations, the Canadian economy is dominated by the service industry, which employs about three quarters of Canadians. However, Canada is unusual among developed countries in the importance of the primary sector, with the logging and oil industries being two of Canada's most important.

Canada is one of the few developed nations that are net exporters of energy. Atlantic Canada has vast offshore deposits of natural gas and large oil and gas resources are centred in Alberta. The vast Athabasca Tar Sands give Canada the world's second largest oil reserves behind Saudi Arabia. In Quebec, British Columbia, Newfoundland & Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba, hydroelectric power is a cheap and clean source of renewable energy.

Canada is one of the world's most important suppliers of agricultural products, with the Canadian Prairies one of the most important suppliers of wheat, canola and other grains. Canada is the world's largest producer of zinc and uranium and a world leader in many other natural resources such as gold, nickel, aluminium, and lead; many towns in the northern part of the country, where agriculture is difficult, exist because of a nearby mine or source of timber. Canada also has a sizeable manufacturing sector centred in southern Ontario and Quebec, with automobiles and aeronautics representing particularly important industries.

Economic integration with the United States has increased significantly since World War II. The *Canada-United States Automotive Agreement* in 1965 opened the borders to trade in the auto manufacturing industry. The *Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement* of 1988 eliminated tariffs between the two countries, while *North American Free Trade Agreement* expanded the free trade zone to include Mexico in the 1990s . Canadian nationalists continue to worry about their cultural autonomy as American television shows, movies and corporations are omnipresent.

Since 2001, Canada has successfully avoided economic recession and has maintained the best overall economic performance in the G8. Since the mid-1990s, Canada's federal government has posted annual budgetary surpluses and has steadily paid down the national debt.

## Demographics



### Largest Metropolitan Areas of Canada

Rank	Core City	Province	Pop.	Rank	Core City	Province	Pop.
1	<b>Toronto</b>	Ontario	5,113,149	11	<b>Kitchener</b>	Ontario	451,235
2	<b>Montreal</b>	Quebec	3,635,571	12	<b>St. Catharines</b>	Ontario	390,317
3	<b>Vancouver</b>	British Columbia	2,116,581	13	<b>Halifax</b>	Nova Scotia	372,858
4	<b>Ottawa</b>	Ontario	1,130,761	14	<b>Oshawa</b>	Ontario	330,594
5	<b>Calgary</b>	Alberta	1,079,310	15	<b>Victoria</b>	British Columbia	330,088
6	<b>Edmonton</b>	Alberta	1,034,945	16	<b>Windsor</b>	Ontario	323,342
7	<b>Quebec City</b>	Quebec	715,515	17	<b>Saskatoon</b>	Saskatchewan	233,923
8	<b>Winnipeg</b>	Manitoba	694,668	18	<b>Regina</b>	Saskatchewan	194,971
9	<b>Hamilton</b>	Ontario	692,911	19	<b>Sherbrooke</b>	Quebec	186,952
10	<b>London</b>	Ontario	457,720	20	<b>St. John's</b>	Newfoundland and Labrador	181,113

Canada 2006 Census



**Toronto**



**Montreal**

### Largest Cities of Canada

Rank	City	Province	Pop.	Rank	City	Province	Pop.
1	<b>Toronto</b>	Ontario	2,503,281	11	<b>Brampton</b>	Ontario	433,806
2	<b>Montreal</b>	Quebec	1,620,693	12	<b>Surrey</b>	British Columbia	394,976
3	<b>Calgary</b>	Alberta	1,019,942	13	<b>Halifax</b>	Nova Scotia	372,679
4	<b>Ottawa</b>	Ontario	812,129	14	<b>Laval</b>	Quebec	368,709
5	<b>Edmonton</b>	Alberta	730,372	15	<b>London</b>	Ontario	352,395
6	<b>Mississauga</b>	Ontario	668,549	16	<b>Markham</b>	Ontario	261,573
7	<b>Winnipeg</b>	Manitoba	633,451	17	<b>Gatineau</b>	Quebec	242,124
8	<b>Vancouver</b>	British Columbia	578,041	18	<b>Vaughan</b>	Ontario	238,866
9	<b>Hamilton</b>	Ontario	504,559	19	<b>Longueuil</b>	Quebec	229,330
10	<b>Quebec City</b>	Quebec	491,142	20	<b>Windsor</b>	Ontario	216,473

Canada 2006 Census



**Toronto**



**Montreal**

Canada's 2006 census counted a total population of 31,612,897, an increase of 5.4% since 2001. Population growth is from immigration and, to a lesser extent,

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 140 of 637



natural growth. About three-quarters of Canada's population live within 150 kilometres (90 mi) of the US border. A similar proportion live in urban areas concentrated in the Quebec City-Windsor Corridor (notably the Greater Golden Horseshoe including Toronto and area, Montreal, and Ottawa), the BC Lower Mainland (consisting of the region surrounding Vancouver), and the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor in Alberta.

According to the 2006 census, there are 43 ethnic origins that at least one hundred thousand people in Canada claim in their background. The largest ethnic group is English (21%), followed by French (15.8%), Scottish (15.2%), Irish (13.9%), German (10.2%), Italian (5%), Chinese (4%), Ukrainian (3.6%), and First Nations (3.5%); Approximately, one third of respondents identified their ethnicity as "Canadian. Canada's aboriginal population is growing almost twice as fast as the Canadian average. In 2006, 16.2% of the population belonged to non-aboriginal visible minorities.

In 2001, 49% of the Vancouver population and 42.8% of Toronto's population were visible minorities. In March 2005, Statistics Canada projected that people of non-European origins will constitute a majority in both Toronto and Vancouver by 2012. According to Statistics Canada's forecasts, the number of visible minorities in Canada is expected to double by 2017. A survey released in 2007 reveals that virtually 1 in 5 Canadians (19.8%) are foreign born. Nearly 60% of new immigrants hail from Asia (including the Middle East).

Canada has the highest per capita immigration rate in the world, driven by economic policy and family reunification; Canada also accepts large numbers of refugees. Newcomers settle mostly in the major urban areas of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. In the 2006 census, there were 5,068,100 people considered to belong to a visible minority, making up 16.2% of the population. Between 2001 and 2006, the visible minority population rose by 27.2 %.

Support for religious pluralism is an important part of Canada's political culture. According to the 2001 census, 77.1% of Canadians identify as being Christians; of this, Catholics make up the largest group (43.6% of Canadians). The largest Protestant denomination is the United Church of Canada. About 16.5% of Canadians declare no religious affiliation, and the remaining 6.3% are affiliated with religions other than Christianity, of which the largest is Islam numbering 1.9%, followed by Judaism at 1.1%.

Canadian provinces and territories are responsible for education. Each system is similar, while reflecting regional history, culture and geography. The mandatory school age ranges between 5–7 to 16–18 years, contributing to an adult literacy rate that is 99%. Postsecondary education is also administered by provincial and territorial governments, who provide most of the funding; the federal government administers additional research grants, student loans and scholarships. In 2002, 43% of Canadians aged between 25 and 64 had post-secondary education; for those aged 25 to 34 the post-secondary education rate reaches 51%.

## Culture



Canadian culture has historically been influenced by British, French, and Aboriginal cultures and traditions. It has also been influenced by American culture because of its proximity and migration between the two countries. American media and entertainment are popular, if not dominant, in English Canada; conversely, many Canadian cultural products and entertainers are successful in the U.S. and worldwide. Many cultural products are marketed toward a unified "North American" or global market.

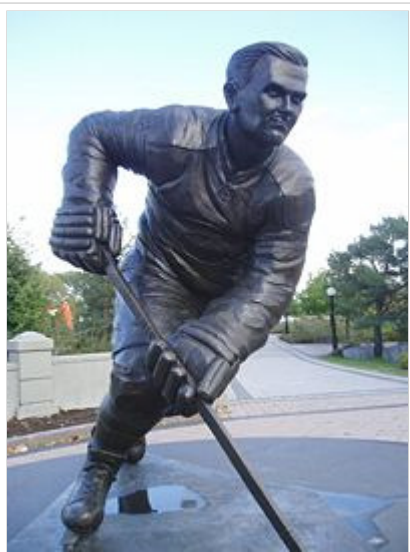
The creation and preservation of distinctly Canadian culture are supported by federal government programs, laws and institutions such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

Canada is a geographically vast and ethnically diverse country. Canadian culture has also been greatly influenced by immigration from all over the world. Many Canadians value multiculturalism and see Canadian culture as being inherently multicultural. Multicultural heritage is the basis of Section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

National symbols are influenced by natural, historical, and First Nations sources. Particularly, the use of the maple leaf as a Canadian symbol dates back to the early 18th century and is depicted on its current and previous flags, the penny, and on the coat of arms. Other prominent symbols include the beaver, Canada goose, common loon, the Crown, the RCMP, and more recently the totem pole and inukchuk.



A Kwakwaka'wakw totem pole and traditional "big house" in Victoria, British Columbia.



The monument to famous hockey player Maurice "Rocket" Richard in Gatineau, Quebec.

Canada's official national sports are ice hockey in the winter and lacrosse in the summer. Ice hockey is a national pastime and the most popular spectator sport in the country. It is the most popular sport Canadians play, with 1.65 million active participants in 2004. Canada's six largest metropolitan areas – Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, Calgary, and Edmonton – have franchises in the National Hockey League (NHL), and there are more Canadian players in the league than from all other countries combined. After hockey, other popular spectator sports include curling and football; the latter is played professionally in the Canadian Football League (CFL). Golf, baseball, skiing, soccer, volleyball, and basketball are widely played at youth and amateur levels, but professional leagues and franchises are not as widespread.

Canada hosted several high-profile international sporting events, including the 1976 Summer Olympics, the 1988 Winter Olympics, and the 2007 FIFA U-20 World Cup. Canada will be the host country for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and Whistler, British Columbia.

## Language



Canada's two official languages are English and French. Official Bilingualism in Canada is law, defined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Official Languages Act, and *Official Language Regulations*; it is applied by the Commissioner of Official Languages. English and French have equal status in federal courts, Parliament, and in all federal institutions. The public has the right, where there is sufficient demand, to receive federal government services in either English or French, and official language minorities are guaranteed their own schools in all provinces and territories.

English and French are the mother tongues of 59.7% and 23.2% of the population respectively, and the languages most spoken at home by 68.3% and 22.3% of the population respectively. 98.5% of Canadians speak English or French (67.5% speak English only, 13.3% speak French only, and 17.7% speak both). English and French Official Language Communities, defined by First Official Language Spoken, constitute 73.0% and 23.6% of the population respectively.

Although 85% of French-speaking Canadians live in Quebec, there are substantial Francophone populations in Ontario, Alberta and southern Manitoba, with an Acadian population in the northern and southeastern parts of New Brunswick constituting 35% of that province's population, as well as concentrations in southwestern Nova Scotia and on Cape Breton Island. Ontario has the largest French-speaking population outside Quebec. The Charter of the French Language in Quebec makes French the official language in Quebec, and New Brunswick is the only province to have a statement of official bilingualism in its constitution. Other provinces have no official languages as such, but French is used as a language of instruction, in courts, and for other government services in addition to English. Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec allow for both English and French to be spoken in the provincial legislatures, and laws are enacted in both languages. In Ontario, French has some legal status but is not fully co-official. Several aboriginal languages have official status in Northwest Territories. Inuktitut is the majority language in Nunavut, and one of three official languages in the territory.

Non-official languages are important in Canada, with over five million people listing one as a first language. Some significant non-official first languages include Chinese (853,745 first-language speakers), Italian (469,485), German (438,080), and Punjabi (271,220).



The population of Montreal, Quebec is mainly French-speaking, with a significant English-speaking community.

## International rankings

Organization	Survey	Ranking
United Nations Development Programme	Human Development Index	4 out of 177
A.T. Kearney/ Foreign Policy Magazine	Globalization Index 2006	6 out of 111
IMD International	World Competitiveness Yearbook 2007	10 out of 60
The Economist	The World in 2005 - Worldwide quality-of-life index, 2005	14 out of 111
Yale University/ Columbia University	Environmental Sustainability Index, 2005 (pdf)	6 out of 146
Reporters Without Borders World-wide	Press Freedom Index 2006	16 out of 168



Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index 2005	14 out of 159
Heritage Foundation/The Wall Street Journal	Index of Economic Freedom, 2007	10 out of 161
The Economist	Global Peace Index	8 out of 121
Fund for Peace/ ForeignPolicy.com	Failed States Index, 2007	168 out of 177

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# Cayman Islands

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

The **Cayman Islands** are a British overseas territory located in the western Caribbean Sea, comprising the islands of Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac, and Little Cayman. It is a tax haven financial centre and one of the many scuba diving destinations in the Caribbean.

## History

The Cayman Islands were first sighted by European eyes when Christopher Columbus, on 10 May 1503, encountered them during his disastrous fourth and final voyage to the New World. He named them *Las Tortugas* after the numerous sea turtles there. The first recorded English visitor to the islands was Sir Francis Drake, who landed there in 1586 and named them the Cayman Islands after the Neo-Taino nations term ( caiman) for crocodile (Zayas, 1914).






Cayman Islands National Museum

The first recorded permanent inhabitant of the Cayman Islands, Isaac Bodden, was born on Grand Cayman around 1700. He was the grandson of the original settler named Bodden who was probably one of Oliver Cromwell's soldiers at the taking of Jamaica in 1655.

The islands, along with nearby Jamaica, were captured, then ceded to England in 1670 under the Treaty of Madrid. They were governed as a single colony with Jamaica until 1962 when they became a separate British Overseas Territory and Jamaica became an independent Commonwealth realm.

The largely unprotected at sea level island of Grand Cayman was hit by Hurricane Ivan on 11- 12 September 2004, which destroyed many buildings and damaged 70% of them. Power, water and communications were all disrupted in some areas for months as Ivan was the worst hurricane to hit the islands in 86 years. However, Grand Cayman forced a major rebuilding process and within two years its infrastructure was nearly returned to pre-Ivan levels. The Cayman Islands have the dubious honour of having experienced the most hurricane strikes in history. Due to the proximity of the islands, more hurricane and tropical systems have affected the Cayman Islands than any other region in the Atlantic

<b>Cayman Islands</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> "He hath founded it upon the seas"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>God Save the Queen</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	George Town
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Demonym</b>	Caymanian
<b>Government</b>	British Overseas Territory
- Queen	Queen Elizabeth II
- Governor	Stuart Jack



basin (brushed or hit every 2.23 years). The Cayman Islands enjoy a high global standard of living fully dependent upon tourism and tax-haven dependent banking.

## Geography

- Leader of Government Business	Kurt Tibbetts
<b>Creation</b>	
- Split from Jamaica	1962
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	260 km <sup>2</sup> ( 207th) 100.4 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.6
<b>Population</b>	
- 2005 estimate	45,017 ( 208th)
- 1999 census	0
- Density	139.5/km <sup>2</sup> ( 63rd) 364.2/sq mi
<b>HDI (2003)</b>	n/a (NA) ( unranked)
<b>Currency</b>	Cayman Islands dollar ( KYD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-5)
- Summer ( DST)	not observed ( UTC-5)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ky
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 345



The Cayman Islands are located in the western Caribbean Sea. They are the peaks of a massive underwater ridge, known as the Cayman Trench, standing 8,000 feet (2,400 m) from the sea floor, which barely exceeds the surface. The islands lie in the centre of the Caribbean south of Cuba and West of Jamaica. They are situated about 400 miles (650 km) south of Miami, 180 miles (300 km) south of Cuba, and 195 miles (315 km) northwest of Jamaica. Grand Cayman is by far the biggest, with an area of 76 square miles (197 km<sup>2</sup>). The two "Sister Islands" of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman are located about 80 miles (130 km) east of Grand Cayman and have areas of 14 square miles (36 km<sup>2</sup>) and 10 square miles (25.9 km<sup>2</sup>) respectively.

All three islands were formed by large coral heads covering submerged ice age peaks of western extensions of the Cuban Sierra Maestra range and are mostly flat. One notable exception to this is The Bluff on Cayman Brac's eastern part, which rises to 140 feet (42.6 m) above sea level, the highest point on the island.

Cayman avian fauna includes two endemic subspecies of Amazona parrots: *Amazona leucocephala hesterna*, or Cayman Brac Parrot, native only to Cayman Brac, and *Amazona leucocephala caymanensis* or Grand Cayman Parrot, which is native only to Grand Cayman. Another notable fauna is the endangered Blue Iguana, which is native to Grand Cayman. There is also the agouti and the Booby Birds on Cayman Brac.



Map of the Cayman Islands

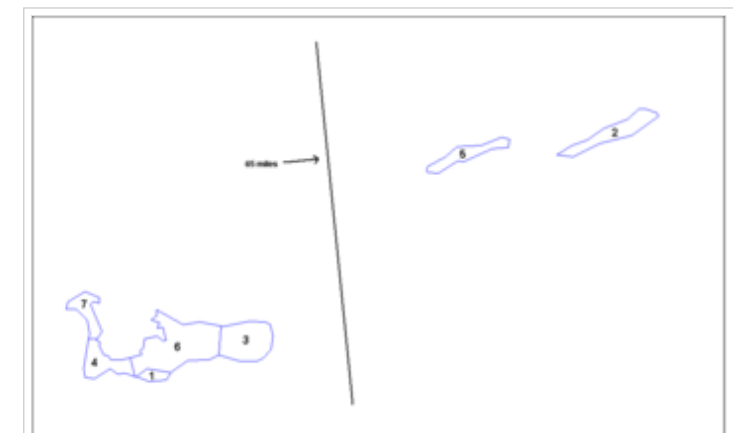
## Districts

Administratively, The Cayman Islands are divided into seven districts:

1. Bodden Town (the former capital)
2. Cayman Brac
3. East End
4. George Town (the present capital)
5. Little Cayman
6. North Side
7. West Bay

## Demographics

The Cayman Islands have more registered businesses than it has people. The latest population estimate of the Cayman Islands is about 50,000 as of July 2006, representing a mix of more than 100 nationalities. Out of that number, about half are of Caymanian descent. About 60% of the population is of mixed race (mostly mixed African-European). Of the remaining 40%, about half are of European descent and half are of African descent. The islands are almost exclusively Christian, with large number of Presbyterians and Catholics. Caymanians enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean. The vast majority of the population resides on Grand Cayman. Cayman Brac is the second most populated with about 1,200 residents, followed by Little Cayman with around 200 permanent residents.



Districts of the Cayman Islands



Many of the prominent and wealthy families in Grand Cayman such as the Waltons, Scotts, Kirkconnells, and Fosters are originally from Cayman Brac. They control a large proportion of real estate property and business enterprises, along with having significant positions in the financial sector.

The capital and major city of the Cayman Islands is George Town, which is located on the south west coast of Grand Cayman.

## Economy

The economy of the Cayman Islands was once centred around turtling. However, this industry began to disappear in the twentieth century and tourism and financial services began to become the economic mainstays during the 1970s. The United States is the Cayman Islands' largest trading partner.

With an average income of around \$42,000, Caymanians enjoy the highest standard of living in the Caribbean. According to the CIA World Factbook, the Cayman Islands GDP per capita is the 12th highest in the world. The islands print their own currency, the Cayman Islands Dollar (KYD), which is pegged to the U.S. dollar at a fixed rate of 1 KYD = 1.2 USD.

The government's primary source of income is indirect taxation. An import duty of 5% to 20% is levied against goods imported into the islands. Few goods are exempt; notable examples include books, cameras and infant formula. The government charges licensing fees to financial institutions that operate in the islands as well as work permit fees for expatriate employees ranging from around US\$500 for a clerk to around US\$20,000 for a CEO.



Panorama of Seven Mile Beach on Grand Cayman Click image for full-scale viewing.

## Tourism

Tourism accounts for 70-75% of the annual GDP of the Cayman Islands. Of the millions of tourists that visit the islands annually, 99% visit Grand Cayman. George Town also serves as a major cruise ship port, which brings in 4,000 to 22,000 tourists a day, five days a week, depending on the number of ships in port.

One of Grand Cayman's (GCM) main attractions is the world-famous Seven Mile Beach on which a number of the island's hotels and resorts are located. Seven Mile Beach is regarded by many as one of the best beaches in the world. Historical sites in GCM such as Pedro St. James Castle in BoddenTown also attract visitors. The Sister Islands - Little Cayman and Cayman Brac - also supply their own unique charm.



The Cayman Islands is regarded as one of the world's best SCUBA diving destinations because of its crystal-clear waters and pristine walls. Cayman Brac and Little Cayman are also elite SCUBA dive destinations. There are several snorkelling locations where tourists can swim with stingrays including the popular Stingray City, Grand Cayman. Divers find two shipwrecks off the shores of Cayman Brac particularly interesting including the MV Keith Tibbetts.

Other Grand Cayman tourist attractions include the Ironshore landscape of Hell, the 24- acre marine theme park Boatswain's Beach, also home of the Cayman Turtle Farm, the production of gourmet sea salt, and the Mastic Trail, a hiking trail through the forests in the centre of the island. On Cayman Brac, a lighthouse and a few local museums are tourist draws. Little Cayman's wildlife attracts nature lovers, especially bird watchers in search of the island's Red-footed Booby population.

Art and Culture are other features of the Cayman Islands that attract international attention. The National Museum and National Gallery preserve contemporary and dated art works of local and international talent. A Cultural History Exhibition is displayed within the museum, and teaches patrons about historical customs and traditions native to the Cayman Islands. The Gallery sponsors eight exhibitions every year and is located in the Harbour Place in George Town.

## Financial services industry

The Cayman Islands are recognised as a financial services centre.

The Cayman Islands financial services industry encompasses banking, mutual funds, captive insurance, reinsurance, vessel registration, companies and partnerships, trusts, structured finance and the Cayman Islands Stock Exchange. As of December 2005, just over 70,000 companies were incorporated on the Cayman Islands including 430 banking and trust companies, 720 captive insurance firms and more than 7,000 funds. The government distinguishes between local (or "ordinary" companies), doing business primarily with the local population, and "exempted" companies conducting business primarily with overseas entities.

There has been a trend of financial institutions reincorporating in first world countries with better regulation.

A recent report released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) assessing supervision and regulation in the Cayman Islands' banking, insurance and securities industries, as well as its anti- money laundering regime, recognised the jurisdiction's comprehensive regulatory and compliance frameworks. "An extensive program of legislative, rule and guideline development has introduced an increasingly effective system of regulation, both formalising earlier practices and introducing enhanced procedures," noted IMF assessors. The report further stated that "the supervisory system benefits from a well-developed banking infrastructure with an internationally experienced and qualified workforce as well as experienced lawyers, accountants and auditors," adding that, "the overall compliance culture within Cayman is very strong, including the compliance culture related to AML ( anti-money laundering) obligations...". The Cayman Islands had previously (briefly) appeared on the FATF Blacklist in 2000, although its listing was thought to be harsh, and was criticised at the time.

From <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/tax/schemes/cayman.html>:

"In May 2000, the Cayman Islands avoided the OECD's infamous blacklist by "committing" itself to a string of reforms to



Cayman Islands coin



improve transparency, remove discriminatory practices, and begin to exchange information with OECD member states about their citizens.

However, with the election of George W. Bush to the U.S. presidency, cooperation between Cayman and the OECD lost momentum. In May 2001, after the U.S. Treasury Department announced that it would not support the OECD initiative, other than pursuing tax exchange agreements, the OECD turned its attention to another initiative, the EU Tax Savings Directive."

"While the... (tax information exchange agreements (TIEA))... somewhat bolster the U.S. government's ability to prosecute corporations and individuals engaging in tax evasion, the agreements are limited, and in most cases do not allow the IRS to investigate suspected corporations or individuals unless there is a court order or strong evidence of criminal activity." As one Cayman official stated, "Despite excellent fishing in the Cayman waters, no fishing expeditions are allowed."

Another obstacle hampering the IRS investigations of tax fraud by U.S. citizens in the Cayman Islands is Cayman's Confidential Relationships Preservations Law (CRPL), which requires banking confidentiality unless there is evidence of criminal activity. While the Cayman government has gone a long way towards enforcing due diligence and the sharing of information with the U.S. government, Cayman's banking privacy laws remain intact. David McConney, CEO of Cayman National Bank, says, "Financial privacy is fundamental to traditional banker/customer relationships. If you have not committed a criminal act, no Cayman financial institution may release any information to any third party without your express approval."

If the IRS wants to investigate potential wrongdoing by a U.S. corporation or individual, it must request information from Cayman's chief justice on a case-by-case basis. Unfortunately, this painstaking process is inadequate to deal with the numerous cases of tax fraud perpetrated by U.S. citizens and corporations. Furthermore, the IRS does not have sufficient resources to pursue investigations of wrongdoing on a case-by-case basis."

From <http://www.radiocayman.gov.ky/pls/portal30/docs/FOLDER/MARKETINGANDPROMOTIONS/PRESSRELEASES/2002PRESSRELEASES/ENRON.PDF> :

"On 27 November 2001, the Cayman Islands, concluded a tax information exchange agreement with the U.S. The agreement provides for exchange of information, upon request, for criminal tax evasion, civil and administrative tax matters relating to U.S. federal income tax. It provides for confidential treatment of information exchanged, and, in accordance with U.S. law, any such information may not be disclosed to any third party. It applies to criminal tax evasion for taxable periods commencing 1 January 2004, and **to all other tax matters** for taxable periods commencing 1 January 2006."

From <http://www.mondaq.com/article.asp?articleid=21025> :

"OECD commitment

In May 2000 the Cayman Islands gave a letter of commitment to the OECD relating to alleged harmful tax competition. Under the letter of commitment, the Cayman Islands Government will implement a plan to share bank account information with foreign Governments that are conducting criminal tax evasion investigations for the first tax year after 31 December 2003, and on civil and administrative tax matters for the first tax year after 31 December 2005.

Tax information exchange agreement



On 27 November 2001 the Cayman Islands entered into a tax information exchange agreement with the US. The agreement is structured to conform with the Cayman Islands' OECD commitment of May 2000. The implementation procedure will require that information be provided only in response to a specific request which is relevant to a tax examination or investigation conducted in accordance with the laws of the requesting state. Requests will be submitted by foreign tax authorities to a competent authority in the Cayman Islands who will act in a capacity similar to that in which the Cayman Islands Chief Justice has acted pursuant to other international information exchange agreements. Confidentiality provisions will ensure that information that has been exchanged is adequately protected from unauthorised disclosure.

It is likely that there will be further bilateral tax information exchange agreements. However, the Cayman Islands Government has made it clear that it will not enter into any agreements with countries that have legislation discriminating against the Cayman Islands.

### EU Savings Directive

What has become known as the Savings Directive is part of a package of measures by the European Commission to tackle "harmful tax competition" in the European Union. It is designed to address the ability of "residents of Member States .... to avoid any form of taxation in their Member State of residence on interest they receive in another Member State".

The current form of the Savings Directive is a compromise solution following the failure of Member States to agree on the original proposal for the imposition of withholding tax on interest payments (which would have had a serious effect on the Eurobond market in London). In implementation of the requirement that Member States "promote the adoption of the same measures" in their dependent or associated territories, the UK Government has committed its Caribbean dependent territories, including the Cayman Islands, to their adoption and has threatened to "legislate" for them.

The Savings Directive requires the reporting of certain information relating to interest payments (including dividend payments by certain investment vehicles whose investments in debt instruments exceeds a certain percentage) to individuals resident in Member States. That information is to be provided by the paying agent (essentially, the last intermediary in a chain of intermediaries), who is also responsible for determining the residence of the payee.

The Cayman Islands Government is concerned that any application of the Savings Directive to the Islands, without equivalent application to their competitors, will result in little benefit to the European Union at a disproportionate cost to the Islands. The UK Government is aware from its own regulatory impact assessment that implementation of the Savings Directive will result in significant additional costs to both the public and private sectors in the UK, and the same will undoubtedly be true in the Cayman Islands.

The Cayman Islands has declined to commit to the implementation of the measures in the Savings Directive, and is now bringing legal proceedings to challenge the legality of certain aspects of the Savings Directive."

From: [http://www.escapeartist.com/OREQ21/Asset\\_Protection.html](http://www.escapeartist.com/OREQ21/Asset_Protection.html)

"If you read the press releases from the offshore jurisdictions that signed TIEAs, you'll come away believing that they may be invoked only in the event of probable cause of tax fraud by a particular taxpayer. But that's not what most of the treaties actually say. Instead, most TIEAs state that any information "foreseeably relevant or material to United States federal tax administration and enforcement with respect to the person identified" for investigation must be

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turned over to the IRS.

Not “probable cause” of a criminal or even civil tax offense. Not even “reasonable suspicion.” Merely “foreseeably relevant.” U.S. courts have interpreted this authority as permitting TIEA information requests “even if the United States has no tax interest and no claim for U.S. taxes are potentially due and owing.” In other words, fishing expeditions into offshore accounts are explicitly permitted. The potential for abuse is obvious.”

From: [http://www.investoroffshore.com/html/faq/faq\\_expat\\_tabletemp.html](http://www.investoroffshore.com/html/faq/faq_expat_tabletemp.html)

"The Cayman Islands are one of the premier offshore financial centres, but have something of a reputation as a stereotypical 'tax haven' in Europe, although they have been attempting to guard against money laundering practices. It has to be said, however, that in the absence of proven wrongdoing, the emphasis is still firmly on preserving confidentiality. (Although this was dealt a blow by the judgment awarded in 2002 to the US Internal revenue Service in Miami, allowing them access to American Express and MasterCard records covering US citizens with offshore assets in the Caymans.)"

From: <http://cayman.com.ky/banking.htm>

"Advantages of a Cayman Islands Bank Account: No capital gains tax, Corporation Tax, *withholding tax*..."

Yet withholding tax is specifically stated in the "Official Guide To Investing In The Cayman Islands" <http://www.investcayman.ky/forms/ci-investment-guide2005.pdf> :

"Banks adhere to the ‘know your client’ rule. These rules have been approved by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, enabling institutions in the Cayman Islands to become qualified intermediaries under the U.S. Withholding Tax Rules introduced on 1 January 2001."

From: [http://www.alsea.org/forum/forum\\_posts.asp?TID=52](http://www.alsea.org/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=52)

"Cayman Islands Bank Fails to Block IRS Discovery of Documents (Posted: 09 Nov 2006 at 7:23am) Cayman National Bank fails to quash an IRS summons seeking documents relating to a judgment obtained by the bank against a U.S. citizen. The court, in *Cayman National Bank Ltd. v. United States* , rejects arguments that discovery is barred by the attorney-client privilege, that IRS should have obtained discovery under the Tax Information Exchange Agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom, and that production would violate Cayman Islands law. Greg Cook, EA, CPA [www.cookco.us](http://www.cookco.us)"

On the phone with Cayman National Bank officer: "We will disclose your information if there is **any** court order to do so in the U.S."

Press release for TIEA between U.S. and Cayman Islands, except document is missing:

<http://www.cimoney.com.ky/section/mediacentre/default.aspx?id=493>

One location of same TIEA:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/20/17/35514531.pdf>

## Government

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The Cayman Islands are a British overseas territory, listed by the UN Special Committee of twenty-four as one of the last non-self governing territories. A fifteen-seat Legislative Assembly is elected by the people every four years to handle domestic affairs. Of the elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), five are chosen to serve as government ministers in a cabinet headed by the governor. The head of government is the Leader of Government Business, which is currently The Honourable Kurt Tibbetts.

A Governor is appointed by the British government to represent the monarch. The governor can exercise complete executive authority if they wish through blanket powers reserved to them in the constitution. They must give royal assent to all legislation, which allows them the power to strike down any law the legislature may see fit for the country. In modern times, the governor usually allows the country to be run by the cabinet, and the civil service to be run by the Chief Secretary, who is the Acting Governor when the Governor is not able to discharge his usual duties for one reason or another. The current governor of the Cayman Islands is Stuart Jack and the current Chief Secretary is The Honourable George McCarthy, OBE, JP.^

## Taxation

Caymanians and Caymanian companies are not subject to any form of direct taxation. However, an import tax of between 5% and 20% is levied on most imported goods. Import taxes on automobiles ranges from 27.5% to 40% for most vehicles while Hummers are taxed at 100% of their value.

## Education

### Primary and secondary schools

The Cayman Islands Education Department operates state schools. Caymanian children are entitled to free primary and secondary education. Various churches and private foundations operate several private schools that offer American and British based studies starting in nursery to Year 13.

### Colleges and universities

Grand Cayman is home to University College of the Cayman Islands, the only government run University on the island. The University College is located at 168 Olympic Way in Georgetown, Grand Cayman. The International College of the Cayman Islands which is located in Newlands about seven miles (11 km) east of George Town. The college was established in 1970 and offers Associate's, Bachelor's and Post Graduate degree programmes. Grand Cayman is also home to St. Matthew's University, which includes a medical school and a school of veterinary medicine.

The Cayman Islands Law School (CILS), a branch of the University of Liverpool in the UK, is also based on Grand Cayman. Situated in George Town, the law school has been in operation since 1982. As taken from the student handbook, "The Law School provides tuition for both full and part-time programmes leading to the Bachelor of Law (Honours) Degree of the University of Liverpool and the qualification of Attorney-at-Law of the Cayman Islands, following successful completion of the postgraduate Professional Practicum Course (PPC)



The Cayman Islands Civil Service College, a unit of Cayman Islands government organised under the Portfolio of the Civil Service, is also located in Grand Cayman. Co-situated with University College of the Cayman Islands in a building on the south side of the campus, the intent of the CICSC is offer both degree programmes and continuing education units of various sorts. Further, the College is planned to develop as a government research centre. It opened in autumn 2007.

## Health care

The Cayman Islands have a modern health care system. There are two hospitals in George Town, the government run George Town Hospital and the smaller, private Chrissie Tomlinson Memorial Hospital. Additionally, Faith Hospital is an eighteen-bed facility on Cayman Brac. The Government maintains a satellite clinic on Little Cayman.

Health insurance is handled by private insurers and a government-run company (CINICO). There is no universal health coverage as in the UK. All employers are required under Law to provide Health Insurance for their employees (although the employee may be required to contribute 50% of the premium). Full time employees also contribute USD 10 every month to the "Indigent Fund" which helps cover care for the unemployed, elderly etc.

Currently the islands lack facilities for cardiac catheterisation, though many feel the population is large enough to support the procedure. Various attempts to establish a cath lab in George Town Hospital have stalled. The Cayman Islands lacked an MRI after one was destroyed during Hurricane Ivan, but in July 2007 a new unit was installed at the Chrissie Tomlinson Memorial Hospital.

For divers and others in need of hyperbaric oxygen therapy, there is a two-person recompression chamber at George Town Hospital on Grand Cayman, run by Cayman Hyperbaric Services. The same organisation has built a hyperbaric unit at Faith Hospital in Cayman Brac, expected to be operational in January 2008.

## Work permits

In order to work in the Cayman Islands as a non-citizen, a work permit is required. This involves passing a police background check and a health check. A prospective worker will not be granted a permit if certain medical conditions are present. Work permits are not issued after age 60.

The Cayman Islands presently imposes a controversial ["rollover"] policy in relation to expatriate workers who require a work permit. Non-Caymanians are only permitted to reside and work within the Territory for a maximum of seven years (non-renewable) unless they satisfy the criteria of key employees. The policy has been the subject of some controversy within the press, and concerns have been expressed that in the long term, the policy may damage the pre-eminence of the Cayman Islands as an offshore financial centre by making it difficult to recruit and retain experienced staff from onshore financial centres. Government employees are no longer exempt from this "rollover" policy according to this report in a local newspaper . The Governor has decided to use his constitutional powers, which give him absolute control for the disposition of civil service employees, to determine which expatriate civil servants are dismissed after seven years service and which are not.

This policy is enshrined in the Immigration Law (2003 revision), written by the UDP government, and subsequently enforced by the PPM government. Both

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governments agree to the term limits on foreign workers, and the majority of Caymanians also agree it is necessary to protect local culture, and heritage from being eroded by a large number of foreigners gaining residency/citizenship.

## Military

The defence of the Cayman Islands is the responsibility of the United Kingdom. The Islands have their own police force, the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service. Regular off-shore marine patrols are conducted by the RCIP and Grand Cayman is a port of call for the United States Coast Guard.

## Foreign relations

The foreign relations of the Cayman Islands are largely managed from the United Kingdom, as the islands remain an overseas territory of the UK. However, the Government of the Cayman Islands often resolves important issues with foreign governments alone, without intervention from Britain. Although in its early days, the Cayman Islands' most important relationships were with Britain and Jamaica, in recent years, a relationship with the United States has developed.

Though the Cayman Islands are involved in no major international disputes, they have come under some criticism due to the use of their territory for narcotics trafficking and money laundering. In an attempt to address this, the Government entered into the Narcotics Agreement of 1984 and the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty of 1986 with the United States, in order to reduce the use of their facilities associated with these activities. In more recent years, they have stepped up the fight against money laundering, by limiting banking secrecy, introducing requirements for customer identification and record keeping, and requiring banks to cooperate with foreign investigators.

Due to their status as an overseas territory of the UK, the Cayman Islands have no representation either on the United Nations, or in most other international organisations. However, the Cayman Islands still participates in some international organisations, being a full member of the Central Development Bank, and an associate member of Caricom and UNESCO, and a member of a sub-bureau of Interpol.

## Sport

The Cayman Islands are members of FIFA, the International Olympic Committee and the Pan American Sports Organisation, and also compete in the biannual Island Games.

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# Chile




2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries  
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**Chile**, officially the **Republic of Chile** (Spanish: *República de Chile*), is a country in South America occupying a long and narrow coastal strip wedged between the Andes mountains and the Pacific Ocean. It borders Peru to the north, Bolivia to the northeast, Argentina to the east, and the Drake Passage at the country's southernmost tip. It is one of only two countries in South America that does not have a border with Brazil. The Pacific forms the country's entire western border, with a coastline that stretches over 6,435 kilometres. Chilean territory extends to the Pacific Ocean which includes the overseas territories of Juan Fernández Islands, the Sala y Gómez islands, the Desventuradas Islands and Easter Island located in Polynesia. Chile claims 1,250,000 km<sup>2</sup> (482,628 sq mi) of territory in Antarctica.

Chile's unusual, ribbon-like shape —4,300 km long and on average 175 km wide— has given it a hugely varied climate, ranging from the world's driest desert - the Atacama - in the north, through a Mediterranean climate in the centre, to a snow-prone Alpine climate in the south, with glaciers, fjords and lakes. The northern Chilean desert contains great mineral wealth, principally copper. The relatively small central area dominates the country in terms of population and agricultural resources. This area also is the cultural and political centre from which Chile expanded in the late 19th century, when it incorporated its northern and southern regions. Southern Chile is rich in forests and grazing lands and features a string of volcanoes and lakes. The southern coast is a labyrinth of fjords, inlets, canals, twisting peninsulas, and islands. The Andes Mountains are located on the eastern border.

Prior to the coming of the Spanish in the 16th century, northern Chile was under Inca rule while Araucanian Indians (also known as Mapuches) inhabited central and southern Chile. Although Chile declared its independence in 1810, decisive victory over the Spanish was not achieved until 1818. In the War of the Pacific (1879-83), Chile defeated Peru and Bolivia and won its present northern regions. It was not until the 1880s that the Araucanian Indians were completely subjugated. The country, which had been relatively free of the coups and arbitrary governments that blighted the South American continent, endured a 17 year military dictatorship (1973-1990), one of the bloodiest in 20th-century Latin America that left more than 3,000 people dead and missing.

Currently, Chile is one of South America's most stable and prosperous nations. Within the greater Latin

<b><i>República de Chile</i></b> (Spanish) <b>Republic of Chile</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Por la razón o la fuerza</i> "By right or might" (Spanish)	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Himno Nacional de Chile</i> (Spanish)	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Santiago <sup>1</sup>
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Demonym</b>	Chilean
<b>Government</b> - President	Democratic republic Michelle Bachelet



American context it leads in terms of competitiveness, quality of life, political stability, globalization, economic freedom, low perception of corruption and comparatively low poverty rates. It also ranks high regionally in freedom of the press, human development and democratic development. Its status as the region's richest country in terms of gross domestic product per capita (at market prices and purchasing power parity) is countered by its high level of income inequality, as measured by the Gini index.

## Etymology

There are various theories about the origin of the word *Chile*. According to one theory the Incas of Peru, who had failed to conquer the Araucanians, called the valley of the Aconcagua "Chili" by corruption of the name of a tribal chief ("cacique") called *Tili*, who ruled the area at the time of the Incan conquest. Another theory points to the similarity of the valley of the Aconcagua with that of the Casma Valley in Peru, where there was a town and valley named *Chili*. Other theories say Chile may derive its name from the indigenous Mapuche word *chilli*, which may mean "where the land ends," "the deepest point of the Earth," or "sea gulls;" or from the Quechua *chin*, "cold," or the Aymara *tchili*, meaning "snow." Another meaning attributed to *chilli* is the onomatopoeic *cheele-cheele*—the Mapuche imitation of a bird call. The Spanish conquistadors heard about this name from the Incas and the few survivors of Diego de Almagro's first Spanish expedition south from Peru in 1535-36 called themselves the "men of Chilli."

## History

<b>Independence</b>	from Spain
- First National Government Junta	September 18, 1810
- Declared	February 12, 1818
- Recognized	April 25, 1844
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	756,950 km <sup>2</sup> ( 38th) 292,183 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.07 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population</b>	
- June 2007 estimate	16,598,074 ( 60th)
- 2002 census	15,116,435
- Density	22/km <sup>2</sup> ( 194th) 57/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$231.061 billion ( 44th)
- Per capita	\$13,936 ( 54th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$163.792 billion ( 41st)
- Per capita	\$9,879 ( 51st)
<b>Gini</b> (2006)	54 ( <b>high</b> )
<b>HDI</b> (2005)	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.867 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 40th)
<b>Currency</b>	Peso ( <span style="font-family: monospace;">CLP</span> )
<b>Time zone</b>	n/a ( UTC-4)
- Summer ( DST)	n/a ( UTC-3)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.cl
<b>Calling code</b>	+56
<sup>1</sup>	The legislative body operates in Valparaíso.



About 10,000 years ago, migrating Native Americans settled in fertile valleys and along the coast of what is now Chile. The Incas briefly extended their empire into what is now northern Chile, but the area's barrenness prevented extensive settlement.

<sup>2</sup> Includes Easter Island and Isla Sala y Gómez; does not include 1,250,000 km<sup>2</sup> (482,628 sq mi) of territory claimed in Antarctica.

In 1520, while attempting to circumnavigate the earth, the Portuguese Ferdinand Magellan, discovered the southern passage now named after him, the Strait of Magellan. The next Europeans to reach Chile were Diego de Almagro and his band of Spanish conquistadors, who came from Peru in 1535 seeking gold. The Spanish encountered hundreds of thousands of Native Americans from various cultures in the area that modern Chile now occupies. These cultures supported themselves principally through slash-and-burn agriculture and hunting. The conquest of Chile began in earnest in 1540 and was carried out by Pedro de Valdivia, one of Francisco Pizarro's lieutenants, who founded the city of Santiago on February 12, 1541. Although the Spanish did not find the extensive gold and silver they sought, they recognized the agricultural potential of Chile's central valley, and Chile became part of the Viceroyalty of Peru.



Pedro de Valdivia.

Conquest of the land that is today called Chile took place only gradually, and the Europeans suffered repeated setbacks at the hands of the local population. A massive Mapuche insurrection that began in 1553 resulted in Valdivia's death and the destruction of many of the colony's principal settlements. Subsequent major insurrections took place in 1598 and in 1655. Each time the Mapuche and other native groups revolted, the southern border of the colony was driven northward. The abolition of slavery in 1683 defused tensions on the frontier between the colony and the Mapuche land to the south, and permitted increased trade between colonists and the Mapuche.

The drive for independence from Spain was precipitated by usurpation of the Spanish throne by Napoleon's brother Joseph in 1808. A national junta in the name of Ferdinand—heir to the deposed king—was formed on September 18, 1810. The junta proclaimed Chile an autonomous republic within the Spanish monarchy. A movement for total independence soon won a wide following. Spanish attempts to re-impose arbitrary rule during what was called the " Reconquista" led to a prolonged struggle.



The Mapuche were the original inhabitants of central and southern Chile.



Intermittent warfare continued until 1817, when an army led by Bernardo O'Higgins, Chile's most renowned patriot, and José de San Martín, hero of the Argentine War of Independence, crossed the Andes into Chile and defeated the royalists. On February 12, 1818, Chile was proclaimed an independent republic under O'Higgins' leadership. The political revolt brought little social change, however, and 19th century Chilean society preserved the essence of the stratified colonial social structure, which was greatly influenced by family politics and the Roman Catholic Church. A strong presidency eventually emerged, but wealthy landowners remained extremely powerful.



War of the Pacific: The Battle of Iquique on May 21, 1879.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the government in Santiago consolidated its position in the south by ruthlessly suppressing the Mapuche during the Occupation of Araucanía. In 1881, it signed a treaty with Argentina confirming Chilean sovereignty over the Strait of Magellan. As a result of the War of the Pacific with Peru and Bolivia (1879–83), Chile expanded its territory northward by almost one-third, eliminating Bolivia's access to the Pacific, and acquired valuable nitrate deposits, the exploitation of which led to an era of national affluence. The Chilean Civil War in 1891 brought about a redistribution of power between the President and Congress, and Chile established a parliamentary style democracy. However, the Civil War had also been a contest between those who favored the development of local industries and powerful Chilean banking interests, particularly the House of Edwards who had strong ties to foreign investors. Hence the Chilean economy partially degenerated into a system protecting the interests of a ruling oligarchy. By the 1920s, the emerging middle and working classes were powerful enough to elect a reformist president, Arturo Alessandri Palma, whose program was frustrated by a conservative congress. Alessandri Palma's reformist tendencies were partly tempered later by an admiration for some elements of Mussolini's Italian Corporate State. In the 1920s, Marxist groups with strong popular support arose.



Bernardo O'Higgins.



A military coup led by General Luis Altamirano in 1924 set off a period of great political instability that lasted until 1932. The longest lasting of the ten governments between those years was that of General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, who briefly held power in 1925 and then again between 1927 and 1931 in what was a de facto dictatorship, although not really comparable in harshness or corruption to the type of military dictatorship that has often bedeviled the rest of Latin America, and certainly not comparable to the violent and repressive regime of Augusto Pinochet decades later. By relinquishing power to a democratically elected successor, Ibáñez del Campo retained the respect of a large enough segment of the population to remain a viable politician for more than thirty years, in spite of the vague and shifting nature of his ideology. When constitutional rule was restored in 1932, a strong middle-class party, the Radicals, emerged. It became the key force in coalition governments for the next 20 years. During the period of Radical Party dominance (1932–52), the state increased its role in the economy. In 1952, voters returned Ibáñez del Campo, now reincarnated as a sort of Chilean Perón, to office for another six years. Jorge Alessandri succeeded Ibáñez del Campo in 1958, bringing Chilean conservatism back into power democratically for another term.

The 1964 presidential election of Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei Montalva by an absolute majority initiated a period of major reform. Under the slogan "Revolution in Liberty", the Frei administration embarked on far-reaching social and economic programs, particularly in education, housing, and agrarian reform, including rural unionization of agricultural workers. By 1967, however, Frei encountered increasing opposition from leftists, who charged that his reforms were inadequate, and from conservatives, who found them excessive. At the end of his term, Frei had accomplished many noteworthy objectives, but he had not fully achieved his party's ambitious goals.

In 1970, Senator Salvador Allende Gossens, a Marxist physician and member of Chile's Socialist Party, who headed the "Popular Unity" (UP or "Unidad Popular") coalition of the Socialist, Communist, Radical, and Social-Democratic Parties, along with dissident Christian Democrats, the Popular Unitary Action Movement (MAPU), and the Independent Popular Action, won a plurality of votes in a three-way contest. Despite pressure from the government of the United States, the Chilean Congress, keeping with tradition, conducted a runoff vote between the leading candidates, Allende and former president Jorge Alessandri and chose Allende by a vote of 153 to 35. Frei refused to form an alliance with Alessandri to oppose Allende, on the grounds that the Christian Democrats were a workers party and could not make common cause with the oligarchs.

Allende's program included advancement of workers' interests; a thoroughgoing implementation of agrarian reform; the reorganization of the national economy into socialized, mixed, and private sectors; a foreign policy of "international solidarity" and national independence; and a new institutional order (the "people's state" or "poder popular"), including the institution of a unicameral congress. The Popular Unity platform also called for nationalization of foreign (U.S.) ownership of Chile's major copper mines.

An economic depression that began in 1967 peaked in 1970, exacerbated by capital flight, plummeting private investment, and withdrawal of bank deposits by those opposed to Allende's socialist program. Production fell and unemployment rose. Allende adopted measures including price freezes, wage increases, and tax reforms, which had the effect of increasing consumer spending and redistributing income downward. Joint public-private public works projects helped reduce unemployment. Much of the banking sector was nationalized. Many enterprises within the copper, coal, iron, nitrate, and steel industries were expropriated, nationalized, or subjected to state intervention. Industrial output increased sharply and unemployment fell during the Allende administration's first



Diego Portales  
(1793-1837), Founder of  
the Chilean State and  
creator of the  
Constitution of 1833.





year.

Other reforms undertaken during the early Allende period included redistribution of millions of hectares of land to landless agricultural workers as part of the agrarian reform program, giving the armed forces an overdue pay increase, and providing free milk to children. The Indian Peoples Development Corporation and the Mapuche Vocational Institute were founded to address the needs of Chile's indigenous population.

The nationalization of U.S. and other foreign-owned companies led to increased tensions with the United States. The Nixon administration brought international financial pressure to bear in order to restrict economic credit to Chile. Simultaneously, the CIA funded opposition media, politicians, and organizations, helping to accelerate a campaign of domestic destabilization. By 1972, the economic progress of Allende's first year had been reversed and the economy was in crisis. Political polarization increased, and large mobilizations of both pro- and anti-government groups became frequent, often leading to clashes.

By early 1973, inflation was out of control. The crippled economy was further battered by prolonged and sometimes simultaneous strikes by physicians, teachers, students, truck owners, copper workers, and the small business class. A US-backed military coup overthrew Allende on September 11, 1973. As the armed forces bombarded the presidential palace (Palacio de La Moneda), Allende reportedly committed suicide. A military government, led by General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, took over control of the country. The first years of the regime were marked by serious human rights violations. On October 1973, at least 72 people were murdered by the Caravan of Death. At least a thousand people were executed during the first six months of Pinochet in office, and at least two thousand more were killed during the next sixteen years, as reported by the Rettig Report. Some 30,000 were forced to flee the country, and tens of thousands of people were detained and tortured, as investigated by the 2004 Valech Commission. A new Constitution was approved by a highly irregular and undemocratic plebiscite characterized by the absence of registration lists, on September 11, 1980, and General Pinochet became President of the Republic for an 8-year term.

In the late 1980s, the regime gradually permitted greater freedom of assembly, speech, and association, to include trade union and limited political activity. The right-wing military government pursued free market economic policies. During Pinochet's nearly 17 years in power, Chile moved away from state involvement, toward a largely free market economy that saw an increase in domestic and foreign private investment, although the copper industry and other important mineral resources were not returned to foreign ownership. In a plebiscite on October 5, 1988, General Pinochet was denied a second 8-year term as president (56% against 44%). Chileans elected a new president and the majority of members of a two-chamber congress on December 14, 1989. Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, the candidate of a coalition of 17 political parties called the *Concertación*, received an absolute majority of votes (55%). President Aylwin served from 1990 to 1994, in what was considered a transition period.

In December 1993, Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, the son of previous president Eduardo Frei Montalva, led the Concertación coalition to victory with an absolute majority of votes (58%). Frei Ruiz-Tagle was succeeded in 2000 by Socialist Ricardo Lagos, who won the presidency in an unprecedented runoff election against Joaquín Lavín of the rightist Alliance for Chile. In January 2006 Chileans elected their first woman president, Michelle Bachelet Jeria, of the Socialist Party. She was sworn in on March 11, 2006, extending the *Concertación* coalition governance for another four years.

## Politics



Chile's Constitution was approved in a highly irregular national plebiscite in September 1980, under the military government of Augusto Pinochet. It entered into force in March 1981. After Pinochet's defeat in the 1988 plebiscite, the Constitution was amended to ease provisions for future amendments to the Constitution. In September 2005, President Ricardo Lagos signed into law several constitutional amendments passed by Congress. These include eliminating the positions of appointed senators and senators for life, granting the President authority to remove the commanders-in-chief of the armed forces, and reducing the presidential term from six to four years.

Chileans voted in the first round of presidential elections on December 11, 2005. None of the four presidential candidates won more than 50% of the vote. As a result, the top two vote-getters—centre-left Concertación coalition's Michelle Bachelet and centre-right Alianza coalition's Sebastián Piñera—competed in a run-off election on January 15, 2006, which Michelle Bachelet won. She was sworn in on March 11, 2006. This was Chile's fourth presidential election since the end of the Pinochet era. All four have been judged free and fair. The President is constitutionally barred from serving consecutive terms.

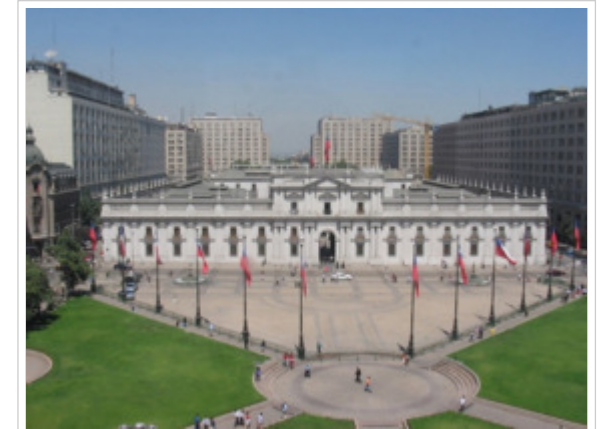
Chile's bicameral Congress has a 38-seat Senate and a 120-member Chamber of Deputies. Senators serve for 8 years with staggered terms, while Deputies are elected every 4 years. The current Senate has a 20-18 split in favour of pro-government Senators. The last congressional elections were held in December 11, 2005, concurrently with the presidential election. The current lower house—the Chamber of Deputies—contains 63 members of the governing center-left coalition and 57 from the centre-right opposition. The Congress is located in the port city of Valparaíso, about 140 kilometers (84 mi.) west of the capital, Santiago.

Chile's congressional elections are governed by a binomial system that rewards large representations. Therefore, there are only two Senate and two Deputy seats apportioned to each electoral district, parties are forced to form wide coalitions and, historically, the two largest coalitions (Concertación and Alianza) split most of the seats in a district. Only if the leading coalition ticket out-polls the second-place coalition by a margin of more than 2-to-1 does the winning coalition gain both seats. In the 2001 congressional elections, the conservative Independent Democratic Union surpassed the Christian Democrats for the first time to become the largest party in the lower house. In 2005, both leading parties, the Christian Democrats and the UDI lost representation in favour of their respective allies Socialist Party (which became the biggest party in the Concertación block) and National Renewal in the right-wing alliance. The Communist Party again failed to gain any seats in the election. (*See* Chilean parliamentary election, 2005.)

Chile's judiciary is independent and includes a court of appeal, a system of military courts, a constitutional tribunal, and the Supreme Court. In June 2005, Chile completed a nation-wide overhaul of its criminal justice system. The reform has replaced inquisitorial proceedings with an adversarial system more similar to that of the United States.

## Administrative division

Chile is divided into 15 regions, each of which is headed by an intendant appointed by the President. Every region is further divided into provinces, with a



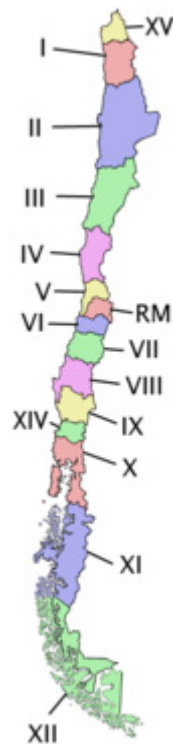
Palacio de La Moneda in downtown Santiago.



provincial governor also appointed by the President. Finally each province is divided into communes which are administered by municipalities, each with its own mayor and councilmen elected by their inhabitants for four years.

Each region is designated by a name and a Roman numeral, assigned from north to south. The only exception is the region housing the nation's capital, which is designated *RM*, that stands for *Región Metropolitana* (Metropolitan Region).

Two new regions were created in 2006: Arica and Parinacota in the north, and Los Ríos in the south. Both became operative in October 2007.



Key	Name	Spanish	Capital
XV	Arica and Parinacota	Región de Arica y Parinacota	Arica
I	Tarapacá	Región de Tarapacá	Iquique
II	Antofagasta	Región de Antofagasta	Antofagasta
III	Atacama	Región de Atacama	Copiapo
IV	Coquimbo	Región de Coquimbo	La Serena
V	Valparaíso	Región de Valparaíso	Valparaiso
VI	O'Higgins	Región del Libertador General Bernardo O'Higgins	Rancagua
VII	Maule	Región del Maule	Talca
VIII	Biobío	Región del Biobío	Concepción
IX	Araucanía	Región de la Araucanía	Temuco
XIV	Los Ríos	Región de Los Ríos	Valdivia
X	Los Lagos	Región de Los Lagos	Puerto Montt
XI	Aisén	Región Aisén del General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo	Coihaique
XII	Magallanes	Región de Magallanes y de la Antártica Chilena	Punta Arenas
RM	Santiago	Región Metropolitana de Santiago	Santiago

## Geography



Parícuta Volcano in northern Chile.



Conguillío National Park in south-central Chile.

A long and narrow coastal Southern Cone country on the west side of the Andes Mountains, Chile stretches over 4,630 kilometers (2,880 mi) north to south, but only 430 kilometers (265 mi) at its widest point east to west. This encompasses a remarkable variety of landscapes.

At 756,950 km<sup>2</sup> (292,260 sq mi), Chile is the world's 38th-largest country. It is comparable in size to Zambia, and is about twice the size of Japan.

The northern Atacama Desert contains great mineral wealth, primarily copper and nitrates. The relatively small Central Valley, which includes Santiago, dominates the country in terms of population and agricultural resources. This area also is the historical centre from which Chile expanded in the late nineteenth century, when it integrated the northern and southern regions. Southern Chile is rich in forests, grazing lands, and features a string of volcanoes and lakes. The southern coast is a labyrinth of fjords, inlets, canals, twisting peninsulas, and islands. The Andes Mountains are located on the eastern border. Chile is the longest (N-S) country in the world (over 4,200 km (2,610 mi)), and also claims 1,250,000 km<sup>2</sup> (482,628 sq mi) of Antarctica as part of its territory. However, this latter claim is suspended under the terms of the Antarctic Treaty, of which Chile is signatory.

Chile controls Easter Island and Sala y Gómez Island, the easternmost islands of Polynesia, which it incorporated to its territory in 1888, and Robinson Crusoe Island, more than 600 km (373 mi) from the mainland, in the Juan Fernández archipelago. Easter Island is nowadays a province of Chile. Also controlled but only temporally inhabited (by some local fishermen) are the small islands of Sala y Gómez, San Ambrosio and San Felix, these islands are notable because they extend Chile's claim to territorial waters out from its coast into the Pacific.

## Climate

The climate of Chile comprises a wide range of weather conditions across a large geographic scale, extending across 38 degrees in latitude, making generalisations difficult. According to the Köppen system, Chile within its borders hosts at least seven major climatic subtypes, ranging from desert in the north, to alpine tundra and glaciers in the east and south east, humid subtropical in Easter Island, Oceanic in the south and mediterranean climate in central Chile. There are four seasons in most of the country: summer (December to February), autumn (March to May), winter (June to August), and spring (September to November).

## Time zones

Because of the distance between the mainland and Easter Island, Chile uses 4 different UTC offsets:

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Elqui Valley in north-central Chile.



Grey Glacier in southern Chile.



- The mainland uses UTC-4, and in summer as daylight saving time UTC-3.
- Easter Island uses UTC-6, and in summer as daylight saving time UTC-5.

## Economy

After a decade of impressive growth rates, Chile began to experience a moderate economic downturn in 1999, brought on by unfavorable global economic conditions related to the Asian financial crisis, which began in 1997. The economy remained sluggish until 2003, when it began to show clear signs of recovery, achieving 4.0% real GDP growth. The Chilean economy finished 2004 with growth of 6.0%. Real GDP growth reached 5.7% in 2005 before falling back to 4.0% growth in 2006. Higher energy prices as well as lagging consumer demand were drags on the economy in 2006. Higher Chilean Government spending and favorable external conditions (including record copper prices for much of 2006) were not enough to offset these drags. For the first time in many years, Chilean economic growth in 2006 was among the weakest in Latin America. GDP expanded 5.1% in 2007.

Chile has pursued generally sound economic policies for nearly three decades. The 1973-90 military government sold many state-owned companies, and the three democratic governments since 1990 have continued privatization, though at a slower pace. The government's role in the economy is mostly limited to regulation, although the state continues to operate copper giant CODELCO and a few other enterprises (there is one state-run bank). Chile is strongly committed to free trade and has welcomed large amounts of foreign investment. Chile has signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with a whole network of countries, including an FTA with the United States, which was signed in 2003 and implemented in January 2004. Over the last several years, Chile has signed FTAs with the European Union, South Korea, New Zealand, Singapore, Brunei, China, and Japan. It reached a partial trade agreement with India in 2005 and began negotiations for a full-fledged FTA with India in 2006. Chile conducted trade negotiations in 2007 with Australia, Malaysia, and Thailand, as well as with China to expand an existing agreement beyond just trade in goods. Chile hopes to conclude FTA negotiations with Australia and the expanded agreement with China in 2008. Negotiations with Malaysia and Thailand are scheduled to continue throughout 2008. The members of the P4 (Chile, Singapore, New Zealand, and Brunei) also plan to conclude a chapter on finance and investment in 2008. The economic international organization the OECD agreed to invite Chile to be among four countries to open discussions in becoming an official member.

High domestic savings and investment rates helped propel Chile's economy to average growth rates of 8% during the 1990s. The privatized national pension system (AFP) has encouraged domestic investment and contributed to an estimated total domestic savings rate of approximately 21% of GDP. However, the AFP is not without its critics, who cite low participation rates (only 55% of the working population is covered), with groups such as the self-employed outside the system. There has also been criticism of the inefficiency and high costs due to a lack of competition among pension funds. Critics cite loopholes in the use of pension savings through lump sum withdraws for the purchase of a second home or payment of university fees as fundamental weaknesses of the AFP. The Bachelet administration plans substantial reform, but not an overhaul, of the AFP during the next several years.



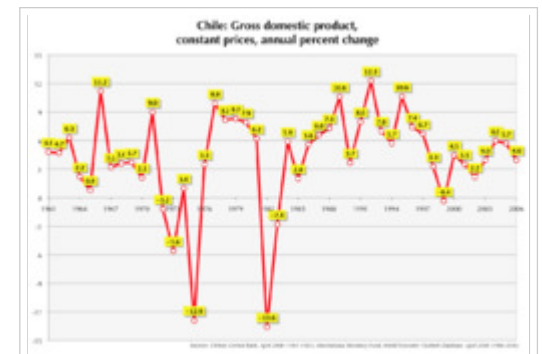
Unemployment stubbornly hovered in the 9%-10% range after the start of the economic slowdown in 1999, above the 7% average for the 1990s. Unemployment finally dipped to 7.8% for 2006, and has kept falling in 2007, averaging 6.8% monthly (up to August). Wages have risen faster than inflation as a result of higher productivity, boosting national living standards. The percentage of Chileans with household incomes below the poverty line—defined as twice the cost of satisfying a person's minimal nutritional needs—fell from 45.1% in 1987 to 13.7% in 2006, according to government polls. Critics in Chile, however, argue true poverty figures are considerably higher than those officially published, due to the government's use of an outdated 1987 household budget poll, updated every 10 years. According to these critics, using the 1997 household budget data, the poverty rate rises to 29%. Using the relative yardstick favoured in many European countries, 27% of Chileans would be poor, according to Juan Carlos Feres of the ECLAC. Despite enjoying a comparatively higher GDP and more robust economy compared to most other countries of Latin America, Chile also suffers from one of the most uneven distributions of wealth in the world, ahead only of Brazil in the Latin American region and lagging behind even of most developing sub-Saharan African nations. Chile's top 10 richest percentile possesses 47 percent of the country's wealth. In relation to income distribution, some 6.2% of the country populates the upper economic income bracket, 15% the middle bracket, 21% the lower middle, 38% the lower bracket, and 20% the extreme poor.

Chile's independent Central Bank pursues an inflation target of between 2% and 4%. Inflation has not exceeded 5% since 1998. Chile registered an inflation rate of 3.2% in 2006. The Chilean peso's rapid appreciation against the U.S. dollar in recent years has helped dampen inflation. Most wage settlements and loans are indexed, reducing inflation's volatility. Under the compulsory private pension system, most formal sector employees pay 10% of their salaries into privately managed funds.

Total foreign direct investment (FDI) was only \$3.4 billion in 2006, up 52% from a poor performance in 2005. However, 80% of FDI continues to go to only four sectors: electricity, gas, water and mining. Much of the jump in FDI in 2006 was also the result of acquisitions and mergers and has done little to create new employment in Chile. The Chilean Government has formed a Council on Innovation and Competition, which is tasked with identifying new sectors and industries to promote. It is hoped that this, combined with some tax reforms to encourage domestic and foreign investment in research and development, will bring in additional FDI and to new parts of the economy. As of 2006, Chile invested only 0.6% of its annual GDP in research and development (R&D). Even then, two-thirds of that was government spending. The fact that domestic and foreign companies spend almost nothing on R&D does not bode well for the Government of Chile's efforts to develop innovative, knowledge-based sectors. Beyond its general economic and political stability, the government also has encouraged the use of Chile as an "investment platform" for multinational corporations planning to operate in the region, but this will have limited value given the developing business climate in Chile itself. Chile's approach to foreign direct investment is codified in the country's Foreign Investment Law, which gives foreign investors the same treatment as Chileans. Registration is simple and transparent, and foreign investors are guaranteed access to the official foreign exchange market to repatriate their profits and capital.

## Foreign trade

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Chile GDP growth since 1961.



Airbus A340 of Chile's LAN Airlines.



2006 was a record year for Chilean trade. Total trade registered a 31% increase over 2005. During 2006, exports of goods and services totaled U.S. \$58 billion, an increase of 41%. This figure was somewhat distorted by the skyrocketing price of copper. In 2006, copper exports reached a historical high of U.S. \$33.3 billion. Imports totaled U.S. \$35 billion, an increase of 17% compared to the previous year. Chile thus recorded a positive trade balance of U.S. \$23 billion in 2006.

The main destinations for Chilean exports were the Americas (U.S. \$39 billion), Asia (U.S. \$27.8 billion) and Europe (U.S. \$22.2 billion). Seen as shares of Chile's export markets, 42% of exports went to the Americas, 30% to Asia and 24% to Europe. Within Chile's diversified network of trade relationships, its most important partner remained the United States. Total trade with the U.S. was U.S. \$14.8 billion in 2006. Since the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement went into effect on January 1, 2004, U.S.-Chilean trade has increased by 154%. Internal Government of Chile figures show that even when factoring out inflation and the recent high price of copper, bilateral trade between the U.S. and Chile has grown over 60% since then.

Total trade with Europe also grew in 2006, expanding by 42%. The Netherlands and Italy were Chile's main European trading partners. Total trade with Asia also grew significantly at nearly 31%. Trade with Korea and Japan grew significantly, but China remained Chile's most important trading partner in Asia. Chile's total trade with China reached U.S. \$8.8 billion in 2006, representing nearly 66% of the value of its trade relationship with Asia.



Chile is responsible for over a third of world's copper production.



Chile is the world's fifth largest exporter of wine.

The growth of exports in 2006 was due mainly to a strong increase in sales to the United States, the Netherlands, and Japan. These three markets alone accounted for an additional U.S. \$5.5 billion worth of Chilean exports. Chilean exports to the United States totaled U.S. \$9.3 billion, representing a 37.7% increase compared to 2005 (U.S. \$6.7 billion). Exports to the European Union were U.S. \$15.4 billion, a 63.7% increase compared to 2005 (U.S. \$9.4 billion). Exports to Asia increased from U.S. \$15.2 billion in 2005 to U.S. \$19.7 billion in 2006, a 29.9% increase.

During 2006, Chile imported U.S. \$26 billion from the Americas, representing 54% of total imports, followed by Asia at 22%, and Europe at 16%. Mercosur members were the main suppliers of imports to Chile at U.S. \$9.1 billion, followed by the United States with U.S. \$5.5 billion and the European Union with U.S. \$5.2 billion. From Asia, China was the most important exporter to Chile, with goods valued at U.S. \$3.6 billion. Year-on-year growth in imports was especially strong from a number of countries—Ecuador (123.9%), Thailand (72.1%), Korea (52.6%), and China (36.9%).

Chile's overall trade profile has traditionally been dependent upon copper exports. The state-owned firm CODELCO is the world's largest copper-producing company, with recorded copper reserves of 200 years. Chile has made an effort to expand nontraditional exports. The most important non-mineral exports are forestry and wood products, fresh fruit and processed food, fishmeal and seafood, and wine.

Successive Chilean governments have actively pursued trade-liberalizing agreements. During the 1990s, Chile signed free trade agreements (FTA) with Canada, Mexico, and Central America. Chile also concluded preferential trade agreements with Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. An association agreement with



Mercosur—Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay—went into effect in October 1996. Continuing its export-oriented development strategy, Chile completed landmark free trade agreements in 2002 with the European Union and South Korea. Chile, as a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization, is seeking to boost commercial ties to Asian markets. To that end, it has signed trade agreements in recent years with New Zealand, Singapore, Brunei, India, China, and most recently Japan. In 2007, Chile held trade negotiations with Australia, Thailand, Malaysia, and China. In 2008, Chile hopes to conclude an FTA with Australia, and finalize an expanded agreement (covering trade in services and investment) with China. The P4 (Chile, Singapore, New Zealand, and Brunei) also plan to expand ties through adding a finance and investment chapter to the existing P4 agreement. Chile's trade talks with Malaysia and Thailand are also scheduled to continue in 2008.

After two years of negotiations, the United States and Chile signed an agreement in June 2003 that will lead to completely duty-free bilateral trade within 12 years. The U.S.-Chile FTA entered into force January 1, 2004 following approval by the U.S. and Chilean congresses. The bilateral FTA has inaugurated greatly expanded U.S.-Chilean trade ties, with total bilateral trade jumping by 154% during the FTA's first three years.

Chile unilaterally lowered its across-the-board import tariff for all countries with which it does not have a trade agreement to 6% in 2003. Higher effective tariffs are charged only on imports of wheat, wheat flour, and sugar as a result of a system of import price bands. The price bands were ruled inconsistent with Chile's World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations in 2002, and the government has introduced legislation to modify them. Under the terms of the U.S.-Chile FTA, the price bands will be completely phased out for U.S. imports of wheat, wheat flour, and sugar within 12 years.



San Antonio port in Chile.

Chile is a strong proponent of pressing ahead on negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and is active in the WTO's Doha round of negotiations, principally through its membership in the G-20 and Cairns Group.

## Finance





Chile's financial sector has grown quickly in recent years, with a banking reform law approved in 1997 that broadened the scope of permissible foreign activity for Chilean banks. The Chilean Government implemented a further liberalization of capital markets in 2001, and there is further pending legislation proposing further liberalization. Over the last ten years, Chileans have enjoyed the introduction of new financial tools such as home equity loans, currency futures and options, factoring, leasing, and debit cards. The introduction of these new products has also been accompanied by an increased use of traditional instruments such as loans and credit cards. Chile's private pension system, with assets worth roughly \$70 billion at the end of 2006, has been an important source of investment capital for the capital market. Chile maintains one of the best credit ratings (S&P A+) in Latin America. There are three main ways for Chilean firms to raise funds abroad: bank loans, issuance of bonds, and the selling of stocks on U.S. markets through American Depository Receipts (ADRs). Nearly all of the funds raised through these means go to finance domestic Chilean investment. The government is required by law to run a fiscal surplus of at least 1% of GDP. In 2006, the Government of Chile ran a surplus of \$11.3 billion, equal to almost 8% of GDP. The Government of Chile continues to pay down its foreign debt, with public debt only 3.9% of GDP at the end of 2006.



Skyline of Santiago's Financial District.

## Defense

Chile's Armed Forces are subject to civilian control exercised by the President through the Minister of Defense. The President has the authority to remove the commanders-in-chief of the armed forces.

### Army

The commander in chief of the Chilean Army is General Oscar Izurieta Ferrer. The Chilean Army is 45,000 strong and is organized with an Army headquarters in Santiago, seven divisions throughout its territory, an Air Brigade in Rancagua, and a Special Forces Command in Colina. The Chilean Army is one of the most professional and technologically advanced armies in Latin America.

### Navy



Leopard 2A4 of the Chilean army in Fidae 2008.



Admiral Rodolfo Codina directs the 23,000-person Navy, including 2,500 Marines. Of the fleet of 29 surface vessels, only eight are operational major combatants (frigates). Those ships are based in Valparaiso. The Navy operates its own aircraft for transport and patrol; there are no Navy fighter or bomber aircraft. The Navy also operates four submarines based in Talcahuano.

## Air Force (FACH)

Gen. Ricardo Ortega Perrier heads a force of 12,500. Air assets are distributed among five air brigades headquartered in Iquique, Antofagasta, Santiago, Puerto Montt, and Punta Arenas. The Air Force also operates an airbase on King George Island, Antarctica. The FACH took delivery of the final 2 of 10 F-16s, all purchased from the U.S., in March 2007. Chile also took delivery in 2007 of a number of reconditioned Block 15 F-16s from the Netherlands, bringing to 18 the total of F-16s purchased from the Dutch.

## Carabineros

After the military coup in September 1973, the Chilean national police (Carabineros) were incorporated into the Defense Ministry. With the return of democratic government, the police were placed under the operational control of the Interior Ministry but remained under the nominal control of the Defense Ministry. Gen. Eduardo Gordon is the head of the national police force of 40,964 men and women who are responsible for law enforcement, traffic management, narcotics suppression, border control, and counter-terrorism throughout Chile.

## Foreign relations

Since the early decades after independence, Chile has always had an active involvement in foreign affairs. In 1837 the country aggressively challenged the dominance of Peru's port of Callao for preeminence in the Pacific trade routes, defeating the short-lived alliance between Peru and Bolivia, the Peru-Bolivian Confederation (1836-39) in the War of the Confederation. The war dissolved the confederation while distributing power in the Pacific. A second international war, the War of the Pacific (1879-83), further increased Chile's regional role, while adding considerably to its territory.

During the nineteenth century, Chile's commercial ties were primarily with Britain, a country that had a decisive influence on the organization of the navy. The French influenced Chile's legal and educational systems and had a decisive impact on Chile, through the architecture of the capital in the boom years at the turn of the century. German influence came from the organization and training of the army by Prussians.

On June 26, 1945 Chile participated as a founding member of the United Nations being among 50 countries



Chilean frigate *Almirante Blanco Encalada* (FF-15) at Pearl Harbour, 2006.



Former President Ricardo Lagos with United States President George W. Bush.

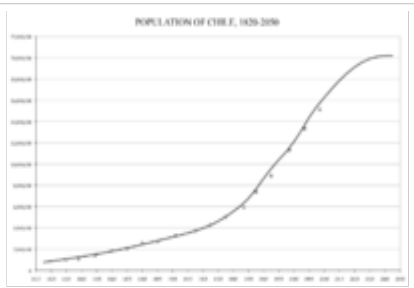


that signed the United Nations Charter in San Francisco. With the military coup of 1973, Chile became isolated politically as a result of widespread human rights abuses.

Since its return to democracy in 1990, Chile has been an active participant in the international political arena. Chile completed a 2-year non-permanent position on the UN Security Council in January 2005. Jose Miguel Insulza, a Chilean national, was elected Secretary General of the Organization of American States in May 2005. Chile is currently serving on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors, and the 2007-2008 chair of the board is Chile's ambassador to the IAEA, Milenko E. Skoknic. The country is an active member of the UN family of agencies and participates in UN peacekeeping activities. It is currently bidding for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council. Chile hosted the Defense Ministerial of the Americas in 2002 and the APEC summit and related meetings in 2004. It also hosted the Community of Democracies ministerial in April 2005 and the Ibero-American Summit in November 2007. An associate member of Mercosur and a full member of APEC, Chile has been an important actor on international economic issues and hemispheric free trade.

The Chilean Government has diplomatic relations with most countries. It settled its territorial disputes with Argentina during the 1990s. Chile and Bolivia severed diplomatic ties in 1978 over Bolivia's desire to reacquire territory it lost to Chile in 1879-83 War of the Pacific. The two countries maintain consular relations and are represented at the Consul General level.

## Demographics



Population of Chile from 1835, projected up to 2050 (INE).

Chile's 2002 census reported a population of 15,116,435. Its growth has been declining since 1990, due to a decreasing birth rate. By 2050 the population is expected to reach approximately 20.2 million. About 85% of the country's population lives in urban areas, with 40% living in Greater Santiago. The largest agglomerations according to the 2002 census are Greater Santiago with 5.4 million people, Greater Valparaíso with 804,000 and Greater Concepción with 666,000.

### Racial structure

The bulk of the Chilean population features a considerably homogeneous mestizo quality, the product of miscegenation between colonial Spanish immigrants and Amerindian females (including the Atacameños, Diaguitas, Picunches, Araucanians or Mapuches, Huilliches, Pehuenches, and Cuncos). Chile's ethnic structure can be classified as 30% white, 5% Native American and 65% predominantly white mestizos. Whites are mostly Spanish in origin (mainly Castilians, Andalusians and Basques), and to a much lesser degree from Chile's various waves of immigrants (Italians, Germans, Israelis, Yugoslavians, Arabs, etc.). Foreigners have always been scarce in Chile, totalling 600 in the whole colonial period. At the 1960 census they numbered 105,000 (55% being Spanish, German, Italians or Argentines, in that order). Besides being small in number, they mixed quickly with the locals. The black population was always scant, reaching a high of 25,000 during the colonial period; its racial contribution is less than 1%. The current Native American population is relatively small (see below) according to the censuses; their numbers are augmented when one takes into consideration those that are physically similar, and those that are linguistically or socially thought to belong to them.



A view of capital Santiago.



Houses on the hills of Valparaíso.

### Indigenous communities

In the 1992 Chilean census, a total of 10.5% of the total population surveyed declared themselves indigenous, irrespective of whether they currently practiced or spoke a native culture and language; almost one million people (9.7% of the total) declared themselves Mapuche, 0.6% declared to be Aymara, and a 0.2% reported as Rapanui.

At the 2002 census, only indigenous people that still practiced a native culture or spoke a native language were surveyed: 4.6% of the population (692,192 people) fit that description; of these, 87.3% declared themselves Mapuche.

Those belonging to recognised indigenous communities (2002)					
Alacaluf	2,622	0.02%	Mapuche	604,349	4.00%
Atacameño	21,015	0.14%	Quechua	6,175	0.04%
Aymara	48,501	0.32%	Rapanui	4,647	0.03%
Colla	3,198	0.02%	Yámana	1,685	0.01%

### Immigration



Relative to its overall population, Chile never experienced any large scale wave of immigrants. The total number of immigrants to Chile, both originating from other Latin American countries and all other (mostly European) countries, never surpassed 4% of its total population. This is not to say that immigrants were not important to the evolution of Chilean society and the Chilean nation. Basque families who migrated to Chile in the 18th century vitalized the economy and joined the old Castilian aristocracy to become the political elite that still dominates the country. Some non-Spanish European immigrants arrived in Chile — mainly to the northern and southern extremities of the country — during the 19th and 20th centuries, including English, Germans, Irish, Italians, French, Croatians and other former Yugoslavians. The prevalence of non-Hispanic European surnames among the governing body of modern Chile are a testament to their disproportionate contribution and influence on the country. Also worth mentioning are the Korean, and especially Palestinian communities, the latter being the largest colony of that people outside of the Arab world. The volume of immigrants from neighboring countries to Chile during those same periods was of a similar value.

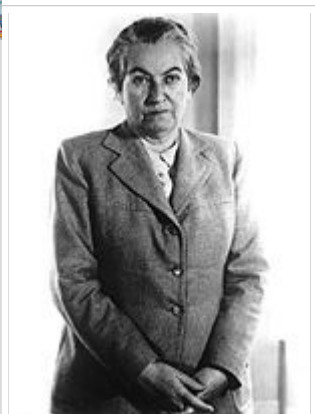


German influence is apparent in southern Chile.

After independence and during the republican era, English, Italian, and French merchants established themselves in the growing cities of Chile and incidentally joined the political or economic elites of the country. The official encouragement of German and Swiss colonization in the Lake District ( Los Lagos Region) during the second half of the 19th century was exceptional. Small numbers of displaced eastern European Jews and Christian Syrians and Palestinians fleeing the Ottoman Empire arrived in Chile. Today they spearhead financial and small manufacturing operations. Croats have also immigrated to Chile and have formed a notable ethnic identity.

Currently, immigration from neighboring countries to Chile is greatest, and during the last decade immigration to Chile has doubled to 184,464 people in 2002, originating primarily from Argentina, Bolivia and Peru. Emigration of Chileans has decreased during the last decade: It is estimated that 857,781 Chileans live abroad, 50.1% of those being in Argentina, 13.3% in the United States, 8.8% in Brazil, 4.9% in Sweden, and around 2% in Australia, with the rest being scattered in smaller numbers across the globe.

## Culture



Gabriela Mistral, Nobel Prize for Literature (1945).

Northern Chile was an important centre of culture in the medieval and early modern Inca empire, while the central and southern regions were areas of Mapuche cultural activities. Through the colonial period following the conquest, and during the early Republican period, the country's culture was dominated by the Spanish. Other European influences, primarily English, French, and German began in the 19th century and have continued to this day. German migrants influenced the Bavarian style rural architecture and cuisine in the south of Chile in cities such as Valdivia and Puerto Montt.

### Music and dance

The national dance is the cueca. Another form of traditional Chilean song, though not a dance, is the tonada. Arising from music imported by the Spanish colonists, it is distinguished from the cueca by an intermediate melodic section and a more prominent melody. In the mid-1960s native musical forms were revitalized by the Parra family with the Nueva Canción Chilena, which was associated with political activists and reformers, and by the folk singer and researcher on folklore and Chilean ethnography, Margot Loyola.



Pablo Neruda, Nobel Prize for Literature (1971).

### Literature

Chileans call their country *país de poetas*—country of poets. Gabriela Mistral was the first Chilean to win a Nobel Prize for Literature (1945). Chile's most famous poet, however, is Pablo Neruda, who also won the Nobel Prize for Literature (1971) and is world-renowned for his extensive library of works on romance, nature, and politics. His three highly individualistic homes, located in Isla Negra, Santiago and Valparaíso are popular tourist destinations.

### Cuisine

Chilean cuisine is a reflection of the country's topographical variety, featuring an assortment of seafood, beef, fruits, and vegetables. Traditional recipes include cazuela, empanadas, humitas, and curanto.

### Sports



Rodeo is a national sport in rural Chile.

Chile's most popular sport is association football (soccer). Chile hosted the 1962 FIFA World Cup and its national football team finished third. Other results achieved by the national football team include four finals at the Copa América, one silver and two bronze medals at the Pan American Games and a bronze medal at the 2000 Summer Olympics. The main soccer clubs are Colo-Colo, CF Universidad de Chile and CD Universidad Católica. Colo-Colo is the country's most successful club, winning 41 national tournaments and three international championships, including the coveted Copa Libertadores South American club tournament.

Tennis is the country's most successful sport and second most popular. Its national team won the World Team Cup clay tournament twice in 2003-04, and played the Davis Cup final against Italy in 1976. At the 2004 Summer Olympics the country captured gold and bronze in men's singles and

gold in men's doubles. Marcelo Ríos became the first Latin American man to reach the number one spot in the ATP singles rankings in 1998. Anita Lizana won the US Open in 1937, becoming the first women from Latin America to win a grand slam tournament. Luis Ayala was twice a runner-up at the French Open and both Ríos and Fernando González reached the Australian Open men's singles finals.



Marcelo Ríos was chosen Chilean sportsman of the century.

At the Olympic Games Chile boasts two gold medals (tennis), six silver medals (athletics, equestrian, boxing and shooting) and four bronze medals (tennis, boxing and football).

Rodeo is the country's national sport and is practiced in the more rural areas of the country. A sport similar to hockey called *chueca* was played by the Mapuche people during the Spanish conquest. Skiing and snowboarding are practiced at ski centers located in the Central Andes, while surfing is popular at some coastal towns.

## Tourism



San Pedro de Atacama.

Tourism in Chile has experienced sustained growth over the last few decades. In 2005, tourism grew by 13.6%, generating more than 4.5 billion dollars of which 1.5 billion is attributed to foreign tourists. According to the National Service of Tourism (Sernatur), 2 million people a year visit the country. Most of these visitors come from other countries in the American continent, mainly Argentina; followed by a growing amount from the United States, Europe, and Brazil with a growing amount of Asians from South Korea and PR China.



The main attractions for tourists are places of natural beauty situated in the extreme zones of the country: San Pedro de Atacama, in the north, is very popular with foreign tourists who arrive to admire the Incaic architecture and the altiplano lakes of the Valley of the Moon. In Putre, also in the North, there is the Chungará Lake, as well as the Parinacota and the Pomerape volcanoes, with altitudes of 6,348 m and 6,222 m, respectively. Throughout the central Andes there are many ski resorts of international repute, like Portillo and Valle Nevado. In the south, the main tourist sites are the Chiloé Archipelago, Patagonia, the San Rafael Lagoon, with its many glaciers, and the Towers of Paine national park. The central port city of Valparaíso, with its unique architecture, is also popular. Finally, Easter Island in the Pacific Ocean is probably the main Chilean tourist destination.



Torres del Paine.

For locals, tourism is concentrated mostly in the summer (December to March), and mainly in the coastal beach towns. Arica, Iquique, Antofagasta, La Serena and Coquimbo are the main summer centres in the north, and Pucón on the shores of Lake Villarrica is the main one in the south. Due to its proximity to Santiago, the coast of the Valparaíso Region, with its many beach resorts, receives the largest amount of tourists. Viña del Mar, Valparaíso's northern affluent neighbour, is popular due to its beaches, casino, and its annual song festival, the most important musical event in Latin America.

In November 2005, the government launched a campaign under the brand "Chile: All Ways Surprising," intended to promote the country internationally for both business and tourism.



Easter Island.

## Languages

### Spanish

The Spanish spoken in Chile is distinctively accented and quite unlike that of neighbouring South American countries due to the dropping of final syllables and 's' sounds, and the soft pronunciation of some consonants.

English language learning and teaching is popular among students, academics and professionals, with some English words being absorbed and appropriated into everyday Spanish speech, although they might seem unrecognizable due to Non-native pronunciations of English.

### Indigenous languages

There are several indigenous languages spoken in Chile: Mapudungun, Quechua, Rapa Nui, Huilliche, Aymar , Kaw sqar, and Y mana. After the Spanish invasion, Spanish took over as the lingua franca, and the indigenous languages have become minority languages with some now extinct or close to extinction.





## National symbols

The national flower is the copihue (*Lapageria rosea*, Chilean bellflower), which grows in the woods of southern Chile.

The coat of arms depicts the two national animals: the condor (*Vultur gryphus*, a very large bird that lives in the mountains) and the huemul (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*, an endangered white tail deer). It also has the legend *Por la razón o la fuerza* (*By right or might* or *By reason or by force*).

The flag of Chile consists of two equal horizontal bands of white (top) and red; there is a blue square the same height as the white band at the hoist-side end of the white band; the square bears a white five-pointed star in the center representing a guide to progress and honour; blue symbolizes the sky, white is for the snow-covered Andes, and red stands for the blood spilled to achieve independence.



A red copihue.

## Religion

Chile is a traditionally Catholic nation, with an estimated 70% of Chileans belonging to that church. According to census data other declared denominations or groupings include: Protestant or Evangelical (15.1%), Jehovah's Witnesses (1%), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (0.9%), Jewish (0.1%), Atheist or Agnostic (8.3%), and other (4.4%). Less than 0.1% are either Orthodox or Muslim. (For the precise numbers of declared religions among the population ages 15 and over as indicated by the results of the latest census, *see*: 2002 Census data.) The LDS church statistics claim to have 543,628 members within Chile.

## International rankings

Publisher	Index	Overall ranking	Lat. Am. ranking	Countries surveyed	% rank.	Date
Freedom House	Freedom in the World 2008	Free	—	193	—	2008/01
SOPAC/ UNEP	2005 Environmental Vulnerability Index	Vulnerable	—	235	—	2005/05
Heritage Foundation/The Wall Street Journal	2008 Index of Economic Freedom	8	1	157	5	2008/01
Fraser Institute	Economic Freedom of the World - 2007 Annual Report	11	1	141	8	2007/09
Fund for Peace	Failed States Index 2007	18 (159)	1 (20)	177	10	2007/07



Transparency International	2007 Corruption Perceptions Index	22	1	179	12	2007/09
The Economist	The Global Peace Index, 2008	19	1	140	14	2008/05
World Health Organization	The world health report 2000 - Health system performance (overall)	33	2	191	17	2000/06
The Economist	The World in 2007 - Democracy index, 2006	30	3	167	18	2006/11
World Bank	Doing Business - Ease of Doing Business, 2008	33	2	178	19	2007/09
Yale University/ Columbia University	2008 Environmental Performance Index	29	4	149	19	2008/01
World Economic Forum	The Global Competitiveness Report 2007-2008's Global Competitiveness Index	26	1	131	20	2007/10
World Bank	Logistics Performance Index	32	1	150	21	2007/11
AccountAbility	Responsible Competitiveness Index 2007	24	1	108	22	2007/07
UNDP	Human Development Report - Human Development Index 2007	40	2	177	23	2007/11
Reporters without borders	Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2007	39	3	169	23	2007/10
International Living	Quality of Life Index 2008	48	8	194	25	2008/03
World Economic Forum	The Global Information Technology Report 2007-2008's Networked Readiness Index	34	1	127	27	2008/04
World Bank	Where is the Wealth of Nations? (2005) - Total wealth per capita	32	4	118	27	2005/09
The Economist	The World in 2005 - Worldwide quality-of-life index, 2005	31	1	111	28	2004/11
Unesco	EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008 - EFA Development Index	37	3	129	29	2007/11
Yale University/ Columbia University	2005 Environmental Sustainability Index	42	9	146	29	2005/01
Freedom House	Freedom of the Press 2007	66	2	195	34	2007/05
FedEx	The Power of Access - 2006 Access Index	32	1	75	43	2006/05



Brown University	Seventh Annual Global e-Government Study (2007)	85	8	198	43	2007/07
IMD International	World Competitiveness Yearbook 2008	26	1	55	47	2008/05
Economist Intelligence Unit/ Business Software Alliance	IT industry competitiveness index 2007	31	1	64	48	2007/07
World Economic Forum	The Global Gender Gap Index 2007	86	16	128	67	2007/11
A.T. Kearney/ Foreign Policy Magazine	Globalization Index 2007	43	2	72	78	2007/12

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# Colombia

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**Colombia** (IPA: /kəˈlʌmbiə/) officially the **Republic of Colombia** (Spanish: , IPA: [reˈpuβlika ðe koˈlombja]), is a country located in the northwestern region of South America. Colombia is bordered to the east by Venezuela and Brazil; to the south by Ecuador and Peru; to the North by the Atlantic Ocean, through the Caribbean Sea; to the north-west by Panama; and to the west by the Pacific Ocean. Besides the countries in South America, the Republic of Colombia is recognized to share maritime borders with the Caribbean countries of Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the Central American countries of Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.

Colombia is the 26th largest nation in the world and the fourth-largest country in South America (after Brazil, Argentina, and Peru), with an area more than twice that of France. In Latin America, it is also the country with the third largest population after Brazil and Mexico.

Colombia is a standing middle power with the second largest Spanish speaking population of the world after Mexico. It is largely recognized for its culture and is also one of the largest manufacturers in South America. Colombia is also one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the Southern Cone, the product of large-scale migrations during the 20th century which has caused a dramatic population growth since then.

The country currently suffers from a low-intensity conflict involving rebel guerrilla groups, paramilitary militias, drug trafficking and corruption inside minor towns and some cities. The conflict originated around 1964-1966, when the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) were founded and began their guerrilla insurgency campaigns against successive Colombian government administrations.

## Etymology

The word "Colombia" comes from the name of Christopher Columbus (*Cristóbal Colón* in Spanish, *Cristoforo Colombo* in Italian). It was conceived by the revolutionary Francisco de Miranda as a reference to the New World, especially to all American territories and colonies under Spanish and

<b><i>República de Colombia</i> (Spanish)</b> <b>Republic of Colombia</b>	
	Image:Escudodecolombia.jpg 
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Libertad y Orden</i> "(Spanish) "Liberty and Order"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Oh, Gloria Inmarcesible!</i> (Spanish)	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Bogotá
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Demonym</b>	Colombian
<b>Government</b> - President	Presidential republic Álvaro Uribe Velez

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Portuguese rule. The name was then adopted by the Republic of Colombia of 1819 formed by the union of Venezuela, New Granada and Ecuador.

In 1830 when Venezuela and Ecuador separated, the Cundinamarca region that remained became a new country: the Republic of New Granada. In 1863 New Granada officially changed its name to United States of Colombia, and in 1886 adopted its present day name: Republic of Colombia.

## History



The Zipa used to cover his body in gold and, from his raft, he offered treasures to the *Guatavita* goddess in the middle of the sacred lake. This old Muisca tradition became the origin of El Dorado legend.

Approximately 10,000 BC hunter-gatherer societies existed near present-day Bogotá (at "El Abra" and "Tequendama") which traded with one another and with cultures living in the Magdalena River Valley. Beginning in the first millennium BC, groups of Amerindians developed the political system of "cacicazgos" with a pyramidal structure of power headed by caciques. Within Colombia, the two cultures with the most complex cacicazgo systems were the Tayronas in the Caribbean Region, and the Muisca in the highlands around Bogotá, both of which were of the Chibcha language family. The Muisca people are considered to have had one of the most developed political systems in South America, after the Incas.

Spanish explorers made the first exploration of the Caribbean littoral in 1500 led by Rodrigo de Bastidas. Christopher

Columbus navigated near the Caribbean in 1502. In 1508, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa started the conquest of the territory through the region of Urabá. In 1513, he was also the first European to discover the Pacific Ocean which he called *Mar del Sur* (or "Sea of the South") and which in fact would bring the Spaniards to Peru and Chile. The territory's main population was made up of hundreds of tribes of the Chibchan and Carib, currently known as the Caribbean people, whom the Spaniards conquered through warfare and alliances, while resulting disease and the conquest itself caused a demographic reduction among the indigenous. In the sixteenth century, Europeans began to bring slaves from Africa.

- Vice President	Francisco Santos
- President of Congress	Nancy Gutiérrez
- President of the Supreme Court	César Valencia
<b>Independence</b>	from Spain
- Declared	July 20, 1810
- Recognized	August 7, 1819
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	1,141,748 km <sup>2</sup> ( 26th) 440,839 sq mi
- Water (%)	8.8
<b>Population</b>	
- December 2007 estimate	44,065,000 ( 29th)
- 2005 census	42,888,592
- Density	40/km <sup>2</sup> ( 161st) 104/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$337.286 billion ( 29th)
- Per capita	\$7,565 ( 81st)
<b>Gini (2006)</b>	52 (high)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	▲ 0.791 (medium) ( 75th)
<b>Currency</b>	Peso ( COP)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-5)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.co
<b>Calling code</b>	+57

Since the beginning of the periods of Conquest and Colonization, there were several rebel movements under Spanish rule, most of them either being crushed or remaining too weak to change the overall situation. The last one, which sought outright independence from Spain, sprang up around 1810, following the independence of St. Domingue in 1804 (present day Haiti), who provided a non-negligible degree of support to the eventual leaders of this rebellion: Simón Bolívar and Francisco de Paula Santander. Simón Bolívar had become the first president of Colombia and Francisco de Paula Santander was Vice President; when Simón Bolívar stepped down, Santander became the second president of Colombia. The rebellion finally succeeded in 1819 when the territory of the Viceroyalty of New Granada became the Republic of Greater Colombia organized as a Confederation along Ecuador and Venezuela (Panama was part of Colombia).



The Gran Colombia.

Internal political and territorial divisions led to the secession of Venezuela and Quito (today's Ecuador) in 1830. At this time, the so-called "Department of Cundinamarca" adopted then the name " Nueva Granada", which it kept until 1856 when it became the "Confederación Granadina" ( Grenadine Confederation). After a two year civil war in 1863, the " United States of Colombia" was created, lasting until 1886, when the country finally became known as the Republic of Colombia. Internal divisions remained between the bipartisan political forces, occasionally igniting very bloody civil wars, the most significant being the Thousand Days civil war (1899 - 1902) which together with the United States intentions to influence in the area (especially the Panama Canal construction and control) led to the separation of the Department of Panama in 1903 and the establishment of it as a nation. Colombia engulfed in a year long war with Peru over a territorial dispute involving the Amazonas Department and its capital Leticia. Soon

after, Colombia achieved a relative degree of political stability, which was interrupted by a bloody conflict that took place between the late 1940s and the early 1950s, a period known as *La Violencia* ("The Violence"). Its cause was mainly because of mounting tensions between the two leading political parties, which subsequently ignited after the assassination of the Liberal Presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on April 9, 1948. This assassination caused riots in Bogotá and became known as El Bogotazo, the violence from these riots spread through out the country and claimed the lives of at least 180,000 Colombians. From 1953 to 1964 the violence between the two political parties decreased first when Gustavo Rojas deposed the President of Colombia in a coup d'etat, and negotiated with the guerrillas, and then under the military junta of General Gabriel París Gordillo.

After Rojas deposition the two political parties Colombian Conservative Party and Colombian Liberal Party agreed to the creation of a "National Front", whereby the Liberal and Conservative parties would govern jointly. The presidency would be determined by an alternating conservative and liberal president every 4 years for 16 years; the two parties would have parity in all other elective offices. The National Front ended " La Violencia", and National Front administrations attempted to institute far-reaching social and economic reforms in cooperation with the Alliance for Progress. In the end, the contradictions between each successive Liberal and Conservative administration made the results decidedly mixed. Despite the progress in certain sectors, many social and political injustices continued and many guerrillas were formally created such as the FARC, ELN and M-19 to fight the government and political apparatus with influences from Cold War doctrines.



Francisco de Paula Santander, Simón Bolívar and other heroes of the Independence of Colombia in the Congress of Cúcuta.



Emerging in the late 1970s, powerful and violent drug cartels developed during the 1980s and 1990s. The Medellín Cartel under Pablo Escobar and the Cali Cartel, in particular, exerted political, economic and social influence in Colombia during this period. These cartels also financed and influenced different illegal armed groups throughout the political spectrum. Some enemies of these allied with the guerrillas and created or influenced paramilitary groups.

The new Colombian Constitution of 1991 was ratified after being drafted by the Constituent Assembly of Colombia. The constitution included key provisions on political, ethnic, human and gender rights. The new constitution initially prohibited the extradition of Colombian nationals. There were accusations of lobbying by drug cartels in favour of this prohibition. The cartels had previously promoted a violent campaign against extradition, leading to many terrorist attack and mafia style executions. They also tried to influence the government and political structure of Colombia by means of corruption, as in the case of the 8000 Process scandal.



Members of the Colombian National Army during a field training exercise.

In recent years, the country has continued to be plagued by the effects of the drug trade, guerrilla insurgencies like FARC and paramilitary groups such as the AUC (later demobilized, though paramilitarism remains active), which along with other minor factions have engaged in a bloody internal armed conflict. President Andrés Pastrana and the FARC attempted to negotiate a solution to the conflict between 1998 and 2002 but failed to do so. President Andrés Pastrana also began to implement the Plan Colombia initiative, with the dual goal of ending the armed conflict and promoting a strong anti-narcotic strategy.

During the presidency of Álvaro Uribe, who was elected on the promise of applying military pressure on the FARC and other criminal groups, some security indicators have improved, showing a decrease in reported kidnappings (from 3700 in the year 2000 to 800 in 2005) and a decrease of more than 48% in homicides between July 2002 and May 2005 and of the terrorist guerrilla itself reduced from 16.900 insurgents to 8.900 insurgents. It is argued that these improvements have favored economic growth and tourism. The 2006–2007 Colombian parapolitics scandal emerged due to the revelations and judicial implications of past and present links between paramilitary groups, mainly the AUC, and some government officials and many politicians, most of them allied to the governing

administration.

## Geography and climate



Colombia is the 26th largest nation in the world and the fourth-largest country in South America. Located in the northwestern region of South America, it is bordered to the east by Venezuela and Brazil; to the south by Ecuador and Peru; to the North by the Atlantic Ocean, through the Caribbean Sea; to the north-west by Panama; and to the west by the Pacific Ocean. Besides the countries in South America, the Republic of Colombia is recognized to share maritime borders with the Caribbean countries of Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the Central American countries of Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. Colombia has more physical diversity packed into its borders than any other area of comparable size in Latin America. The country is part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, a region of the world subject to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.



Los Llanos plains in **Colombia**.

Geologically Colombia is formed by two great territorial zones, one submerged in the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean sea covering a total area of 828,660 km<sup>2</sup> and the second is the emerged land which is formed by the Andes mountain range and the Llanos plains that are shared with Venezuela and cover an area of some 1'143,748 km<sup>2</sup>. Colombian surface features form complicated land patterns. The western third of the country is the most complex, starting at the shore of the Pacific Ocean in the west and moving eastward at a latitude of 5 degrees north, a diverse sequence of features is encountered; In the extreme west are the very narrow and discontinuous Pacific coastal lowlands, which are backed by the Serranía de Baudó, one of the lowest and narrowest of Colombia's mountain ranges. Next is the broad region of the Río Atrato/Río San Juan lowland.

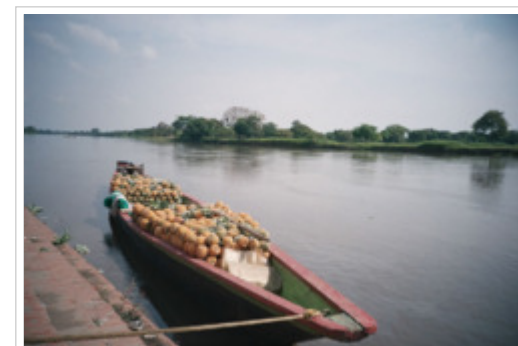
The western mountain range, the *Cordillera Occidental*, is a moderately high range with peaks reaching up to about 13,000 ft (4,000 m). The Cauca River Valley, an important agricultural region with several large cities on its borders, separates the Cordillera Occidental from the massive Cordillera Central. Several snow-clad volcanoes in the *Cordillera Central* have summits that rise above 18,000 ft (5,500 m). The valley of the Magdalena River, a major transportation artery, separates the *Cordillera Central* from the main eastern range, the *Cordillera Oriental*. The peaks of the *Cordillera Oriental* are moderately high. This range differs from Colombia's other mountain ranges in that it contains several large basins. To the east of the country, the sparsely populated, flat to gently rolling eastern lowlands called *Llanos orientales* part of the Orinoco river basin and the jungle covered Amazon region part of the Amazon river basin (both basins called eastern plains) cover almost 60 percent of the country's total land area. The northern plains are mostly part of the Caribbean natural region which includes the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range, the highest mountain by the sea and the Guajira Peninsula, mostly arid with another separate formation from the Andes mountain range, the Serranía de Macuira to form the Guajira-Barranquilla xeric scrub.

## Climate

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 184 of 637



Shaded relief map of Colombia.



the Magdalena River at Santa Cruz de Mompos.





Glacier Snowy peaks of the Nevado del Tolima volcano. 5,200+ metres (17,060 ft)

The climate of Colombia is determined by its proximity to the Earth's Equator predominating a tropical and isothermal climate, presenting variations within five natural regions and depending on the altitude; determined by mountain climate, temperature, humidity, winds; influenced by the trade winds and precipitation which is influenced by the Intertropical Convergence Zone. Colombia is also affected by the effects of the El Niño and La Niña.

Depending on the altitude temperatures decrease about 3.5 ° F (2 ° C) for every 1,000-foot (300-m) increase in altitude above sea level, presenting perpetual snowy peaks to lower hot lands. Rainfall varies by location and is present in two seasons (two dry and two rainy) in Colombia presenting one of the highest rainfalls in the world in the Pacific region. Rainfall in parts of the Guajira Peninsula seldom exceeds 30 in (75 cm) per year. Colombia's rainy southeast, however, is often drenched by more than 200 in (500 cm) of rain per year. Rainfall in most of the rest of the country runs between these two extremes.

Altitude affects not only temperature, but also vegetation. In fact, altitude is one of the most important influences on vegetation patterns in Colombia. The mountainous parts of the country can be divided into several vegetation zones according to altitude, although the altitude limits of each zone may vary somewhat depending on the latitude. The "tierra caliente" (hot land), below 3,300 ft (1,000 m), is the zone of tropical crops. The tierra templada (temperate land), extending from an altitude of 3,300 to 6,600 ft (1,000 to 2,000 m). Wheat and potatoes dominate in the "tierra fría" (cold land), at altitudes from 6,600 to 10,500 ft (2,000 to 3,200 m). In the "zona forestada" (forested zone), which is located between 10,500 and 12,800 ft (3,200 and 3,900 m). Treeless pastures table lands dominate the páramos, or alpine grasslands, at altitudes of 12,800 to 15,100 ft (3,900 to 4,600 m). Above 15,100 ft (4,600 m), where temperatures are below freezing, is the "tierra helada", a zone of permanent snow and ice.

Colombian Flora and Fauna also interact with climate zone patterns. A scrub woodland of scattered trees and bushes dominates the semiarid northeastern steppe and tropical desert. To the south, savannah (tropical grassland) vegetation covers the eastern plains; Colombian portion of the llanos. The rainy areas in the southeast are blanketed by tropical rain forest. In the mountains, the spotty patterns of precipitation in alpine areas complicate vegetation patterns. The rainy side of a mountain may be lush and green, while the other side, in the rain shadow, may be parched. As a result Colombia is considered to be among 17 of the most megadiverse countries in the world.

## Environmental issues



The hot and humid Colombian Pacific coast, one of the rainiest in the world.



The environment issues in Colombia are caused by both natural hazards and human effects on the environment. Natural hazards are determined by the global positioning of Colombia by the Pacific ring of fire causing geological instability. Colombia has some 15 major volcanoes which have caused tragedies like Armero and geological faults that have caused numerous devastating earthquakes like the 1999 Armenia earthquake. Human induced deforestation have also added to the problems of geological instability and inundations during the rainy seasons, two regions are very susceptible to these mainly in the Caribbean region of Colombia; La Mojana Region and the Magdalena river basin. The population increase and the burning of fossil fuels and industry, among other human produced waste has contaminated the environment of major cities and nearby water sources. Participants in the Colombian armed conflict have also contributed to the pollution of the environment in Colombia. The illegally armed groups have deforested large portions of land to plant illegal crops (mostly on government designated protected areas) while the government fumigated these crops using hazardous chemicals. The guerrillas also destroyed oil pipelines creating major ecological disasters.



Nevado del Ruiz volcano, erupted in 1985 causing the Armero tragedy.

## Government, law and politics



*Casa de Nariño*, the presidential palace in Bogotá houses the President of Colombia and maximum representative of the Executive Branch of Colombia.

The Government of Colombia takes place in a framework of a presidential representative democratic republic as established in the Colombian Constitution of 1991. The Colombian government is divided into three branches of power; the **executive**, **legislative** and **judicial** with special **control institutions** and **electoral institutions**. The President of Colombia is the maximum representative of executive branch of government in Colombia and is also the head of state and head of government with supreme administrative authority, followed by the Vice President and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Colombia.

At a provincial level the executive is managed by department governors, municipal mayors at municipal level and local administrators for smaller administrative subdivisions such as *corregidor* for corregimientos. The legislative branch of government in Colombia is represented by the National Congress of Colombia which is formed by an upper house the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives. At a provincial level the legislative branch is represented by department assemblies and a municipal level with municipal councils. Both the legislative and executive branches share most of the government power while the judicial branch of Colombia functions as an independent body from the other two branches which are vested with a shared power. The judicial branch under a

adversarial system is represented by the Supreme Court of Justice which is the highest entity in this branch but shared in responsibility with the Council of State, Constitutional Court and the Superior Council of the Judicature which also have jurisdictional and regional courts.

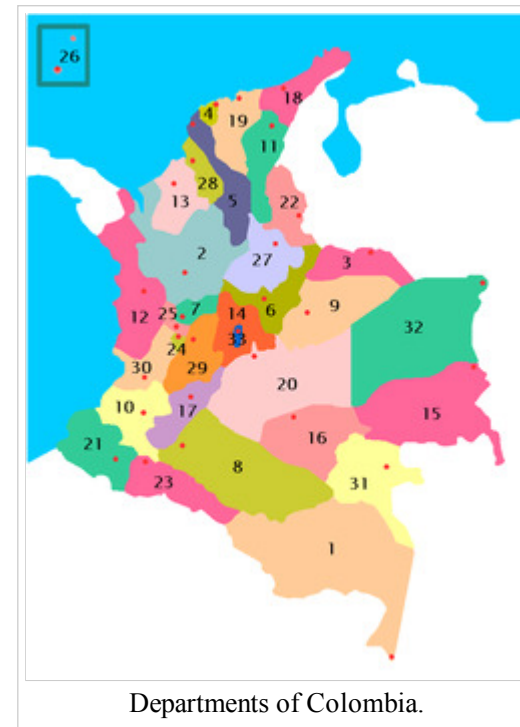
### Administrative divisions

Colombia is divided into 32 departments and one capital district which is treated as a department. There are in total 10 districts assigned to cities in Colombia



including Bogotá, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Santa Marta, Tunja, Cúcuta, Popayán, Buenaventura, Tumaco and Turbo. Colombia is also subdivided into some municipalities which form departments, each with a municipal seat capital city assigned. Colombia is also subdivided into corregimientos which form municipalities. Each department has a local government which is headed by a department governor and its own department assembly elected for a period of four years in a regional election. Each municipality also headed by a municipal mayor and a municipal council. And for corregimientos there will be an elected corregidor or local leader.

1 Amazonas	18 La Guajira
2 Antioquia	19 Magdalena
3 Arauca	20 Meta
4 Atlántico	21 Nariño
5 Bolívar	22 Norte de Santander
6 Boyacá	23 Putumayo
7 Caldas	24 Quindío
8 Caquetá	25 Risaralda
9 Casanare	26 San Andrés and Providencia
10 Cauca	27 Santander
11 Cesar	28 Sucre
12 Chocó	29 Tolima
13 Córdoba	30 Valle del Cauca
14 Cundinamarca	31 Vaupes
15 Guainía	32 Vichada
16 Guaviare	33 Bogotá* ( <i>Distrito Capital</i> )
17 Huila	



Some department have also local administrative regional subdivisions such as the departments of Antioquia and Cundinamarca, where towns have a large concentration of population and municipalities are near each other. In the case of some department where the population is still scarce and there are security problems such as in eastern Colombian departments of Amazonas, Vaupés and Vichada there special administrative definitions for territories, some are considered Department corregimientos, which are a hybrid between a corregimiento and a municipality. The difference besides the population is also subject to a cut in the assigned budget.

## Defense



The executive branch of government is in charge of managing the defense affairs of Colombia with the President of Colombia being the supreme chief of the armed forces, followed by the Minister of Defense, which controls the Military of Colombia and the Colombian National Police among other institutions. The Colombian military is divided into three branches with their respective chains of command; the Colombian National Army, the Colombian Air Force and the Colombian National Armada.

The national police functions as a gendarmerie independently from the Military as a the law enforcement agency for the entire country. Each of these operating with their own intelligence apparatus and also separately form the national intelligence agency *Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad*. The National Police has a presence in all municipality seats of Colombia, while the National Army is formed by divisions, regiments and special units, the Colombian National Armada is formed by the Colombian Marine Corps, Naval Force of the Pacific, Naval Force of the Caribbean, Naval Force of the South, Colombia Coast Guards, Naval Aviation and the Specific Command of San Andres y Providencia, the Colombian Air Force is formed by combat air commands units supported by other air support units.



Tall ship ARC Gloria, insignia of Colombia

### Foreign affairs

The Foreign affairs of Colombia are headed by the President of Colombia and managed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Colombia has diplomatic missions in all the continents, but not in all countries, and also multilateral relations with Brussels (Mission to the European Union) Geneva (Permanent Mission to the United Nations and other International Organizations) Montevideo (Permanent Missions to ALADI and MERCOSUR) Nairobi (Permanent Missions to the United Nations and other International Organizations) New York City (Permanent Mission to the United Nations) Paris (Permanent Mission to UNESCO) Rome (Permanent Mission to FAO) Washington DC (Permanent Mission to the Organization of American States).

The foreign relations of Colombia are mostly concentrated on combating illegal drug trade, improving Colombian image in the international community, fight against terrorism, expanding the Colombian products in the global market and environmental issues. Colombia receives special military and commercial cooperation and support from the United States mainly through Plan Colombia to fight against the internal armed groups as well as special financial preferences from the European Union in certain products.

### Politics of Colombia



The Politics of Colombia take place in the framework of a presidential representative democratic republic as established in the Colombian Constitution of 1991. The constitution vested the National Electoral Council along with the National Registry of the Civil State with the function of organizing and controlling the electoral process in Colombia. Since the 2005 reform the electoral process abides by the Law 974 of 2005 which modified the way political parties organize and interact in the government. Colombia goes through three electoral processes to elect candidates for a period of four years; a Presidential election, for president and vice president candidates (authorized to serve one reelection, 8 years), a legislative election for congress; senate and chamber of representatives (authorized many terms through reelection) and a regional election to elect department governors, department assemblies, municipal mayors and municipal councils and Local administrative juntas (executive regional leaders are only authorized one term in office).

The last presidential and legislative elections were on May 28, 2006, in which president Álvaro Uribe was reelected by a vote of 62%, with 22% going to Carlos Gaviria of the Democratic Pole, and 12% to Horacio Serpa of the Liberal Party. Colombia's bicameral parliament is the Congress of Colombia consists of a 166-seat Chamber of Representatives of Colombia and a 102-seat Senate of Colombia. Members of both houses are elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms. With congressmen, Colombia also elects the president. Department deputies, city councils and mayors are elected one year and five months after the president's and congressmen's election. The latest regional election was on October 28, 2007 with some 27 million Colombians apt to vote to elect between some 86 thousand candidates to represent 1,098 Colombian municipalities and 32 governors of Colombian Departments. Colombian authorities mobilized 167,559 soldiers and policemen in order to vigil the 9,950 voting sites.

The election process in the judicial system is headed by the Constitutional Court and members are appointed by the Congress of Colombia out of nominations made by the President and other high ranking tribunals, presidents of courts in the other hand are elected in internal elections. In Electoral Institutions and Control Institutions of Colombia officials are also appointed by the president and approved by congress like the Inspector General of Colombia.

## Economy



Voters concentrate in a voting centre during the legislative elections of 2006. As a rule, voters are not allowed to wear political propaganda in allusion to a candidate or party, or have electronic devices on their possession while voting.



Colombia's economy is fueled by abundant natural resources, a highly literate population and relatively high-valued currency. After experiencing decades of steady growth (average GDP growth exceeded 4% in the 1970-1998 period), Colombia experienced a recession in 1999 (the first full year of negative growth since 1929), and the recovery from that recession was long and painful. Colombia's economy suffers from weak domestic and foreign demand, austere government budgets, and serious internal armed conflicts.



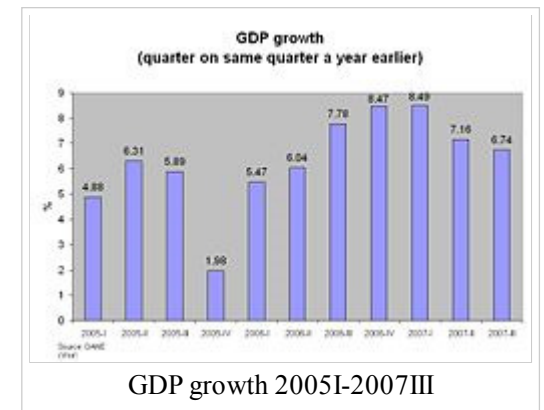
Plantation of Colombian coffee, Quindio.  
Coffee is the main agricultural export of Colombia.

The IMF Economic Indicators published on September 2006, forecast the Colombian GDP to reach US\$156.69 billion in 2008. Inflation has been below 6% for 2004, 2005, and 2006. Colombia's main exports include manufactured goods (41.32% of exports), petroleum (28.28%), coal (13.17%), and coffee (6.25%). Unofficially, illegal drugs are also a major export. Colombia is one of the largest producers of pop-up books in the world.

Colombia is also the largest exporter of plantains to the United States. Within Latin America, Colombia is known as a provider of fine lingerie, with the industry being centered in Medellín. All imports, exports, and the general trade balance are in record levels, and the inflow of export dollars has resulted in substantial revaluation of the Colombian Peso.

The problems facing the country range from pension system problems to drug dealing to moderately high unemployment (12%). Several international financial institutions have praised the economic reforms introduced by current President Álvaro Uribe, which include measures designed to bring the public-sector deficit below 2.5% of gross domestic product (GDP). The government's economic policy and its controversial democratic security strategy have engendered a growing sense of confidence in the economy, and GDP growth in 2003 was among the highest in Latin America. On May 28, 2007, the American magazine *BusinessWeek* published an article naming Colombia the most Extreme Emerging Market on Earth.

## Tourism





The Tourism industry in Colombia developed in the 1940s and has maintained a steady growth since then. The main touristic destinations are Bogotá, Cartagena, Eje cafetero, Santa Marta, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, San Andrés Island among others, each presenting different tourist attractions. There are different tourist season in Colombia, the two most busy are related to religious celebrations; the holy week and Christmas among other numerous public holidays, including the celebrations surrounding the Independence of Colombia.

The most notable festivities are the Cali's Fair, the Barranquilla's Carnival, the Bogotá summer festival, the Iberoamerican Theatre Festival, the Festival of the Flowers, the Vallenato Legend Festival, Carnival of Blacks and Whites and the Fiestas del Mar. Despite Travel advisories warning not to travel to Colombia due to Colombian armed conflict, the country continues to attract more tourists in recent years. The apparent cause appears to be the current hardline approach of President Álvaro Uribe called democratic security to push rebels groups farther away from the major cities, highways and tourist sites that may attract international visitors. Since President Uribe took office in 2002, he has notably increased Colombia's stability and security by significantly boosting its military strength and police presence throughout the country.



Tourists in Cartagena.



Arrecifes beach at the Tayrona Park, one of main eco-touristic destinations.

This apparently has achieved fruitful results for the country's economy, particularly international tourism. In 2006, Colombia received some 1.5 million international visitors, an astonishing increase of about 50% from the previous year. Lonely Planet, a world travel publisher, has picked Colombia as one of their top 10 world destinations for 2006. The World Tourism Organization reported in 2004 that Colombia achieved the third highest percentage increase of tourist arrivals in South America between 2000 and 2004 (9.2%). Only Peru and Suriname had higher increases during the same period. Because of the improved security, Caribbean cruise ships tours stop in Cartagena and Santa Marta. To further point out the improved security in the country, in June 2007, the Travel Channel's show, *5 Takes Latin America*, aired an episode on Colombia. Points of interest on the show were Bogotá, Cocora Valley in Salento, and the Salt Cathedral of Zipaquirá.

The varied and rich geography, flora and fauna of Colombia has also developed an eco-touristic industry, mostly developed in the National Natural Parks of Colombia which include the areas of Amacayacu Park in the Department of Amazonas, Colombian National Coffee Park in the town of Montenegro, Quindío, the Nevado del Ruiz volcano in Los Nevados National Park (near the city of Manizales), Cocora valley in Salento, Quindío,

PANACA theme Park, PANACA Savanna Park, Tayrona Park in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range (near the city of Santa Marta), the Tatacoa Desert, the Chicamocha Canyon National Park, Gorgona and Malpelo islands, as well as Cabo de la Vela in the Guajira Peninsula.

## Transportation



Colombia has a network of national highways maintained by the *Instituto Nacional de Vías* or INVIAS (National Institute of Roadways) government agency under the Ministry of Transport. The Pan-American Highway travels through Colombia, connecting the country with Venezuela to the east and Ecuador to the south.

Colombia's principal airport is El Dorado International Airport in Bogotá. Several national airlines ( Avianca, AeroRepública, AIREs , SATENA and Easy Fly, ), and international airlines (such as Iberia, American Airlines, Varig, Copa, Continental, Delta, Air Canada, Air France, Aerolíneas Argentinas, Aerogal, TAME, TACA) operate from El Dorado. Bogotá's airport is one of the largest and most expensive in Latin America. Because of its central location in Colombia and America, it is preferred by national land transportation providers, as well as national and international air transportation providers.



Occidente tunnel, Antioquia.

## Demographics



Colombian people at the Cali's Fair

With approximately 43.6 million people in 2006, Colombia is the third-most populous country in Latin America, after Brazil and Mexico.

Movement from rural to urban areas was very heavy in the mid-twentieth century, but has since tapered off. The urban population increased from 31% of the total population in 1938, to 57% in 1951 and about 70% by 1990. Currently the figure is about 77%. Thirty cities have a population of 100,000 or more. The nine eastern lowlands departments, constituting about 54% of Colombia's area, have less than 3% of the population and a density of less than one person per square kilometer (two persons per sq mi.). Colombia's total population in 2015 is projected to be more than 52 million.

The country has a diverse population that reflects its colourful history and the peoples that have populated here from ancient times to the present. The historic amalgam of the different main groups forms the

basics of Colombia's current demographics: European immigrants, Indigenous Natives, Africans, Asians, Middle Easterners and other recent immigrants. Many of the indigenous peoples were absorbed into the mestizo population, but the remaining 700,000 currently represent over eighty-five distinct cultures. The European immigrants were primarily Spanish colonists, but a good number of other Europeans ( Dutch, German, French, Swiss, Belgian, also many North Americans migrated to the Caribbean region in the late XIX early XX century, in smaller numbers Polish, Lithuanian, English and Croatian communities) immigrated during the Second World War and the Cold War. For example, former Bogotá mayor Antanas Mockus is the son of Lithuanian immigrants. Africans were brought as slaves, mostly to the coastal lowlands, beginning early in the sixteenth century, and continuing into the nineteenth century. Other immigrant populations include Asians and Middle Easterners, particularly Lebanese, Jordanians, Syrians, Chinese, Japanese and Koreans.



Afro-Colombian kids





## Indigenous peoples

Before the Spanish colonization of the region that would become the country of Colombia, the territory was the home of many different indigenous peoples. Today more than fifty different indigenous ethnic groups exist in Colombia. Most of them speak languages belonging to the Chibchan and Cariban linguistic families. The Colombian government has established 567 reserves for indigenous peoples and they are inhabited by more than 800,000 persons. Some of the largest indigenous groups are the Arhuacos, the Muisca, the Kuna people, the Witoto, the Páez, the Tucano, the Wayuu and the Guahibo.

## Immigrant groups

Because of its strategic location Colombia has received several immigration waves during its history. Most of these immigrants have settled in the Caribbean Coast; Barranquilla (the largest city in the Colombian Caribbean Coast) has the largest population of Arab Lebanese, Jewish, Italian, German, American, Chinese, French, Portuguese and Gypsy descendants. There are also important communities of German and Chinese descendants in the Caribbean Coast.

## Ethnic groups

The census data in Colombia does not take into account ethnicity, so percentages are basically estimates from other sources and can vary from one another. Statistics reveal that Colombians are predominantly Roman Catholic and overwhelmingly speakers of Spanish, and that a majority of them are the result of the a mixture of Europeans, Africans, Amerindians.

58% of the population is mestizo, or of mixed European and Amerindian ancestry, while 20% is of European ancestry. Another 14% is mulatto, or of mixed black African and European ancestry, while 4% is of black African ancestry and 3% are zambos, of mixed black African and Amerindian ancestry. Pure indigenous Amerindians comprise 1 percent of the population. There are 101 languages listed for Colombia in the Ethnologue database, of which 80 are spoken today as living languages. There are about 500,000 speakers of indigenous languages in Colombia today.

More than two-thirds of all Colombians live in urban areas—a figure significantly higher than the world average. The literacy rate (94 percent) in Colombia is also well above the world average, and the rate of population growth is slightly higher than the world average. Also, a large proportion of Colombians are young, largely because of recent decreases in the infant mortality rate. While 33 percent of the people are 14 years of age or younger, just 4 percent are aged 65 or older.

## Education



Che Square (or Santander Square), campus of the National University of Colombia in Bogotá. The National University is the largest state owned university in Colombia.

Over 93% of the entire population over 15 years of age can read and write, and this number has continued to increase throughout the years. Sixty percent of students complete primary schooling (5 years) and move onto secondary schooling(6 years). Most primary schools are private. Approximately 80 percent of Colombian children enter school, but they usually join a preschool academy until age 6 and then go to school. The school year extends from February to November in the capital city while in many other cities it extends from August to June. Primary education is free and compulsory for nine years for children between 6 and 12 years of age. The net primary enrollment (percentage of relevant age-group) in 2001 was 86.7 percent. The completion rate (percentage of age-group) for children attending elementary school (primaria) in 2001 totaled 89.5 percent. In many rural areas, teachers are poorly qualified, and only five years of primary school are offered. Secondary education (educación media) begins at age 11 and lasts up to six years, without any opportunity for vocational training. Secondary-school graduates are awarded the diploma (high-school diploma). Net secondary enrollment in 2001 was 53.5 percent. School life expectancy in 2001 was 11.1 years. Total public spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2001 was 4.4 percent—one of the highest rates in Latin America—as compared with 2.5 percent at the end of the 1980s. Government expenditures on education in 1999 totaled 19.7 percent of total government spending. The ratio of pupils to teachers in 2001 in primary school was 26:1 and in secondary school, 19:2.

Colombia has 24 public universities. A total of 92.5 percent of the population is literate (male: 92.4 percent; female: 92.6 percent), according to a 2003 estimate. Literacy is at 93 percent in urban areas, but only 67 percent in rural areas. People in Colombia are educated in Spanish (see also Colombian Spanish). The second most spoken language is English.

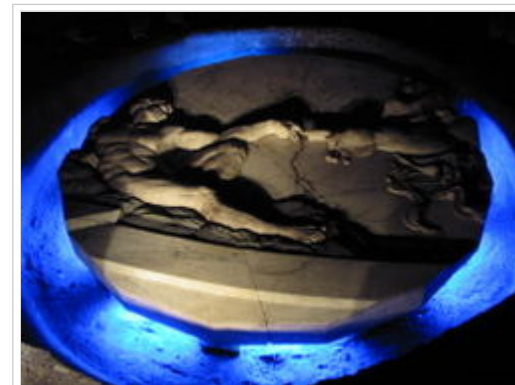
## Religion

The National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) does not collect religious statistics, and accurate reports are hard to obtain. Based on various studies, more than 95% of the population adheres to Christianity, in which a huge segment of the population, between 81% and 90%, practices Roman Catholicism. About 1% of Colombians practice indigenous religions.

Under 1% practice Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Despite strong numbers of adherents, around 60% of respondents to a poll by *El Tiempo* report that they do not practice their faith actively.

The Colombian constitution guarantees religious freedom, but also states that the State "is not atheist or agnostic, nor indifferent to Colombians' religious sentiment." Religious groups are readily able to obtain recognition as organized associations, but some smaller ones face difficulty in obtaining recognition as religious entities, which is required to offer chaplaincy services in public facilities.

## Crime



Salt Cathedral in the town of Zipaquirá, Cundinamarca.



Mounted Colombian National Police unit on patrol, City of Medellín.

Colombia has become notorious for its illicit drug production, kidnappings, and murder rate. In the 1990s, it became the world's largest producer of cocaine and coca derivatives. Cultivation of coca in 2000 was estimated at 402,782 acres (1,630 km<sup>2</sup>).

For some time Colombia also had the highest murder rate in the world at 62 murders per 100,000 people. However, it has descended in recent years to 39 murders per 100,000 people, bringing it down in the List of countries by murder rate below the levels of South Africa. Over 90 percent of the murdered are males. Regions like Putumayo, Guaviare and Arauca remain at 100 or more murders per 100,000 inhabitants in 2005.

Between 1992 and 1999 a total of 5,181 kidnappings, two-thirds of the world's reported, occurred in Colombia. In the year 2005, 800 kidnappings were reported, (73% less than in 2002) of which 35% were rescued in the same year. In 2005, 18,960 vehicles were stolen (37% less than in 2002) and 18,111 persons were murdered (38% less than in 2002).

Coca cultivation is a major illegal business in Colombia. In several rural regions, large tracts of land have been used for coca plant cultivation. According to U.S. figures, in 2004 an estimated 281,947 acres (1,141 km<sup>2</sup>) of land were used to grow the plant, and the nation had a producing potential of 430,000 metric tons of cocaine per year. According to a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime survey, coca cultivation was estimated at 212,511 acres (860 km<sup>2</sup>) in December 2006.

In the year of 2006 the Colombian government had destroyed around 180,387 acres (730 km<sup>2</sup>) beating all records in coca plant destruction. The Colombian government now plans to destroy around 123,553 acres (500 km<sup>2</sup>) of coca plants in 2007 and they claim there will be only around 49,421 acres (200 km<sup>2</sup>) left, which they claim will be destroyed in 2008. While Colombian efforts to eradicate the coca plant have displaced production, they have not diminished the area on which the crop is harvested. This disputes the Colombian claim that coca will be eradicated in 2008.

## Human rights

According to Amnesty International's Annual Report 2006, "Although the number of killings and kidnappings in some parts of the country fell, serious human rights abuses committed by all parties to the conflict remained at critical levels. Of particular concern were reports of extrajudicial executions carried out by the security forces, killings of civilians by armed opposition groups and paramilitaries, and the forced displacement of civilian communities." More than 3.5 million civilians out of the country's 40 million people have been displaced during the last two decades, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

"Women comprise over 55 percent of Colombia's internally displaced population (IDP). According to the Profamilia study, conducted from 2000 to 2001, one displaced woman in five is a victim of sexual violence; many suffer unwanted pregnancies." The victims, as reported by Ms. Magazine, have sometimes resorted to illegal abortions. In 2007, abortion was decriminalized in the cases of rape, when a fetus is expected to die, and when the mother's life or health is endangered.

According to Amnesty International, "Paramilitaries who had supposedly demobilized under the terms of a controversial law ratified in July continued to

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commit human rights violations, while armed opposition groups continued to commit serious and widespread breaches of international humanitarian law. Individuals who may have been responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity were not brought to justice." The Justice and Peace law, together with other legal mechanisms such as Decree 128, provides legal and economic benefits to demobilized paramilitaries. More than 25,000 paramilitary members are taking advantage of the demobilization process. Amnesty International believes that some have concealed their paramilitary activities by using different names or acting as civilian informers and civic guards.

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# Costa Rica

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

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**Costa Rica**, officially the **Republic of Costa Rica** (Spanish: *Costa Rica* or *República de Costa Rica*, Spanish pronunciation: [reˈpuβlika ðe ˈkosta ˈrika]), is a republic in Central America, bordered by Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the east-southeast, the Pacific Ocean to the west and south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east. Costa Rica was the first country in the world to constitutionally abolish its army. Among Latin American countries, Costa Rica ranks 4th in terms of the 2007 Human Development Index, and 48th worldwide. Costa Rica is ranked 5th in the world in terms of the 2008 Environmental Performance Index, up from the 15th place in 2006. In 2007 the government of Costa Rica stated that they want to be the first country to become carbon neutral by 2021.

## History

In Pre-Columbian times the indigenous people, in what is now known as Costa Rica, were part of the international Intermediate Area located between the Mesoamerican and Andean cultural regions. This has recently been updated to include the influence of the Isthmo-Colombian area. It was the point where the Mesoamerican and South American native cultures met.

The northwest of the country, the Nicoya Peninsula, was the southernmost point of Nahuatl (named after Nitin) cultural influence when the Spanish conquerors ( conquistadores) came in the sixteenth century. The central and southern portions of the country had Chibcha influences. However, the indigenous people have influenced modern Costa Rican culture to a relatively small degree, as most of these died from diseases such as smallpox and mistreatment by the Spaniards.

The first European to reach what is now Costa Rica was Christopher Columbus in 1502. During Spanish Colonial times, the largest city in Central America was Guatemala City. Costa Rica's distance from this hub led to difficulty in establishing trade routes and was one of the reasons that Costa Ricans developed in relative isolation and with little oversight from the Spanish Monarchy (" The Crown"). While this isolation allowed the colony to develop free of intervention by The Crown, it also contributed to its

<b>República de Costa Rica</b> <b>Republic of Costa Rica</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Noble patria, tu hermosa bandera</i> (Spanish) "Noble homeland, your beautiful flag"	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	San José
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Demonym</b>	Costa Rican
<b>Government</b>	Const. Democracy ( President. Republic)



failure to share in the prosperity of the Colonies, making Costa Rica the poorest Spanish Colony in Central America. Costa Rica was described as "the poorest and most miserable Spanish colony in all Americas" by a Spanish governor in 1719.

Another contributing factor to this poverty was the lack of indigenous people used as forced labor. While many Spaniards in the other colonies had tribal members working on their land, most of the Costa Rican settlers had to work on their own land themselves. For all these reasons Costa Rica was by and large unappreciated and overlooked by the Crown and left to develop on its own. It is believed that the circumstances during this period led to the formation of many of the idiosyncrasies that Costa Rica has become known for, while at the same time setting the stage for Costa Rica's development as a more egalitarian society than the rest of its neighbors. Costa Rica became a "rural democracy" with no oppressed mestizo or indigenous class. It was not long before Spanish settlers turned to the hills, where they found rich volcanic soil and a climate that was milder than that of the lowlands.

Costa Rica joined other Central American provinces in 1821 in a joint declaration of independence from Spain. After a brief time in the Mexican Empire of Agustín de Iturbide Costa Rica became a state in the Federal Republic of Central America from 1823 to 1839. In 1824 the capital was moved to San José, but due to an intense rivalry with Cartago, violence briefly ensued. Although the newly independent provinces formed a Federation, border disputes broke out among them, adding to the region's turbulent history and conditions.

Costa Rica's membership in the newly formed Federal Republic of Central America, now free of Spanish rule, was short lived; in 1838, long after the Central American Federation ceased to function in practice, Costa Rica formally withdrew and proclaimed itself sovereign. The distance from Guatemala City to the Central Valley of Costa Rica, where most of the population lived and still lives, was great. The local population had little allegiance to the government in Guatemala City, in part because of the history of isolation during Colonial times. Costa Rica's disinterest in participating as a province in a greater Central American government was one of the deciding factors in the break-up of the fledgling federation into independent states, which still exist today. However, all of the Central American nations still celebrate September 15th as their independence day, which pertains to the independence of Central America from Spain.

- President	Oscar Arias ( PLN)
- Vice President	Laura Chinchilla
<b>Independence</b>	
- from Spain (via Guatemala)	September 15, 1821
- from the UPCA	1838
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	51,100 km <sup>2</sup> ( 128th) 19,730 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.7
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2007 estimate	4,133,884 ( 119th)
- Density	85/km <sup>2</sup> ( 107th) 220/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$56.777 billion ( 84th)
- Per capita	\$12,000 ( 62nd)
<b>Gini (2001)</b>	49.9 (high)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.846 (high) ( 48th)
<b>Currency</b>	Costa Rican colón ( CRC)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-6)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.cr
<b>Calling code</b>	+506



General map of Costa Rica.

Most Afro-Costa Ricans, who constitute about 3% of the country's population, descend from Jamaican immigrants who arrived during the 1880s to work in the construction of railways connecting the urban populations of the Central Plateau to the port of Limón on the Caribbean coast. U.S. convicts and Chinese immigrants also participated in the construction project, conducted by US businessman Minor C. Keith. In exchange for completing the railroad, the Costa Rican government granted Keith large tracts of land and a lease on the train route, which he used to produce bananas and export them to the United States. As a result, bananas came to rival coffee as the principal Costa Rican export, while foreign-owned corporations (including the United Fruit Company) began to hold a major role in the national economy.

Historically, Costa Rica has generally enjoyed greater peace and more consistent political stability compared with many of its fellow Latin American nations. Since the late nineteenth century, however, Costa Rica has experienced two significant periods of violence. In 1917-19, Federico Tinoco Granados ruled as a dictator until he was overthrown and forced into exile. Again in 1948, José Figueres Ferrer led an armed uprising in the wake of a disputed presidential election. With more than 2,000 dead, the resulting 44-day Costa Rica Civil War was the bloodiest event in Costa Rican history during the twentieth-century. Afterwards, the new, victorious

government junta, led by the opposition, abolished the military and oversaw the drafting of a new constitution by a democratically-elected assembly. Having enacted these reforms, the regime finally relinquished its power on 8 November 1949 to the new democratic government. After the coup d'etat, Figueres became a national hero, winning the country's first democratic election under the new constitution in 1953. Since then, Costa Rica has held 12 presidential elections, the latest being in 2006. All of them have been widely regarded by the international community as peaceful, transparent, and relatively smooth transitions.

## Geography



Costa Rica is located on the Central American isthmus, 10° North of the equator and 84° West of the Prime Meridian. It borders both the Caribbean Sea (to the east) and the North Pacific Ocean (to the west), with a total of 1,290 kilometers (802 mi) of coastline (212 km / 132 mi on the Caribbean coast and 1,016 km / 631 mi on the Pacific). It is about the size of West Virginia and shares that state's reputation for excellent whitewater kayaking/rafting opportunities.

Two of the country's most renowned rivers in that regard are the Rio Pacuare and the Rio Reventazon located near the city of Turrialba about two hours east of San Jose. Other notable whitewater areas are the Sarapiquí Valley area, several Pacific coast rivers near Quepos, and the southern Pacific drainage area around San Isidro de General.

Costa Rica also borders Nicaragua to the north (309 km / 192 mi of border) and Panama to the south-southeast (639 km / 397 mi of border). In total, Costa Rica comprises 51,100 square kilometers (19,730 sq. mi) plus 589,000 square kilometers of territorial waters.

The highest point in the country is Cerro Chirripó, at 3,810 metres (12,500 ft), and is the fifth highest peak in Central America. The highest volcano in the country is the Irazú Volcano (3,431 m / 11,257 ft). The largest lake in Costa Rica is Lake Arenal.

Costa Rica also comprises several islands. Cocos Island stands out because of its distance from continental landmass (24 km<sup>2</sup> / 9.25 sq mi, 500 km or 300 mi (480 km) from Puntarenas coast), but Calero Island is the largest island of the country (151.6 km<sup>2</sup> / 58.5 sq mi).

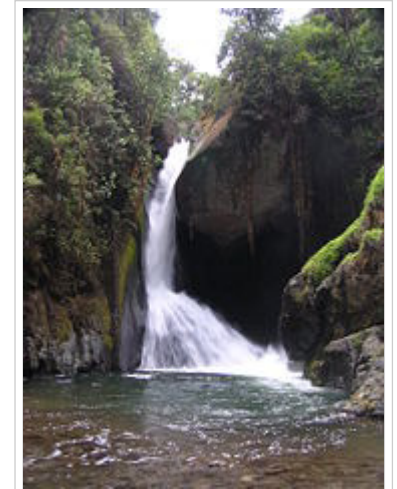
Costa Rica protects 23% of its national territory within the Protected Areas system. It also possesses the greatest density of species in the world.

## Politics

Costa Rica is a democratic republic with a strong constitution. Although there are claims that the country has had more than 115 years of uninterrupted democracy, their presidential election history shows otherwise (see List of Presidents of Costa Rica). Nonetheless, the country has had at least fifty-nine years of uninterrupted democracy, making it one of the most stable countries in the region. Costa Rica has been able to successfully avoid the widespread violence that has plagued most of Central America.

Costa Rica is a republic with three powers: executive responsibilities are vested in a president, legislative power is vested on the Legislative Assembly, and Judicial power is vested on the Supreme Court. There also are two vice presidents as well as a cabinet designated by the president. The president, vice presidents, and fifty-seven Legislative Assembly delegates are elected for four-year terms. A constitutional amendment approved in 1969 limited presidents and delegates to one term, although delegates were allowed to run again for an Assembly seat after sitting out a term.

The Supreme Electoral Body, the Office of the Comptroller General, the Office of the Procurator General of the Republic and the Office of the Ombudsman also enjoy a lot of independence.



On the Río Savegre, just below San Gerardo de Dota in the Talamanca Highlands of Costa Rica.





The Supreme Court is divided into 4 chambers, one dealing with Constitutional Law, one dealing with Criminal Law and two dealing with Civil Law, Merchant Law and the like.

In April 2003, the constitutional amendment ban on presidential re-election was reversed, allowing Óscar Arias (Nobel Peace Prize laureate, 1987) to run for President for a second term. In 2006, Óscar Arias was re-elected in a tight and highly contested election, running on a platform of promoting free trade. He took office on May 8, 2006.

Certain autonomous state agencies enjoy considerable operational independence; they include the telecommunications and electrical power monopoly, the nationalized commercial banks, the state insurance monopoly, and the social security agency. Costa Rica has no military by constitution.

## Provinces and cantons

Costa Rica is composed of seven provinces, which in turn are divided into 81 cantons ("cantón" in Spanish, plural "cantones"), each directed by a mayor. Mayors are chosen democratically every four years by each canton's people. There are no provincial legislatures.

1. Alajuela
2. Cartago
3. Guanacaste
4. Heredia
5. Limón
6. Puntarenas
7. San José



## Economy



According to the CIA World Factbook, Costa Rica's GDP per capita is US\$13,500 (2007 estimate); however, this developing country still faces the fourth highest inflation rate in Latin America, lack of maintenance and new investment in infrastructure, over 16% of the people were below the poverty line (2006 estimate) and a 5.5% unemployment rate (2007 estimate). The Costa Rican economy grew nearly 5% in 2006 after experiencing 4 years of slow economic growth.

The central government offers tax exemptions for those who are willing to invest in the country. Several global high tech corporations have already started developing in the area exporting goods including chip manufacturer Intel, pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline, and consumer products company Procter & Gamble. In 2006 Intel's microprocessor facility alone was responsible for 20% of Costa Rican exports and 4.9% of the country's GDP. Trade with South East Asia and Russia has boomed during 2004 and 2005, and the country is expected to obtain full Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) membership by 2007 (the country became an observer in 2004).



Intel microprocessor facility in Costa Rica is responsible for 20% of Costa Rican exports and 4.9% of the country's GDP.

For the fiscal year 2005, the country showed a government deficit of 2.1%, internal revenue increased an 18%, and exports increased a 12.8%. Revised economic figures released by the Central Bank indicate that economic growth stood at 5%, nevertheless the country faced high inflation (14%) and a trade deficit of 5.2%. As of 2007, Costa Rica's inflation rate stands at 9.30%, Latin Americas 4th highest inflation rate.

In recent times electronics, pharmaceuticals, financial outsourcing, software development, and ecotourism have become the prime industries in Costa Rica's economy. High levels of education among its residents make the country an attractive investing location.

The unit of currency is the colón ( CRC), which trades around 495 to the U.S. dollar; currently about 800 to the euro. On October 16, 2006, a new currency exchange system was introduced, allowing the value of the CRC colón to float between two bands as done previously by Chile. The idea is that by doing so the Central Bank will be able to better tackle inflation and discourage the use of US dollars. Since that time, the value of the colón against the dollar has stabilized.

Costa Rica's location provides easy access to American markets as it has the same time zone as the central part of the United States and direct ocean access to Europe and Asia. A country wide referendum has approved a free trade agreement with the United States. In the referendum on October 7, 2007, the voters of Costa Rica narrowly backed the free trade agreement, with 51.6 percent of "Yes" votes.

## Tourism



With a \$1.9-billion-a-year tourism industry, Costa Rica stands as the most visited nation in the Central American region, with 1.9 million foreign visitors in 2007, which translates into a relatively high expenditure per tourist of \$1000 per trip, and a rate of foreign tourists per capita of 0.46, one of the highest in the Caribbean Basin. Most of the tourists come from the U.S. and Canada (46%), and the E.U. (16%). In 2005, tourism contributed with 8.1% of the country's GNP and represented 13.3% of direct and indirect employment. Tourism now earns more foreign exchange than bananas and coffee combined.

Ecotourism is extremely popular with the many tourists visiting the extensive national parks and protected areas around the country. Costa Rica was a pioneer in this type of tourism and the country is recognized as one of the few with real ecotourism. In terms of 2008 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, Costa Rica reached the 44th place in the world ranking, being the first among Latin American countries. Just considering the subindex measuring human, cultural, and natural resources, Costa Rica ranks in the 24th place at a worldwide level, and ranks 7th when considering only the natural resources pillar.

## Foreign affairs

Costa Rica is an active member of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the United Nations University of Peace are based in Costa Rica. The Costa Rican State is also a member of many other international organizations related to human rights and democracy.

Costa Rica's main foreign policy objective is to foster human rights and sustainable development as a way to secure stability and growth.

Costa Rica is also a member of the International Criminal Court, without a Bilateral Immunity Agreement of protection for the US-military (as covered under Article 98).

Costa Rica also has had a lifelong battle with Nicaragua, its neighboring country over the San Juan River (rio San Juan) which denotes the border between these two countries; the disagreement originates from the fact that the river, being Nicaraguan soil, is the only way of access to several communities in Costa Rica which need to be served by armed Costa Rican police forces.

On June 1, 2007, Costa Rica broke ties with the Republic of China in Taiwan, switching to the People's Republic of China in mainland China.

## Flora and fauna



Poás Volcano Crater is one of the country's main tourist attractions.



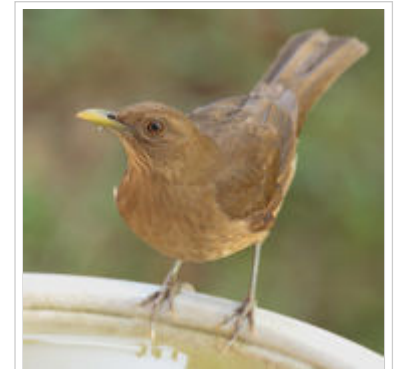
An aninga drying its feathers.

Costa Rica is home to a rich variety of plants and animals. While the country has only about 0.1% of the world's landmass, it contains 5% of the world's biodiversity. Around 25% of the country's land area is in protected national parks and protected areas, the largest percentual of protected areas in the world.

One national park that is internationally-renowned among ecologists for its biodiversity (including big cats and tapirs) and where visitors can expect to see an abundance of wildlife is the Corcovado National Park.

Tortuguero National Park – the name *Tortuguero* can be translated as "Full of Turtles" – is home to spider, howler and white-throated Capuchin monkeys, the three-toed sloth, 320 species of birds (including eight species of parrots), a variety of reptiles, but is mostly recognized for the annual nesting of the endangered green turtle and is considered the most important nesting site for this species. Giant leatherback, hawksbill, and loggerhead turtles also nest here.

The Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve is home to about 2,000 plant species, including numerous orchids. Over four hundred types of birds can be found here, and over one hundred species of mammals. As a whole, around eight hundred species of birds have been identified in Costa Rica. The Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad (INBIO) is allowed to collect royalties on any biological discoveries of medical importance.



The Clay-colored Robin is Costa Rica's national bird.

## Demographics

According to the CIA World Factbook, Costa Rica has a population of 4,133,884 of which 94% are white (including) Mestizo, 3% black, 1% Amerindian, 1% Chinese and 1% other. The exact amount, however, is not known because the Costa Rican census combines mestizos and whites in one category. The white population is primarily of Spanish ancestry with significant numbers of Costa Ricans of Italian, German, Jewish and Polish descent. In contrast to its neighboring countries' populations, less mixing of the Spanish settlers and the indigenous populations occurred. Therefore, a vast majority of Costa Ricans are either of Spanish or of mixed mestizo heritage.

Just under 3% of the population is of black African descent. The majority of the afro Costa Ricans are Creole English-speaking descendants of nineteenth century black Jamaican immigrant workers, as well as slaves who were brought during the Atlantic slave trade. The influential remainder of the population vary in ethnic groups from mulattoes who make up 5%.

The indigenous or Amerindian population numbers around 1%, or over 41,000 individuals. In the Guanacaste Province a significant portion of the population descends from a bi-racial mix of local Amerindians and Spaniards. There is also an expatriate community of people of all ages from the United States, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Britain, and other countries.



Costa Rica hosts many refugees, mainly from Colombia and Nicaragua. As a result, an estimated 10% to 15% of the Costa Rican population is made up of Nicaraguans, most of whom migrate for seasonal work opportunities and then return to their country. There is also a growing number of Peruvian refugees. Moreover, Costa Rica took in many refugees from a range of other Latin American countries fleeing civil wars and dictatorships during the 1970s and 80s - notably from Chile and Argentina, as well as those from El Salvador who fled from guerrillas and government death squads.

## Religion

Christianity is the predominant religion in Costa Rica, and Roman Catholicism is the official state religion as guaranteed by the Constitution of 1949. Some 92% of Costa Ricans are Christian and like many other parts of Latin America, Protestant denominations have been experiencing rapid growth. However, three in four Costa Ricans still adhere to Roman Catholicism.

Due to the recent small but continuous immigration of communities from Asia, the Middle East, and other places, other religions have grown, the most popular being Buddhism (because of an increasing Chinese community of 40,000), and smaller numbers of Jewish, Muslim, Bahá'í and Hindu adherents.

There is a Jewish synagogue, the B'nei Israel Congregation, in San José, near the La Sabana Metropolitan Park. Several homes in the neighbourhood east of La Sabana Metropolitan Park are festooned with the Star of David and other recognizable Jewish symbols.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has seen modest growth in Costa Rica in the last 40 years and has built one of only two temples in Central America in the San Antonio de Belen region of Heredia.

## Language

The only official language is Spanish. There are two main accents native to Costa Rica, the standard Costa Rican and the Nicoyan. The Nicoyan accent is very similar to the standard Nicaraguan accent due, in part, to its vicinity. A notable Costa Rican pronunciation difference includes a soft initial and double [r] phoneme that is not trilled as is normal in the Spanish speaking world.

Jamaican immigrants in the 19th Century brought with them a dialect of English that has evolved into the Mekatelyu creole dialect.

## Marriage

Because Roman Catholicism is the official state religion, only that church's marriages are legally recognized by the government. Any persons wishing to wed outside of the Catholic church must hire a lawyer who will perform and then register their civil wedding for them. Legal age for marriage in Costa Rica is 18. The age of consent is 15.

## Culture



Costa Ricans often refer to themselves as *tico* (masculine) or *tica* (feminine). "Tico" comes from the popular local usage of "tico" and "tica" as diminutive suffixes (e.g., "momentico" instead of "momentito"). The phrase "Pura Vida!" (approximately translatable to "This is living!", literal meaning "Pure Life!" as in "Distilled life!") is a ubiquitous motto in Costa Rica. Some youth use *mae*, a contraction of "maje" (*mae* means "guy/dude"), to refer to each other, although this might be perceived as insulting to those of an older generation; maje was a synonym for "tonto" (stupid).

Costa Rica boasts a varied history. Costa Rica was the point where the Mesoamerican and South American native cultures met. The northwest of the country, the Nicoya peninsula, was the southernmost point of Nahuatl cultural influence when the Spanish conquerors ( conquistadores) came in the sixteenth century. The centre and southern portions of the country had Chibcha influences.

The Atlantic coast, meanwhile, was populated with African workers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Most afro Costa Ricans, however, derive from nineteenth-century Jamaican workers, brought in to work on the construction of railroads between the urban populations of the Central Plateau and the port of Limon on the Caribbean coast. Italian and Chinese immigrants also arrived at this time to work on railroad construction.

## Music

Costa Rican popular music genres include: American and British rock and roll, pop and reggaeton are popular and common among the youth (especially urban youth) while dance-oriented genres like soca, salsa, bachata, merengue , cumbia and Costa Rican swing The guitar is a popular instrument especially as an accompaniment to Folk dances.

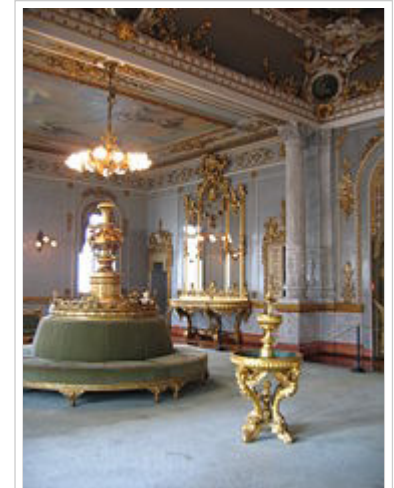
## Cuisine

See Costa Rican cuisine entry.

## Education

The literacy rate in Costa Rica is of 96% (CIA World Factbook, February 2007), one of the highest in Latin America. Elementary and high schools are found throughout the country in practically every community. Universal public education is guaranteed in the Constitution. Primary education is obligatory, and both preschool and high school are free. There are both state and private universities.

There are only a few schools in Costa Rica that go beyond the 12th grade. Those schools that finish at 11th grade receive a Costa Rican Bachillerato Diploma accredited by the Costa Rican Ministry of Education.



Inside of the Teatro Nacional de Costa Rica, the Costa Rican national theatre.



## Famous Costa Ricans

- Francisco Amighetti Painter.
- Óscar Arias Sánchez, Nobel Peace Prize winner (1987) and President of the Republic (1986–1990, 2006-current).
- Rafael Ángel Calderón Guardia, politician and social reformer. President of the Republic (1940–1944).
- Jose Maria Castro Madriz President, supreme court justice, university founder, newspaper founder.
- Franklin Chang-Díaz, Astronaut.
- José Figueres Ferrer, National caudillo and President of the Republic (1948–1949, 1953–1958, and 1970–1974).
- Joaquín Gutiérrez a famed writer.
- Clodomiro Picado Twight, Toxicologist.
- Claudia Poll Olympic gold medalist.
- Silvia Poll Olympic silver medalist.
- Juan Santamaría The official National Hero.

## International Rankings

Index (Year)	Author / Editor / Source	Year of publication	Countries sampled	World Ranking <sup>(1)</sup>	Ranking L.A. <sup>(2)</sup>
Environmental Performance (2008)	Yale University	2008	149	5	1
Human Poverty, HPI-1 (2005) <sup>(3)</sup>	United Nations (UNDP)	2007-08	108	5	4
Poverty below \$2 a day (1990-2005) <sup>(4)</sup>	United Nations (UNDP)	2007-08	71	8	3
Press Freedom (2007)	Reporters Without Borders	2007	169	21	1
Democracy (2006)	The Economist	2007	167	25	1
Global Peace (2008)	The Economist	2008	140	34	3
Quality-of-life (2005)	The Economist	2007	111	35	3
Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (2008)	World Economic Forum	2008	130	44	1
Human Development (2005)	United Nations (UNDP)	2007-08	177	48	4
Economic Freedom (2008)	The Wall Street Journal	2008	162	49	5
Corruption Perception (2006)	Transparency International	2007	163	55	3



Global Competitiveness (2007)	World Economic Forum	2007-08	131	63	4
Income inequality (1989-2007) <sup>(5)</sup>	United Nations (UNDP)	2007-2008	126	100	5

<sup>(1)</sup> Worldwide ranking among countries evaluated. See notes (3) and (4) also

<sup>(2)</sup> Ranking among the 20 Latin American countries.

<sup>(3)</sup> Ranking among 108 developing countries with available data only.

<sup>(4)</sup> Ranking among 71 developing countries with available data only. Countries in the sample surveyed between 1990-2005. Refers to population below income poverty line as defined by the World Bank's \$2 per day indicator

<sup>(5)</sup> Because the Gini coefficient used for the ranking corresponds to different years depending of the country, and the underlying household surveys differ in method and in the type of data collected, the distribution data are not strictly comparable across countries. The ranking therefore is only a proxy for reference purposes.

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# Cuba

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The **Republic of Cuba** (Spanish: *Cuba* or *República de Cuba* [reˈpuβlika ðe ˈkuβa]), consists of the island of Cuba (the largest and second-most populous island of the Greater Antilles), Isla de la Juventud and several adjacent small islands. Cuba is located in the northern Caribbean at the confluence of the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. Cuba is south of the eastern United States and The Bahamas, west of the Turks and Caicos Islands and Haiti and east of Mexico. The Cayman Islands and Jamaica are to the south. The national flower is *Hedychium Coronarium* Koenig, most known as "mariposa" (butterfly) and the national bird is "Tocororo" or "Cuban Trogon" from the family of Trogonidae.

Cuba is the most populous nation in the Caribbean. Its people, culture and customs draw from several sources including the aboriginal Taíno and Ciboney peoples, the period of Spanish colonialism, the introduction of African slaves, and its proximity to the United States. The island has a tropical climate that is moderated by the surrounding waters; however, the warm temperatures of the Caribbean Sea and the fact that the island of Cuba sits across the access to the Gulf of Mexico make Cuba prone to frequent hurricanes. Cuba's main island, at 766 miles long (1,232.5 km), is the world's 17th largest.

## History

<b><i>República de Cuba</i></b> <b>Republic of Cuba</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Patria o Muerte</i> (Spanish) "Fatherland or Death"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>La Bayamesa</i> ("The Bayamo Song")	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Havana
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	Spanish, French, Black, Taíno
<b>Demonym</b>	Cuban



<b>Government</b>	Socialist Republic <sup>b</sup>
- President of the Council of State	Fidel Castro
- Acting President of the Council of State	Raúl Castro
<b>Independence</b>	from Spain
- Declared <sup>c</sup>	October 10, 1868
- Republic declared	May 20, 1902
- Cuban Revolution	January 1, 1959
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	110,861 km <sup>2</sup> ( 105th) 42,803 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- 2006 estimate	11,382,820 ( 73rd)
- 2002 census	11,177,743
- Density	102/km <sup>2</sup> ( 97th) 264/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$46.22 billion (2006 est.) ( not ranked)
- Per capita	\$4,500 (2007 est.) ( not ranked)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	0.838 (high) ( 51st )
<b>Currency</b>	Cuban Peso ( CUP) Convertible peso <sup>d</sup> ( CUC)
<b>Time zone</b>	EST ( UTC-5)
- Summer ( DST)	(Starts March 11; ends November 4) ( UTC-4)



The recorded history of Cuba began on 12 October 1492, discovered when Christopher Columbus sighted the island during his first voyage of discovery and claimed it for Spain. Columbus named the island *Isla Juana* in reference to Prince Juan, the heir apparent. The island had been inhabited by Native American peoples known as the Taíno and Ciboney whose ancestors had come from South America and possibly North and Central America in a complex series of migrations at least several centuries before, and perhaps 6,000 to 8,000 years ago. The Taíno were farmers and the Ciboney (far more commonly written Siboney in neo-Taino nations) were both farmers and hunter-gatherers; some have suggested that copper trade was significant and mainland artifacts have been found in proximal Taíno cultures.

The coast of Cuba was fully mapped by Sebastián de Ocampo in 1511, and in that year the first Spanish settlement was founded by Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar at Baracoa. Other towns including the future capital of the island San Cristobal de la Habana (founded in 1515) soon followed. The Spanish, as they did throughout the Americas, oppressed and enslaved the approximately 100,000 indigenous people that resisted conversion to Christianity on the island. Within a century they had all but disappeared as a distinct nation as a result of the combined effects of European-introduced disease, forced labor and other mistreatment, though aspects of the region's aboriginal heritage has survived in part via the rise of a significant Mestizo population. With destruction of aboriginal society, the settlers began to exploit African slaves, with more resistance to the diseases from the Old World, and who soon made up a significant proportion of the inhabitants.

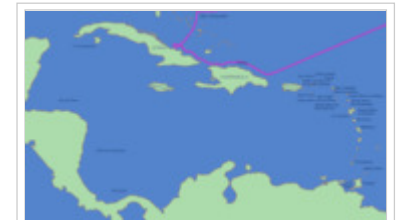
## Colonial Cuba

Cuba was in Spanish possession for almost 400 years (circa 1511-1898). Its economy was based on plantation agriculture, mining and the export of sugar, coffee and tobacco to Europe and later to North America. Havana was seized by the British in 1762, but restored to Spain the following year. The Spanish population was boosted by settlers leaving Haiti when that territory was ceded to France. As in other parts of the Spanish Empire, the small land-owning elite of Spanish-descended settlers held social and economic power, supported by a population of Spaniards born on the island and called Criollos by the Iberian born Spaniards, other Europeans and African-descended slaves.

In the 1820s, when the other parts of Spain's empire in Latin America rebelled and formed independent states, Cuba remained loyal, although there was some agitation for independence. Due to its loyalty to the Spanish government, the Spanish Crown gave the following motto to the island government "La Siempre Fidelisima Isla" (The Always Faithful Island) This was partly because the prosperity of the Cuban settlers depended on trade with Europe, partly through fears of a slave rebellion (as had happened in Haiti) if the Spanish withdrew, and partly because the Cubans feared the rising power of the United States more than they disliked Spanish rule.

An additional factor was the continuous migration of Spaniards to Cuba from all social strata, a demographic trend that had ceased in other Spanish possessions decades before and which contributed to the slow development of a Cuban national identity. Pirates were also still a problem and defense against them

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<p><sup>a</sup> As shown on the obverse of the 1992 coin (Note that the Spanish words "Ka Patria" feminine in Spanish is translated into English as either "Cradle" or "Place of Birth" or "Homeland.")</p> <p><sup>b</sup> states that "<i>Cuba is an independent and sovereign socialist state [Article 1]... the name of the Cuban state is Republic of Cuba [Article 2].</i>" The usage "socialist republic" to describe the style of government of Cuba is nearly uniform, though forms of government have no universally agreed typology. For example, Atlapedia describes it as "Unitary Socialist Republic"; Encyclopædia Britannica omits the word "unitary," as do most sources.</p> <p><sup>c</sup> At the start of the Ten Years' War.</p> <p><sup>d</sup> From 1993 to 2004, the U.S. dollar was used in addition to the peso until the dollar was replaced by the convertible peso.</p>	



The first voyage of Columbus



depended heavily on the presence of Spanish troops.

Cuba's proximity to the U.S. has been a powerful influence on its history. Throughout the 19th century, Southern politicians in the U.S. plotted the island's annexation as a means of strengthening the pro-slavery forces in the U.S., and there was usually a party in Cuba which supported such a policy. In 1848, a pro-annexations rebellion was defeated and there were several attempts by annexationist forces to invade the island from Florida. There were also regular proposals in the U.S. to buy Cuba from Spain. During the summer of 1848, President James K. Polk quietly authorized his ambassador to Spain, Romulus Mitchell Saunders, to negotiate the purchase of Cuba and offer Spain up to \$100 million. While an astonishing sum of money at the time for one territory, trade in sugar and molasses from Cuba exceeded \$18,000,000 in 1838 alone. Spain, however, refused to consider ceding one of its last possessions in the Americas.



Castillo de los Tres Reyes del Morro (Morro Castle (fortress), built in 1589 to guard the eastern entrance to Havana bay).

After the American Civil War apparently ended the threat of pro-slavery annexation, agitation for Cuban independence from Spain revived, leading to a rebellion in 1868 led by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, a wealthy lawyer landowner from Oriente province who freed his slaves, proclaimed a war and was named President of the Cuban Republic-in-arms. This resulted in a prolonged conflict known as the Ten Years' War between pro-independence forces and the Spanish Army, allied with local supporters. There was much sympathy in the U.S. for the independence cause, but the U.S. declined to intervene militarily or to even recognize the legitimacy of the Cuban government in arms, despite the fact that many European and Latin American nations had done so. In 1878, the Pact of Zanjón ended the conflict, with Spain promising greater autonomy to Cuba.

The island was exhausted after this long conflict and pro-independence agitation temporarily died down. There was also a prevalent fear that if the Spanish withdrew or if there was further civil strife, the increasingly expansionist U.S. would step in and annex the island. In 1879-1880, Cuban patriot Calixto Garcia attempted to start another war, known in Cuban history as the Little War but received little support. Partly in response to U.S. pressure, slavery was abolished in 1886, although the African-descended minority remained socially and economically oppressed, despite

formal civic equality granted in 1893. During this period, the rural poverty in Spain provoked by the Spanish Revolution of 1868 and its aftermath led to an even greater Spanish emigration to Cuba.

During the 1890s, pro-independence agitation revived, fueled by resentment of the restrictions imposed on Cuban trade by Spain and hostility to Spain's increasingly oppressive and incompetent administration of Cuba. Few of the promises for economic reform made by the Spanish government in the Pact of Zanjón were kept. In April 1895, a new war was declared, led by the writer and poet José Martí who had organized the war over a ten year period while in exile in the U.S. and proclaimed Cuba an independent republic — Martí was killed at Dos Rios shortly after landing in Cuba with the eastern expeditionary force. His death immortalized him and he has become Cuba's undisputed national hero.

The Spanish armed forces totaled about 200,000 troops against a much smaller rebel army which relied mostly on guerilla and sabotage tactics to fight battles, and the Spaniards retaliated with a campaign of suppression. General Valeriano Weyler was appointed military governor of Cuba, and as a repressive measure he herded the rural population into what he called *reconcentrados*, described by international observers as "fortified towns." These reconcentrados are often considered the prototype for the 20th century concentration camps. Between 200,000 and 400,000 Cuban civilians died from starvation and disease during this period in the camps. These numbers were verified by both the Red Cross and U.S. Senator (and former Secretary of War) Redfield Proctor. U.S. and European



protests against Spanish conduct on the island followed..

Military events of consequence include the break out to the western provinces "La Invasion", and the taking of the fort complexes at Tunas and Guisa.

In 1897, fearing U.S. intervention, Spain moved to a more conciliatory policy, promising home rule with an elected legislature. The rebels rejected this offer and the war for independence continued.

## **The *Maine* incident**

The U.S. battleship *Maine*, the largest Navy ship built in an American shipyard to date, arrived in Havana on January 25, 1898. The Spanish and their Cuban supporters saw the uninvited arrival of the *Maine* as intimidation, though McKinley claimed it was to offer protection to the 8,000 American residents in the island.

On 15 February the *Maine* was blown up in Havana harbour, killing 266 men. Forces in the U.S. blamed the Spanish for blowing up the *Maine*.

Those skeptical of the U.S. accusations were suspicious because the most important officers were at a party on shore. There were 81 foreigners and 82 black seamen among the 25 officers and 318 enlisted killed.

An investigative commission arrived in Havana on February 21 aboard USS *Mangrove* where Judge Advocate of the Navy Adolf Marix reported the ship had been sunk by a mine placed underneath the ship by a diver named Pepe "Taco" Barquin. Marix reported Pepe "Taco" Barquin had been offered \$6,000 and was killed the day after. Another diver was killed by guards and another wounded and jailed on the night of the explosion. The one in jail (his arrest was recorded in Regla's official documents), Marix reported, was being poisoned by the Spanish authorities.

A Naval Court of inquiry found on March 22, 1898, after physical examination of the ship, "In the opinion of the court, the MAINE was destroyed by the explosion of a submarine mine, which caused the partial explosion of two or more of her forward magazines." Although the court also concluded, "The court has been unable to obtain evidence fixing the responsibility for the destruction of the MAINE upon any person or persons.", the inference was widely drawn that if there was a submarine mine, the Spanish government had most probably caused that mine to be laid. Swept along on a wave of nationalist sentiment, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution calling for intervention and President William McKinley was quick to comply.

According to a letter from Brigadier Freyre de Andrade, the chief planners were Garcia Corujedo, Villasuso, Maribona and other Freemason businessmen, associated with gun runner Maximo Gomez and New York politician Astor Chandler, a friend of Theodore Roosevelt.

Commonly authors find the matter far less definitive and assignment of guilt far less clear. McMorrow, states: "Thus, the conclusion that the explosion which destroyed the ship was triggered by an external blast, as reached by both the Sampson and Vreeland inquiries, seems to be a valid one. Having reached that same conclusion, we still don't know what actually caused the blast. Was the MAINE destroyed by a Spanish mine, as so many believed in 1898, by sabotage, or by some kind of infernal machine?"



## Independence

Theodore Roosevelt, who had fought in the Spanish-American War and had some sympathies with the independence movement, succeeded McKinley as President of the United States in 1901 and abandoned the 20-year treaty proposal. Instead, the Republic of Cuba gained formal independence on 20 May 1902, with the independence leader Tomás Estrada Palma becoming the country's first president. Under the new Cuban constitution, however, the U.S. retained the right to intervene in Cuban affairs and to supervise its finances and foreign relations. Under the Platt Amendment, Cuba also agreed to lease to the U.S. the naval base at Guantánamo Bay. Cuba today does not celebrate May 20 as their date of independence, but instead October 10, as the first declaration of independence, May 1 international (but not US) labor day, and also July 26, the date of Castro's first attack on Moncada Barracks

In 1906, following disputed elections, an armed revolt led by Independence War Veterans broke out and that defeated the meager government forces loyal to Estrada Palma and the U.S. exercised its right of intervention. The country was placed under U.S. occupation and a U.S. governor, Charles Edward Magoon, took charge for three years. Magoon's governorship in Cuba was viewed in a negative light by many Cuban historians for years thereafter, believing that much political corruption was introduced during Magoon's years as governor. In 1908, self-government was restored when José Miguel Gómez was elected President, but the U.S. retained its supervision of Cuban affairs.

## 1912 Race War

In 1912 Partido Independiente de Colour attempted to establish a separate black republic in Oriente Province. Perhaps because the group lacked sufficient weaponry the main tactic was to set businesses and private residences on fire. The movement was a failure and General Monteagudo suppressed the rebels with considerable bloodshed. Historians differ on the interpretation of this circumstance, some view it as suppression of Black rights, others as an attempt at racial cleansing and secession on part of the Black activists.

## World War I

Cuban pilots distinguished themselves fighting for France in the Lafayette Escadrille . Cuba shipped considerable sugar to England, via smuggling strategy which avoided U-boat attack by the subterfuge of shipping sugar to Sweden (this operation was managed by Cuban Ambassador Carlos Garcia Velez, General Calixto Garcia's eldest surviving son). During the unsuccessful revolt against the Menocal government in 1917, the government attributed this in part to pro-German sentiment on part of the "Liberales." However, this was not proven to most historians satisfaction. The Menocal government declared war on Germany very soon after the U.S. did, and as a result the Mexican government broke off relations with Cuba.

## After World War I

Despite frequent outbreaks of disorder, however, constitutional government was maintained until 1930, when Gerardo Machado y Morales suspended the constitution.



Machado's government had considerable local support despite its violent suppression of critics. However, it was during this period that Soviet intrusion into Cuban affairs began with the arrival in Cuba of Fabio Grobart. During Machado's tenure, a nationalistic economic program was pursued with several major national development projects being undertaken (see Infrastructure of Cuba. Carretera Central and El Capitolio).

Machado's hold on power was weakened following a decline in the demand for exported agricultural produce due to the Great Depression, the attacks first by War of Independence Veterans, and later by covert terrorist organizations principally the ABC

During a general strike in which the communist party took the side of Machado the Senior elements of the Cuban army forced Machado into exile and installed Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, son of Cuba's founding father, as President. In September, 4th-5th (1933) however, a second coup (led by sergeants, most notably Fulgencio Batista, overthrew Céspedes leading to the formation of the first Ramón Grau San Martín government.) Notable bloody events in this violent period include the separate sieges of Hotel Nacional and Atares Castle (see Blas Hernandez). This government lasted just 100 days, but engineered radical socialistic changes in Cuban society and a rejection of the Platt amendment.

In 1934, Batista and the army, who were the real centre of power in Cuba, replaced Grau with Carlos Mendieta y Montefur. In 1940, Batista decided to run for President himself. Because of a split with the leader of the opposition, Ramón Grau San Martín, Batista turned instead to the Communist Party of Cuba, which had grown in size and influence during the 1930s.

### **Batista's control ends with democratic rule**

With the support of the Communist-controlled labor unions, Batista was elected President and his administration carried out major social reforms. Several members of the Communist Party held office under his administration. Batista's administration formally took Cuba into World War II as a U.S. ally, declaring war on Japan on December 9, 1941, then on Germany and Italy on December 11, 1941; Cuba, however, did not significantly participate militarily in World War II hostilities. At the end of his term in 1944, in accordance with the constitution, Batista stepped down and Ramón Grau was elected to succeed him. Grau initiated increased government spending on health, education and housing. Grau's auténticos were bitter enemies of the Communists and Batista, which opposed most of Grau's programs.

### **World War II**

While Cuba, although supplying vast quantities of sugar, and strategic manganese metal, was not greatly involved in combat during WWII; although, U.S. air bases were established, Cuban freighters were sunk, a German spy was discovered and executed, and a German submarine was sunk by the Cuban Navy. During WWII the Nazis counterfeited vast sums of U.S. currency which was sent via the Dozenberg group to Cuba and other parts of Latin America; Soviet directions to the Cuban communist party, seem to have been sent via radio from Switzerland by the Alexander Foote Network



Great Theatre of Havana, Garcia Lorca



## After World War II

Grau completed his presidential term. In 1948, Grau was succeeded by Carlos Prío Socarrás, who had been Grau's minister of labor and was particularly hated by the Communists. Corruption is generally believed to have increased notably under Prío's administration; however not all accusations of corruption were proven, and Eduardo Chibás, leader of the Ortodoxo party to which Fidel Castro belonged, committed suicide when his allegations were not substantiated. Corruption is partially attributed to the influx of gambling money into Havana, which became a safe haven for mafia operations. Prío carried out major reforms such as founding a National Bank and stabilizing the Cuban currency. The influx of investment fueled a boom which did much to raise living standards across the board and create a prosperous middle class in most urban areas, although the gap between rich and poor became wider and more obvious.

## From Batista to Castro



Bullet riddled truck used in the attack on the Presidential Palace in Havana by the Directorio Revolucionario and the Organizacion Autentica in 1957

The 1952 election was a three-way race. Roberto Agramonte of the Ortodoxos party led in all the polls, followed by Dr. Aurelio Hevia of the Auténtico party, and running a distant third was Batista, who was seeking a return to office. Both front runners, Agramonte and Hevia in their own camps, had decided to name Col. Ramon Barquin, then a diplomat in Washington, DC to head the Cuban Armed Forces after the elections. Barquin was a top officer who commanded the respect of the professional army and had promised to eliminate corruption in the ranks. Batista feared that Barquin would oust him and his followers, and when it became apparent that Batista had little chance of winning, he staged a coup on 10 March 1952 and held power with the backing of a nationalist section of the army as a “provisional president” for the next two years. Justo Carrillo told Barquin in Washington in March 1952 that the inner circles knew that Batista had aimed the coup at him; they immediately began to conspire to oust Batista and restore democracy and civilian government in what was later dubbed La Conspiracion de los Puros de 1956 (Agrupacion Montecristi). In 1954, under pressure from the U.S., Batista agreed to elections. The Partido Auténtico put forward ex-President Grau as their candidate, but he withdrew amid allegations that Batista was rigging the elections in advance. Batista could then claim to be an elected President.

Fidel Castro directed a failed assault on the Moncada Barracks, in Santiago de Cuba, and on the smaller Carlos Manuel de Cespedes Barracks and on the Feast of Saint Ann July 26, 1953..

In April 1956, Batista had given the orders for Barquin to become General and Chief of the Army. But it was too late. Even after Barquin was informed, he decided to move forward with the coup to rescue the morale of the Armed Forces and the Cuban people. On April 4, 1956, a coup by hundreds of career officers led by Col. Barquin (then Vice Chairman of the Inter-American Defense Board in Washington and Cuban Military Attaché of Sea, Air and Land to the US) was frustrated by Rios Morejon. The coup broke the backbone of the Cuban Armed Forces. The officers were sentenced to the maximum terms allowed by Cuban Martial Law. Barquin was sentenced to solitary confinement for 8 years. La Conspiración de los Puros resulted in the imprisonment of the top commanding brass of the Armed Forces and the closing of the military academies. Barquin was the founder of La Escuela Superior de Guerra (Cuba's War College) and past director of La Escuela de Cadetes (Cuba's Military Academy). Without Barquin's officers the army's ability to combat the revolutionary insurgents was severely curtailed.





On 2 December 1956 a party of 82 revolutionaries, led by Castro, landed in a yacht named Granma with the intention of establishing an armed resistance movement in the Sierra Maestra. The yacht had come from Mexico, where Castro had been exiled to, and where his army was strengthened with the help of Ernesto Che Guevara, who later became one of the most important people in the Cuban revolution and one of Castro's closest allies. Castro had gone to Mexico after serving only two years of a twenty year prison sentence for his part in a 1953 rebel attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba. . Castro received his pardon from Batista after being requested by the Archbishop of Santiago, Monseñor Enrique Perez Serantes and Senator Rafael Diaz-Balart, at the time Fidel Castro's brother-in-law. After the landing, Batista launched a campaign of repression against the opposition, which only served to increase support for the insurgency. With Barquin's professional officers in La Prision Modelo de Isla de Pinos in the Gulf of Mexico, the Army lacked the leadership and will to fight the insurgents.

Through 1957 and 1958, opposition to Batista grew, especially among the upper and middle classes and the students, among the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and in many rural areas. In response to Batista's plea to purchase better arms from the U.S. in order to root out the insurgents in the mountains, the United States government imposed an arms embargo on the Cuban government on March 14, 1958. By late 1958, the rebels had succeeded in breaking out of the Sierra Maestra and launched a general insurrection, joined by hundreds of students and others fleeing Batista's crackdown on dissent in the cities. When the rebels captured Santa Clara, east of Havana, Batista decided the struggle was futile and fled the country to exile in Portugal and later Spain. Batista named Gen. Eulogio Cantillo Chief of the Army and gave him instructions not to release Barquin and his officers. Nevertheless, Barquin, who had the backing of the US, was rescued from Isla de Pinos in the early hours and taken to Campamento Ciudad Militar Columbia where he relieved Cantillo and assumed the post of Chief of Staff (serving as Chief of the Armed Forces and de facto president of Cuba for a short period of time) in an effort to establish order in the streets and the Armed Forces. He negotiated the symbolic change of command between Camilo Cienfuegos, Che Guevara, Raul and Fidel Castro, after the Supreme Court decided that the Revolution was the source of law and its representative should assume command. With less than 300 men Camilo assumed the post from Barquin who in Columbia alone commanded 12,000 professional soldiers. Castro's rebel forces entered the capital on January 8, 1959. Shortly after Dr. Manuel Lleo Urrutia assumed power.



Presidential Palace in Havana, now the Museum of the Revolution

## Cuba following revolution

Fidel Castro became Prime Minister of Cuba in February 1959. In its first year in power, the new revolutionary government carried out measures such as the expropriation of private property with no or minimal compensation (sometimes based on property tax valuations that the owners themselves had kept artificially low), the nationalization of public utilities, and began a campaign to institute tighter controls on the private sector such as the closing down of the gambling industry. The government also evicted many Americans, including mobsters (who, in collaboration with Batista, ran the gambling casinos in Havana) from the island. Some of these measures were undertaken by Fidel Castro's government in the name of the program that he had outlined in the Manifesto of the Sierra Maestra, while in the Sierra Maestra. However, he failed to enact one element of his reform program, which was to call elections under the Electoral Code of 1943 within the first 18 months of his time in power and to restore all of the provisions of the Constitution of 1940 that had been suspended under Batista.



Castro flew to Washington, DC in April 1959, but was not met by President Eisenhower, who decided to attend a golf tournament rather than meet with the Cuban leader. Castro returned to Cuba after a series of meetings with African-American leaders in New York's Harlem district, and after a lecture on "Cuba and the United States" delivered at the headquarters of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Summary executions of thousands of suspected Batista supporters and members of the opposition through the "paredones" that took place after show trials, coupled with the seizure of privately-owned businesses and the rapid demise of the independent press, nominally attributed to the powerful pro-revolution printing unions, raised questions about the nature of the new government.

The nationalization of private property and businesses, totaling about \$25 billion U.S. dollars ) and, particularly, U.S.-owned companies (to an excess of 1960 value of US \$1.0 billions ) aroused immediate hostility within the Eisenhower administration. Anti-Castro Cubans began to leave their country in great numbers and formed a burgeoning expatriate community in Miami that was opposed to the Castro government.

The United States government became increasingly hostile towards the Castro-led government of Cuba throughout 1959. Some contend that this, in turn, may have influenced Castro's movement away from the liberal elements of his revolutionary movement and increase the power of hardline Marxist figures in the government, notably Che Guevara.

This theory is open to debate and has been attacked in various publications which have argued that Castro undertook the Revolution with the goal of turning Cuba towards socialism.

## Marxist-Leninist Cuba

One immediate strategic result of the Cuban-Soviet alliance was the decision to place Soviet medium range ballistic missiles ( MRBMs) and intermediate range ballistic missiles ( IRBMs) in Cuba. This precipitated the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, during which the Kennedy administration threatened the Soviet Union with nuclear war unless the missiles were withdrawn. The idea to place missiles in Cuba was brought up either by Castro or Khrushchev, but agreed by the USSR for the reason that the U.S. had their nuclear missiles placed in Turkey and the Middle East, thus directly threatening USSR security. With minutes to go until the Soviet ships carrying a further shipment of missiles reached a US naval blockade, the Soviets backed down, and made an agreement with Kennedy. All the missiles were to be withdrawn from Cuba, but at the same time the US was to move its missiles from Turkey and elsewhere in the Middle East. Kennedy however couldn't lose face by doing this immediately, but made an assurance to withdraw the US missiles within a couple of months.

Another result was that Kennedy agreed not to invade Cuba in the future. In the aftermath of this, there was a resumption of contacts between the U.S. and Castro, resulting in the release of the anti-Castro fighters captured at the Bay of Pigs to the US in exchange for a package of aid. However in 1963 relations deteriorated again as Castro moved Cuba towards a fully-fledged Communist system modeled on the Soviet Union.. The U.S. imposed a complete diplomatic and commercial embargo on Cuba, and began Operation Mongoose. In the beginning, U.S. influence in Latin America was strong enough to make the embargo very effective and Cuba was forced to



A so-called 'yank tank', one of the many remaining U.S.-made cars in Cuba, imported prior to the United States embargo against Cuba.



divert virtually all its trade towards the Soviet Union and its allies. However, public declarations of support from Latin American governments for the USA's policies were harder to come by. The Mexican ambassador to the US told the Kennedy administration: *If we publicly declare that Cuba is a threat to our security, forty million Mexicans will die laughing.*"

In 1965, Castro merged his revolutionary organizations with the Communist Party, of which he became First Secretary, with Blas Roca as Second Secretary; later to be succeeded by Raúl Castro, who as Defense Minister and Fidel's closest confidant became and has remained the second most powerful figure in the government. Raúl Castro's position was strengthened by the departure of Che Guevara to launch unsuccessful attempts at insurrectionary movements in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and then Bolivia, where he was killed in 1967. Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, President of Cuba from 1959 to 1976, was a figurehead of little importance. Castro introduced a new constitution in 1976 under which he became President himself, while remaining chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Although Cuba's relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated considerably during the mid 1960s, relations between the two countries improved following the Cuban government's endorsement of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. As a result, the Soviet Union increased its aid to Cuba. Indeed, through the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviets were prepared to subsidise all this in exchange for the strategic asset of an ally under the nose of the United States and the undoubted propaganda value of Castro's considerable prestige in the developing world.

During the 1970s, Castro moved onto the world stage as a leading spokesperson for Third World "anti-imperialist" governments. He provided invaluable military assistance to pro-Soviet forces in Angola (see Cuba in Angola), Ethiopia, Yemen and other African and Middle Eastern trouble spots. Cuban forces were decisive in helping the MPLA forces win the Angolan Civil War in 1975. Although the bills for these expeditionary forces were paid by the Soviets, the significant size of the force placed a considerable strain on Cuba's fragile economy, which was adversely affected by the loss of manpower. Cuba's economic growth was also hampered by its dependence on sugar exports, which forced the Soviets to provide further economic assistance by buying the entire Cuban sugar crop, even though domestic producers in the Soviet Union grew enough sugar beet to supply domestic demand. In exchange the Soviets had to supply Cuba with all its fuel, since it could not import oil from any other source.

Image:Castrotrudeau.jpg  
Fidel Castro and Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau join together in song, January 1976.

By the 1970s, the ability of the U.S. to keep Cuba isolated was declining. Cuba had been expelled from the Organization of American States in 1962 and the OAS had cooperated with the U.S. trade boycott for the next decade, but, in 1975, the OAS lifted all sanctions against Cuba and both Mexico and Canada broke ranks with the U.S. by developing closer relations with Cuba. Both countries said that they hoped to foster liberalization in Cuba by allowing trade, cultural and diplomatic contacts to resume — in this they were disappointed, since there was no appreciable easing of repression against domestic opposition. Castro did stop openly supporting insurrectionary movements against Latin American governments, although pro-Castro groups continued to fight the military dictatorships which then controlled most Latin American countries.

The Cuban exile community in the U.S. grew in size, wealth and power and politicized elements effectively opposed liberalization of U.S. policy towards Cuba, and have been accused of many terrorist acts, including the bombing of civilian Cubana flight 455 in 1976, resulting in the death of all 73 passengers. However, the efforts of the exiles to foment an anti-Castro movement inside Cuba, let alone a revolution there, met with limited success. On Sunday, April 6, 1980, 10,000 Cubans stormed the Peruvian embassy in Havana seeking political asylum. On Monday, April 7, the Cuban government granted permission for the emigration of Cubans seeking refuge in the Peruvian embassy. On April 16 500 Cuban citizens left the Peruvian Embassy for Costa Rica. On April 21 many of



those Cubans started arriving in Miami via private boats and were halted by the US State Department on April 23. The boat lift continued, however, since Castro allowed anyone who desired to leave the country to do so through the port of Mariel and this emigration became known as the Mariel boatlift. In all, over 125,000 Cubans emigrated to the United States before the flow of vessels ended on June 15.

## Post-Cold War Cuba

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 dealt Cuba a giant economic blow. It led to another unregulated exodus of asylum seekers to the United States in 1994, but was eventually slowed to a trickle of a few thousand a year by the U.S.-Cuban accords. It again increased in 2004-06 although at a far slower rate than before.

Castro's popularity, which is difficult to assess, was severely tested by the aftermath of the Soviet collapse (a time known in Cuba as the *Special Period*). The loss of the nearly five billion USD that the Soviet government provided the Cuban government in aid in the form of a guaranteed export market for Cuban sugar and cheap oil had a significant impact on the country's economy.

As in all Communist countries, the collapse of the Soviet Union caused a crisis in confidence for those who believed that the Soviet Union was successfully "building socialism" and providing a model that other countries should follow. However, this event, even combined with a tightening of the embargo by the US government, was insufficient to persuade Cuba's Communists to surrender their grip on power. There were numerous popular uprisings in the early 1990s, the most notable of which was the "Maleconazo" of 1994.

By the later 1990s the situation in the country had stabilized. By then Cuba had more or less normal economic relations with most Latin American countries and had improved relations with the European Union, which began providing aid and loans to the island. Communist China also emerged as a new source of aid and support, even though Cuba had sided with the Soviets during the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s. Cuba also found new allies in President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and President Evo Morales of Bolivia, both major oil and gas exporters.

## Transfer of duties

On July 31, 2006, Fidel Castro delegated his duties as President of the Council of state, President of the Council of Ministers, First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party and the post of commander in chief of the armed forces to his brother and First Vice President, Raúl Castro. This transfer of duties has been described as temporary while Fidel Castro recovers from surgery undergone after suffering from an "acute intestinal crisis with sustained bleeding". Fidel Castro was too ill to attend the nationwide commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Granma boat landing on December 2, 2006, which fueled speculations that Castro had stomach cancer, though Spanish doctor Dr. García Sabrido stated that his illness was a digestive problem and not terminal, after an examination of the subject on Christmas Day.

On January 31, 2007, footage of Castro meeting with Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez was broadcast, where, according to international media reports, Castro



Cuban farmers, 1989



"appeared frail but stronger than three months ago", and the Cuban leader made a lengthy surprise appearance by phone on Chávez's radio talk show *Aló Presidente* the following month. Though Castro loyalists in the Cuban government have maintained that he will stand in the 2008 elections to the Cuban National Assembly, speculation has continued as to whether he will ever return to power. Recent requests for mass donations of copper ornaments are interpreted by some to suggest support for persistent rumors that massive memorial statues are being prepared.

Some public discussions of the future among Cuban government officials have been published.

## Government and politics

### Domestic Politics

Following the **enactment** of the Socialist Constitution of 1976, which was adopted without following the procedures laid out in the Constitution of 1940, the Republic of Cuba was defined as a socialist republic. This constitution was replaced by the Socialist Constitution of 1992, the present constitution, which claimed to be guided by the ideas of José Martí, and the political ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin. The present constitution also ascribes the role of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) to be the "leading force of society and of the state." Members of both councils are elected by the National Assembly of People's Power. The President of Cuba, who is also elected by the Assembly, serves for a five-year term and there is no limit to the number of terms of office. Fidel Castro has been in government since the adoption of the Constitution in 1976 when he replaced Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado. The Supreme Court of Cuba serves as the nation's highest judicial branch of government. It is also the court of last resort for all appeals from convictions in provincial courts.

Cuba's national legislature, the National Assembly of People's Power (*Asamblea Nacional de Poder Popular*), is the supreme organ of State power and has 609 members who serve five-year terms. The assembly meets twice a year, between sessions legislative power is held by the 31 member Council of Ministers. Candidates for the Assembly are approved by public referendum. All Cuban citizens over sixteen years of age who have not been found guilty of a criminal offense can vote. Article 131 of the Constitution states that voting shall be "through free, equal and secret vote". Article 136 states: "In order for deputies or delegates to be considered elected they must get more than half the number of valid votes cast in the electoral districts". Votes are cast by secret ballot and are counted in public view. Individual vote totals, which are invariably high, are not verified by non-partisan, independent, or non-state organs and observers. Nominees are chosen at local gatherings from multiple candidates before gaining approval from election committees. In the subsequent election, there is just one candidate for each seat, who must gain a majority to be elected.

No political party is permitted to nominate candidates or campaign on the island, though the Communist Party of Cuba has held five party congress meetings since 1975. In 1997, the party claimed 780,000 members, and representatives generally constitute at least half of the Councils of state and the National Assembly. The remaining positions are filled by candidates nominally without party affiliation. Other political parties campaign and raise finances internationally, whilst activity within Cuba by oppositional groups is minimal and illegal. While the Cuban constitution has language pertaining to freedom of



Revolution Square: José Martí Monument designed by Enrique Luis Varela, sculpture by Juan José Sicre and finished in 1958.



speech, rights are limited by Article 62, which states that "None of the freedoms which are recognized for citizens can be exercised contrary to... the existence and objectives of the socialist state, or contrary to the decision of the Cuban people to build socialism and communism . Violations of this principle can be punished by law." Because the means of production are in the hands of the state and under the control of the government, there have been numerous cases where violations of this law have cost dissidents their employment.

For the above conditions, opponents of the present Cuban government sustain Cuban elections are neither free nor fair.

Members of the Communist Party Cubans participate in the community-based Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, which play a central role in daily life. These groups are designed to coordinate public projects, ensure that the population remains loyal to the government's specific brand of socialism, and act as neighbourhood watchdogs against " counter-revolutionary" activities.

The Cuban Communist Party has not openly held its statutorily required Congress for ten years, which is at least five years overdue. It is not expected that one will be held until either Fidel Castro recovers or an open public and permanent successor is named

## Cuba's Foreign Relations

### Cuba-United States relations

Since Cuba became a declared socialist republic in 1961, the United States Government has initiated various policy measures against Cuba's government, applying standards on Cuba which some believe it did not apply to countries with arguably equally poor human rights records. These measures have had a considerable political and economic effect on the island; these have variously been designed to encourage Cubans to remove the leadership and to undertake political change towards liberal democracy. The most significant of these measures was the United States embargo against Cuba and the subsequent Helms-Burton Act of 1996. The US government, its supporters and other observers contend that the Cuban government does not meet the minimal standards of a democracy, especially through its lack of multi-party contests for seats and the limitations on free speech that limit a candidate's ability to campaign. The Cuban government, its supporters and other observers within and outside Cuba argue that Cuba has a form of democracy, citing the extensive participation in the nomination process at the national and municipal level.

The US government has budgeted \$39 million in 2008 for "broadcasting to Cuba".

In 2000, the Trade Sanctions Reform and Enhancement Act allowed for exports directly from the United States to Cuba in the areas of food and medical products. Highly restrictive, companies such as the Navarretta Group built markets for U.S. companies and taught them how to receive the proper licensing from the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the U.S. Department of Commerce.

### Cuba's Internationalism



Havana City financial district



Shortly after the victory of the Cuban Revolution, the country took on civil and military assignments in the southern hemisphere, supporting anti-colonial liberation movements, leftist governments and dictatorships and insurgencies against some dictatorships. Cuba supported African, Latin American and Asian countries in the field of military, health and education. These “overseas adventures” not only irritated the USA but quite often were a “major headache” for the Kremlin .

### **Latin America**

The Cuban Government's military involvement in Latin America has been extensive. The Sandinista insurgency in Nicaragua which led to the demise of the Somoza-Dictatorship in 1979, was openly supported by Cuba and can be considered its greatest success in Latin America. Apart from that, Cuban efforts bore little fruit in this region considered to be the back door of the US.

The most well known of these failures was the attempted insurgency by Ernesto Guevara in Bolivia in 1967. Less known actions were the 1959 missions into the Dominican Republic and Panama. Almost all countries in Latin America, of which the most, at the time, had autocratic governments, witnessed this kind of infiltration. Arnaldo Ochoa, later commander of Cuban forces in Angola, is said the only survivor of the Camilo Cienfuegos contingent sent on the doomed expedition to the Dominican Republic.

The official position of the Cuban government is that although allegations of the Cuban government's military involvement in other countries of the Americas have been extensive these are not well substantiated. The alleged presence of "armed Cuban military advisors" on the island of Grenada was given as one reason for the US government invasion of the island and overthrow of its government in 1981. The commercial airport that was being built on Grenada with Cuban assistance was also cited by US President Ronald Reagan claimed as evidence of Cuban interference in the region. In a speech in 1983, Reagan stated that satellite images of baseball diamonds in Nicaragua in the 1980s was proof of Cuban infiltration. Critics would observe that Reagan ignored the fact that baseball had been popular in Nicaragua since the turn of the century. However, far more solid data backed up Reagan's statements. Casualty ratios in Grenada indicate that vigorous defense of the landing strip by the Cuban construction workers was one of the bravest ever carried out by nominal civilians. Others estimate the size of the Cuban and Grenadian forces much higher. Colonel Tortolo senior Cuban commander, and his staff were stripped of their rank and sent to Angola. .

### **Africa and Asia Minor**

Unlike the rather limited success in Latin America the situation was quite different on the African continent, where, in all, Cuba supported 17 liberation movements or leftist governments. In some countries it suffered setbacks, such as in eastern Zaire ( Simba Rebellion), but in others Cuba garnered significant successes. Major engagements took place in Algeria, Zaire, Yemen, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. Among all the countries Cuba ever supported, Angola takes an exceptional position (see Cuba in Angola and Namibia).

### **Human rights**

The Cuban government has been accused of numerous human rights abuses, including torture, arbitrary imprisonment, unfair trials, and extra-judicial

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executions. Dissidents complain of harassment and torture. While the Cuban government placed a moratorium on capital punishment in 2001, it made an exception for perpetrators of an armed hijacking 2 years later. Groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have issued reports on Cuban prisoners of conscience. Opponents claim the Cuban government represses free expression by limiting access to the Internet.

Human Rights Watch claims that the true number of political prisoners may well be vastly understated. According to Human Rights Watch, political prisoners, along with the rest of Cuba's prison population, are confined to jails with substandard and unhealthy conditions.

In the last weeks of March 2003, the Cuban government sentenced 75 members of the opposition to prison terms of up to 28 years. The activists were charged with “disrespect” toward the Revolution, “treason,” and “giving information to the enemy,” in the harshest backlash against peaceful dissent that the island had seen in years. Since 2003, human rights supporters have sent thousands of appeals to the Cuban authorities calling for the release of the prisoners. The numbers of recognized political prisoners varies over time, increasing and decreasing with circumstances. However all former political prisoners are subject to arbitrary re-arrest. Political arrests continue.

On the fourth anniversary of a major crackdown on human rights activists in Cuba that saw dozens sentenced to long prison terms for peaceful promotion of basic rights and freedoms, human rights organizations called for the release of the 59 prisoners who remain in jail, several of whom are seriously ill. Organizations like Human Rights First called on the Cuban government and, in particular, to interim leader Raul Castro, to immediately and unconditionally release the 59 individuals who remain in prison since their arrest in the spring of 2003.

The Ladies in White are the wives and relatives of those imprisoned in a series of controversial 2003 arrests. They have persistently and peacefully advocated their release since then.

Marta Beatriz Roque has been twice detained for her opposition to the government. In July 1997, she and three other dissidents were detained for publishing a paper titled "The Homeland Belongs to All," which discussed Cuba's human rights situation and called for political and economic reforms. The paper, which was labeled seditious by the government, led to her being imprisoned for a little over three years. On April 3, 2003, Roque was brought to trial and convicted. She was sentenced to 20 years in prison for engaging in “activities aimed at subverting the internal order of the Cuban State, provoking its destabilization and the loss of its independence,” and receiving “substantial monetary funds from the U.S. Government.” On July 22, 2004, Roque was unexpectedly released from prison due to her declining health. Medical parole, however, is given only for the duration of the illness. As such, she is subject to rearrest and detainment in the event that there is any improvement in her health. According to Amnesty International, Roque has been harassed repeatedly by Cuban government supporters and state security agents, including receiving death threats and being physically assaulted since her early release from prison.

Normando Hernández González is an independent journalist sentenced to 25 years in prison in the spring of 2003 for his commentaries on Cuban society, including pieces on the Cuban health, educational and judicial systems, and for his promotion of free expression. Mr. Hernández was apparently held in a cell for more than a year with a prisoner known to have tuberculosis, despite repeated concerns expressed by him and his family. He was recently confirmed to have contracted tuberculosis and is suffering from high fevers, fatigue and fainting. The doctors at Prison Kilo 7 in Camagüey, where he is being held, are reportedly refusing him medical assistance. There have also been reports that he has been physically assaulted by prison guards.

José Luis García Paneque was sentenced to 24 years in prison in 2003 for his work as an independent journalist, as well as for his involvement in a civic





initiative to promote democratic reforms, known as the Varela Project. García Paneque's health has dramatically worsened since his imprisonment; he suffers from intestinal problems that have caused him to lose almost 90 pounds and at one point left him emaciated at a weight of around 110 pounds. He also suffers from rectal bleeding, and has dangerously low blood pressure. Despite these symptoms, his wife reports that he is not receiving adequate medical care and her request for his release on medical parole in November 2005 has not been answered.

Luis Enrique Ferrer García received a 28-year sentence for his work with the Varela Project, a civic initiative calling for democratic reforms in Cuba. To protest his unjust imprisonment, particularly harsh prison conditions and mistreatment by prison authorities, Ferrer García has engaged in numerous hunger strikes throughout his detention, often leaving him very ill and weak. In addition, he has been the victim of numerous physical assaults by security guards and violent prisoners, most of whom are encouraged by prison authorities to harass and intimidate him.

Oscar Elías Biscet is a physician and president of the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, which peacefully promotes human rights and the rule of law. In reprisal for his human rights activities, the 41-year-old doctor was sentenced to 25 years in prison and has been held in some of the harshest conditions, including in punishment cells and solitary confinement. For long periods of time he is denied family visits, the right to leave his cell, and essential packages of medicine and food. Biscet suffers from chronic gastritis, hypertension and recurring infections, and is reportedly losing his eyesight; his poor health has been severely aggravated by unhygienic prison conditions and harsh treatment. At one point, Dr. Biscet was reported have lost more than 60 pounds.

Although still clinging to official Cuban government view that racial progress was poor before Castro reached power (despite the obvious ethnicity of the leader and many senior members of the Batista regime) has eroded in the last few years.

## Freedom of information in Cuba

In addition to scholarly concerns and disputes among experts on Cuba, major factors limiting accuracy of information about the island include the censorship by the Cuban Government.

Stuart Hamilton writes in the Progressive Librarian issue 19-10 2002

- "The members of the underground opposition parties face constant scrutiny from the authorities for their anti-government views. However, at the same time as enforcing a crackdown on dissidents the government is also accused of preventing ordinary Cubans accessing information. Independent news agencies are banned, and journalists who report stories contrary to the official line reported in the state newspaper, Granma, are likely to be victimised. As a result of this anti-government stories are normally found in newspapers and journals published abroad, as journalists go underground to send stories out to foreign sympathisers via telephone. Miami in Florida is the centre of anti-Castro publishing activity, with papers such as Nueva Prensa containing articles critical of the regime."

Expelled BBC correspondent Stephen Gibbs comments

- "Cuban officials are surprisingly unapologetic on the issue. Their justification is that Cuba is in the midst of an undeclared war with a shameless US administration which is determined to undermine the Cuban revolution. They sometimes allude to what they seem to regard as the British government's



distinguished censorship of the press during World War II." .

Apparently Cuban cabinet ministers do not know about Castro's state of health:

- " Cuban leader Fidel Castro is not at death's door and rumors in Miami of his demise are wishful thinking, Cuban Culture Minister Abel Prieto said on Wednesday...he had no inside information on Castro's medical condition, but deduced from the 81-year-old leader's regular essays and columns that he is not dying."

## Trade unions

There are unions in Cuba, with a membership totaling 98% of the island's workforce. Unions do not register with any state agency, and are self financed from monthly membership dues. Their supporters claim that union officers are elected on an open basis, and differing political views are found within each of the unions. However, all unions are part of an organization called the *Confederación de Trabajadores Cubanos (Confederation of Cuban Workers, CTC)*, which does maintain close ties with the state and the Communist Party. Supporters claim that the CTC allows workers to have their voice heard in government; opponents claim that the government uses it to control the trade unions and appoint their leaders. The freedom of workers to express independent opinions is also a subject of debate. Supporters of the system argue that workers' opinions have in fact shaped government policy on several occasions, as in a 1993 proposal for tax reform, while opponents, citing studies by international labor organizations, point out that workers are required to pledge allegiance to the ideals of the Communist Party, and argue that the government systematically harasses and detains labor activists, while prohibiting the creation of independent (non-CTC affiliated) trade unions, that the leaders of attempted independent unions have been imprisoned, and that the right to strike is not recognized in the law.

## International Intrigue in Cuba

Examples of international intrigue in Cuba, dating to the Gerardo Machado regime, when Stalinist Pole Fabio Grobart first entered the Island, are given by Roger Fontaine

## Soviet advisers

As early as 1959 Soviet Advisers were seen in Cuba. The agents were in place as early as September 1959 when KGB colonel, Valdim Kotchergin (or Kochergin) was seen in Cuba Vadim Kochergin and also KGB Colonel (later General) Victor Simonov went on to train overseas personnel including Carlos the Jackal ( Ilich Ramírez Sánchez) and subcomandante Marcos (commonly believed to be a non-Indigenous student called Rafael Sebastián Guillén Jorge Luis Vasquez, a Cuban who was imprisoned in East Germany, states that the Stasi (the East German secret police agency) trained the personnel of the Cuban Interior Ministry(MINIT)



## Provinces and municipalities

Fourteen provinces and one special municipality (the Isla de la Juventud) now compose Cuba. These in turn were formerly part of six larger historical provinces: Pinar del Río, Habana, Matanzas, Las Villas, Camagüey and Oriente. The present subdivisions closely resemble those of Spanish military provinces during the Cuban Wars of Independence, when the most troublesome areas were subdivided. ....



- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Isla de la Juventud ( <i>Isle of Youth</i> ) |                            |
| <b>2</b> Pinar del Río                                | <b>9</b> Ciego de Ávila    |
| <b>3</b> La Habana ( <i>Havana</i> )                  | <b>10</b> Camagüey         |
| <b>4</b> Ciudad de la Habana ( <i>Havana City</i> )   | <b>11</b> Las Tunas        |
| <b>5</b> Matanzas                                     | <b>12</b> Granma           |
| <b>6</b> Cienfuegos                                   | <b>13</b> Holguín          |
| <b>7</b> Villa Clara                                  | <b>14</b> Santiago de Cuba |
| <b>8</b> Sancti Spíritus                              | <b>15</b> Guantánamo       |

The provinces are further divided into 170 municipalities.

## Geography

### Climate



Cuba is an archipelago of islands located in the Caribbean Sea, with the geographic coordinates 21°3N, 80°00W. Cuba is the principal island, which is surrounded by four main groups of islands. These are the Colorados, the Sabana-Camagüey, the Jardines de la Reina and the Canarreos. The main island of Cuba constitutes most of the nation's land area or 105,006 km<sup>2</sup> (40,543 sq mi) and is the seventeenth-largest island in the world by land area. The second largest island in Cuba is the Isla de la Juventud (Isle of Youth) in the southwest, with an area of 3,056 km<sup>2</sup> (1,180 sq mi). Cuba has a total land area of 110,860 km<sup>2</sup> (42,803 sq mi).

The main island consists mostly of flat to rolling plains. At the southeastern end is the Sierra Maestra, a range of steep mountains whose highest point is the Pico Real del Turquino at 1,975 meters (6,480 ft). The local climate is tropical, though moderated by trade winds. In general (with local variations), there is a drier season from November to April, and a rainier season from May to October. The average temperature is 21 °C in January and 27 °C in July. Cuba lies in the path of hurricanes, and these destructive storms are most common in September and October. Havana is the largest city and capital; other major cities include Santiago de Cuba and Camagüey. Better known smaller towns include Baracoa which was the first Spanish settlement on Cuba, Trinidad, a UNESCO world heritage site, and Bayamo.

### Nickel industry

Cuba has had until recently one of the America's most productive and long standing nickel mines.

### Oil wealth

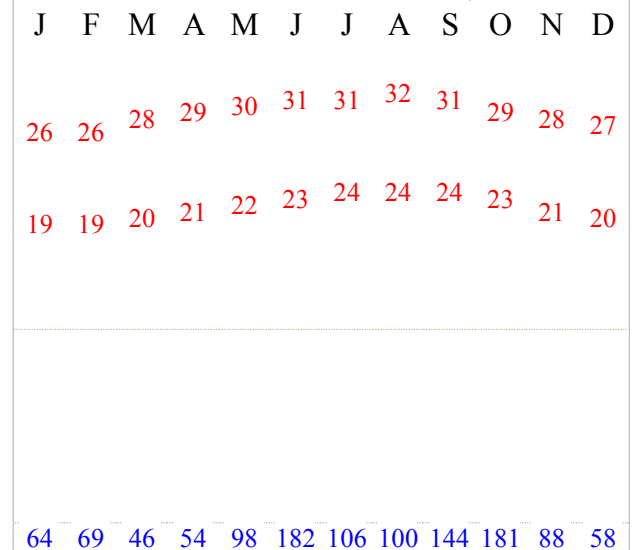
Recent oil exploration has revealed that the North Cuba Basin has approximately 4.6 billion to 9.3 billion barrels of oil in it, which Cuba has now started to test-drill (as of 2006).

### Education



Map of Cuba

### Climate chart for Casa Blanca, Havana



temperatures in °C • precipitation totals in mm

source: Climate Charts

Imperial conversion

[ Hide ]



University of Havana, founded in 1728

Before and during the present government Cuba boasted some of the highest rates of education and literacy in the Americas. The Cuban state, through tax receipts, funds education for all Cuban citizens including university education. Private educational institutions are not permitted. School attendance is compulsory from ages six to the end of basic secondary education (normally at 15), and all students, regardless of age or gender, wear school uniforms with the colour denoting grade level. Primary education lasts for six years, secondary education is divided into basic and pre-university education. Higher education is provided by universities, higher institutes, higher pedagogical institutes, and higher polytechnic institutes. The University of Havana was founded in 1728 and there are a number of other well established colleges and universities. The Cuban Ministry of Higher Education also operates a scheme of distance education which provides regular afternoon and evening courses in rural areas for agricultural workers. Education has a strong political and ideological emphasis, and students progressing to higher education are expected to have a commitment to the goals of the Cuban government. Cuba has also provided state subsidized education to foreign nationals, including U.S. students, who are trained as doctors at the Latin American School of Medicine. The program provides for full scholarships, including accommodation, and its graduates are

meant to return to their countries to offer low-cost healthcare. Internet access is limited

It is required that all applicants to universities in Cuba gain a letter from the government (the "Committee for the Defence of the Revolution") stating that they have a good "political and moral background" in order to apply. There have been claims that such letters are withheld because of an applicant (or relative) being politically undesirable. The validity of these claim or how often letters are refused is not easily verifiable and so there is no consensus on whether this amounts to widespread political oppression or just a few isolated cases.

## Public health

The Cuban government operates a much-lauded national health system and assumes full fiscal and administrative responsibility for the health care of its citizens. Historically, Cuba has long ranked high in numbers of medical personnel and has made significant contributions to world health since the 19th century . Partisans of the Cuban government state that this is especially so since the revolution, claiming that no other developing country has a health system comparable to Cuba's. According to World Health Organization (WHO) statistics, life expectancy and infant mortality rates in Cuba have been comparable to Western industrialized countries since such information was first gathered in 1957. In 2007 according to Unicef Cuba and Canada have the lowest infant mortality rates in Americas followed by the USA. In depth examination of WHO statistics for Cuba reveals that these statistics are prepared by each government and published unchanged by WHO; thus they have been called into question. Nevertheless, the CIA World Factbook cites life expectancy and infant mortality rates that are similar to those for the USA. It is not clear what sources the CIA used for this, since the data presented seems to be equivalent to that published by the Cuban government; this has led to suggestions that material prepared by Ana Belen Montes (a convicted Castro government agent) is still being used by the CIA. .

A separate, second division of hospitals cares specifically for foreigners and diplomats. Many foreigners travel to Cuba for reliable and affordable health care.

The San Francisco Chronicle, The Washington Post, and NPR have all reported on Cuban doctors defecting to other countries. , , According to the San Francisco Chronicle, one of the reasons that Cuban doctors defect is because their salary in Cuba is only \$15 per month.

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## Demographics

According to **Cuba's Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas ONE 2002 Census**, the Cuban population was 11,177,743, including:

- 5,597,233 men and
- 5,580,510 women.

The racial make-up was 7,271,926 whites, 1,126,894 blacks and 2,778,923 mulattoes (or mestizos). The Chinese population in Cuba is descended mostly from indentured laborers who arrived in the 19th century to build railroads and work in mines. After the Industrial Revolution, many of these laborers stayed in Cuba because they could not afford return passage to China.

**(Official 2002 Cuba Census)**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>% Of Total</b>
<b>White</b>	7,271,926	3,618,349	3,653,577	65.06%
<b>Black</b>	1,126,894	593,876	533,018	10.08%
<b>Mulatto/Mestizo</b>	2,778,923	1,385,008	1,393,915	24.86%



Havana's Chinatown district. This paifang is located on Calle Dragones next to the *Parque Fraternidad*.

The population of Cuba has very complex origins and intermarriage between diverse groups is so general as to be the rule.

The ancestry of White Cuban (65.05%) comes primarily from the ethnically diverse Spanish nations

-  Spanish

Other European people that have contributed include:

-  French
-  Portuguese
-  Italians
-  Russians



El malecón de La Habana


During the 18th, 19th and early part of the 20th century, large waves of Canarian, Catalan, Andalusian, Galician and other Spanish people emigrated to Cuba.

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-  Spanish

Africans make up 10.08% to 24.86% of the population. The ancestry of black Cubans comes from the following groups:

-  African
- Kongo (largest ethnic group brought to Cuba)

People from Asia (2%):

-  Chinese
-  Vietnamese

Minor but significant ethnic influx is derived from diverse peoples from Middle East:

-  Jews
-  Lebanese
-  Palestinians
-  Syrians

The Cuban government controls the movement of people into Havana on the grounds that the Havana metropolitan area (home to nearly 20% of the country's population) is overstretched in terms of land use, water, electricity, transportation, and other elements of the urban infrastructure. There is a population of internal migrants to Havana nicknamed "Palestinos" (Palestinians); these mostly hail from the eastern region of Oriente. Cuba also shelters a population of non-Cubans of unknown size. There is a population of several thousand North African teen and pre-teen refugees.

Cuba's birth rate (9.88 births per thousand population in 2006) is one of the lowest in the Western Hemisphere. Its overall population has increased continuously from around 7 million in 1961 to over 11 million now, but the rate of increase has stopped in the last few decades, and has recently turned to a decrease, with the Cuban government in 2006 reporting the first drop in the population since the Mariel boatlift. The decrease in fertility rate - from 3.2 children per woman in 1970 to 1.38 in 2006 - is the third greatest in the Western Hemisphere, with only Guadeloupe and Jamaica showing larger decreases. Cuba, which has unrestricted access to legal abortion, has an abortion rate of 58.6 per 1000 pregnancies in 1996 compared to a Caribbean average of 35, a Latin American average of 27 (the latter mostly illegally performed), and a European average of 48. Additionally, contraceptive use is estimated at 79% (in the upper third of countries in the Western Hemisphere). With its high abortion rate, low birth rate, and aging population, Cuba's demographic profile more resembles those of former Communist Eastern European countries such as Poland or Ukraine rather than those of its Latin American and Caribbean neighbors.

Immigration and emigration have had noticeable effects on the demographic profile of Cuba during the 20th century. Between 1900 and 1930, close to a million Spaniards arrived from Spain; many of these and their descendants left after the Castro government took power. On a smaller scale, of thousands of Jewish immigrants who arrived prior during and after WWII, more than 90% have left Cuba.



## Exodus

The Cuban exodus, which is primarily based on political dissent coupled with the failure of the system to provide economic well being, has lasted almost half a century and has brought more than two million Cubans of all social classes to the United States. Others have left for Spain, Canada, Mexico, Sweden, and other countries. It still is standard procedure for the Cuban government to strip almost all property from most of those leaving the island.

Since 1959 many Cubans have emigrated to Miami, Florida, where a vocal, well-educated and economically successful exile community exists formally called the Cuban-American lobby. The exodus that occurred immediately after the Cuban Revolution was primarily of the upper and middle classes that were predominantly white. This contributed to a demographic shift back in Cuba. Seeking to normalize migration between the two countries—particularly after the chaos that accompanied the Mariel boatlift—Cuba and the United States in 1994 agreed, in what is commonly called the 1994 Clinton-Castro accords, to limit emigration to the United States. The United States grants a specific number of visas to those wishing to emigrate; 20,000 since 1994. Cubans picked up at sea trying to emigrate without a visa are returned to Cuba while those that make it to U.S. soil are allowed to seek asylum. U.S. law gives the Attorney General the discretion to grant permanent residence to Cuban natives or citizens seeking adjustment of status if they have been present in the United States for at least one year after admission or parole and are admissible as immigrants; these escapes are often daring and most ingenious. In 2005 an additional 7,610 Cuban emigrants from Cuba entered the United States by September 30. Citizens of Cuba must obtain an exit permit before they may leave the country legally. Human Rights Watch has criticized the Cuban restrictions on emigration and its alleged keeping of children as "hostages" in order to prevent defection by Cubans traveling abroad. Over the years, thousands of Cubans have attempted to escape across the Florida Strait to reach the United States with many succeeding (over a hundred thousand in the Mariel Boatlift alone). But it has been estimated that between 30,000 to 40,000 Cubans may have perished attempting to flee the island. This has led to a safer route through Mexico where organized traffickers ferry asylum seekers for a price.

## Religion

Cuba has many faiths representing the widely varying culture. Catholicism was brought to the island by the Spanish, and is the most dominant faith. After Fidel Castro took over, Cuba became atheistic and punished religious practice. Since the Fourth Cuban Communist Party Congress in 1991, restrictions have been eased and, according to the National Catholic Observer, direct challenges by state institutions to the right to religion have all but disappeared, though the church still faces restrictions of written and electronic communication, and can only accept donations from state-approved funding sources. The Roman Catholic Church is made up of the Cuban Catholic Bishops' Conference (COCC), led by Jaime Lucas Ortega y Alamino, Cardinal Archbishop of Havana. It has eleven dioceses, 56 orders of nuns and 24 orders of priests. In January 1998, Pope John Paul II paid a historic visit to the island, invited by the Cuban government and Catholic Church.

The religious landscape of Cuba is also strongly marked by syncretisms of various kinds. This diversity derives from West and Central Africans who were transported to Cuba, and in effect reinvented their African religions. They did so by combining them with elements of the Catholic belief system, with a result very similar to Brazilian Umbanda.



Catedral de San Cristóbal de la Habana  
(Cathedral of Saint Christopher of Havana)





Catholicism is often practised in tandem with Santería, a mixture of Catholicism and other, mainly African, faiths that include a number of cult religions. Cuba's patron saint, La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre (the Virgin of *Cobre*) is a syncretism with the Santería goddess Ochún. The important religious festival "La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre" is celebrated by Cubans annually on 8 September. Other religions practised are Palo Monte, and Abakuá, which have large parts of their liturgy in African languages.

Protestantism, introduced from the United States in the 18th century, has seen a steady increase in popularity. 300,000 Cubans belong to the island's 54 Protestant denominations. Pentecostalism has grown rapidly in recent years, and the Assemblies of God alone claims a membership of over 100,000 people. The Episcopal Church of Cuba claims 10,000 adherents. Cuba has small communities of Jews, Muslims and members of the Bahá'í Faith. Havana has just three active synagogues and no mosque. Most Jewish Cubans are descendants of Polish and Russian Ashkenazi Jews who fled pogroms at the beginning of the 20th century. There is, however, a sizeable number of Sephardic Jews in Cuba, who trace their origin to Turkey (primarily Istanbul and Thrace). Most of these Sephardic Jews live in the provinces, although they maintain a synagogue in Havana. In the 1960s, almost 8,000 Jews left for Miami. In the 1990s, approximately 400 Jewish Cubans relocated to Israel in a co-ordinated exodus using visas provided by nations sympathetic to their desire to move to Israel.

## Culture

Cuban culture is much influenced by the fact that it is a melting pot of cultures, primarily those of Spain and Africa. It has produced more than its fair share of literature, including the output of non-Cubans Stephen Crane, Graham Greene and Ernest Hemingway

Sport is Cuba's national passion. Due to historical associations with the United States, many Cubans participate in sports which share popularity in North America, rather than sports traditionally promoted in other Latin American nations. Baseball is by far the most popular; other sports and pastimes in Cuba include basketball, volleyball, cricket, and athletics. Cuba is the dominant force in amateur boxing, consistently achieving high gold medal tallies in major international competitions. The government of Cuba however, will not be sending competitors to the "World Boxing Championships, based in the U.S. city of Chicago from October 21 to November 3; this to avoid the "theft" of athletes. the Cuban government official newspaper alleges:

- " As our people are all too well aware, the theft of anyone who stands out in Cuban society, whether s/he is an athlete, educationalist, doctor, artist, or any kind of scientist, has been the practice of various U.S. governments within that country's constant policy of aggression against our people. That felony was instigated at the very triumph of the Revolution in 1959 with the exit of thousands of doctors and engineers."

Cuban music is very rich and is the most commonly known expression of culture. The "central form" of this music is Son, which has been the basis of many other musical styles like salsa, rumba and mambo and an upbeat derivation of the rumba, the cha-cha-cha. Rumba music originated in early Afro-Cuban culture. The Tres was also invented in Cuba, but other traditional Cuban instruments are of African and/or Taíno origin such as the maracas, güiro, marimba and various wooden drums including the mayohuacan. Popular Cuban music of all styles has been enjoyed and praised widely across the world. Cuban classical music,



The courtyard of one of the free museums in Havana, the 'Casa de Simón Bolívar'



which includes music with strong African and European influences, and features symphonic works as well as music for soloists, has also received international acclaim thanks to composers like Ernesto Lecuona.

Cuban literature began to find its voice in the early 19th century. Dominant themes of independence and freedom were exemplified by José Martí, who led the Modernist movement in Cuban literature. Writers such as Nicolás Guillén and Jose Z. Tallet focused on literature as social protest. The poetry and novels of José Lezama Lima have also been influential. Writers such as Reinaldo Arenas, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and more recently Daína Chaviano, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, Zoé Valdés, and Leonardo Padura have earned international recognition in the postrevolutionary era, though many of these writers have felt compelled to continue their work in exile due to ideological control of media by the Cuban authorities.

Cuban cuisine is a fusion of Spanish and Caribbean cuisines. Cuban recipes share spices and techniques with Spanish cooking, with some Caribbean influence in spice and flavor. Now food rationing, which has been the norm in Cuba for the last four decades, restricts the common availability of these dishes. Traditional Cuban meal would not be served in courses; rather all food items would be served at the same time. The typical meal could consist of plantains, black beans and rice, *ropa vieja* (shredded beef), Cuban bread, pork with onions, and tropical fruits. Black beans and rice, referred to as *Platillo Moros y Cristianos* (or *moros* for short), and plantains are staples of the Cuban diet. Many of the meat dishes are cooked slowly with light sauces. Garlic, cumin, oregano and bay leaves are the dominant spices.

## Economy

The Cuban Government adheres to socialist principles in organizing its largely state-controlled planned economy. Most of these means of production are owned and run by the government and most of the labor force is employed by the state. Recent years have seen a trend towards more private sector employment. By the year 2006, public sector employment was 78% and the private sector at 22% compared to the 1981 ratio of 91.8% to 8.2%. Capital investment is restricted and requires approval by the government. The Cuban government sets most prices and rations goods to citizens. Moreover, any firm wishing to hire a Cuban must pay the Cuban government, which in turn will pay the company's employee in Cuban pesos.

While the form of government of Cuba is theoretically opposed to class privilege, preferential treatment exists for those who are members of the Communist Party or who hold positions of power within the government. Access to transportation, work, housing, university education and better health care are a function of status within the government or the Communist Party.

Starting in the late 1980s, the Soviet subsidies for Cuba's state-run economy started to dry up. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba depended on Moscow for sheltered markets for its exports and substantial aid. The Soviets had been paying above-market prices for Cuban sugar, while providing Cuba with petroleum at below-market prices. The removal of these subsidies sent the Cuban economy into a rapid depression known in Cuba as the Special Period. At one point, Cuba received subsidies amounting to six billion dollars. In 1992, the United States tightened the trade embargo. Some believe that this may have contributed to a drop in Cuban living standards which approached crisis point within a year.



The 'Palacio Azul', Blue Palace, a State hotel in the city of Cienfuegos.



Like some other Communist and post-Communist states following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba took limited free market-oriented measures to alleviate severe shortages of food, consumer goods, and services to make up for the ending of Soviet subsidies. These steps included allowing some self-employment in certain retail and light manufacturing sectors, the legalization of the use of the U.S. dollar in business, and the encouragement of tourism. In 1996 tourism surpassed the sugar industry as the largest source of hard currency for Cuba. Cuba has tripled its market share of Caribbean tourism in the last decade, with large investment in tourism infrastructure this growth rate is predicted to continue. 1.9 million tourists visited Cuba in 2003 predominantly from Canada and the European Union, generating revenue of \$2.1 billion. The rapid growth of tourism during the *Special Period* had widespread social and economic repercussions in Cuba. This has led to speculation of the emergence of a two-tier economy and the fostering of a state of tourist apartheid on the island.

The Cuban government has significantly developed its medical tourism capabilities as a key means to generate income for the country. For many years, Cuba has operated a special division of hospitals that treated foreigners and diplomats while excluding Cubans. Every year, thousands of European, Latin American, Canadian and American consumers with hard cash visit to access medical care services at up to 80 percent less than U.S. costs. There are some who criticize Cuba's medical tourism industry because ordinary Cubans do not have access to the kind of quality healthcare that medical tourists receive.

Since 1959, Cuba has experienced slow growth in its Gross Domestic Product relative to other countries that were in a similar situation in the 1950s, stagnant trade, and amassed a significant debt amounting to some 16.62 billion in convertible currency and 15 to 20 billion dollars with Russia. Cuban citizens themselves have experienced a decrease in their caloric intake and a shortage of housing.

For some time now, Cuba has been experiencing a housing shortage because of the state's failure to keep pace with increasing demand. Moreover, the government instituted food rationing policies in 1962, which were exacerbated following the collapse of the Soviet Union and, according to supporters of the government, the tightening of the US embargo. As late as 2001, studies have shown that the average Cuban's standard of living was lower than before the downturn of the post-Soviet period. Paramount issues have been state salaries failing to meet personal needs under the state rationing system chronically plagued with shortages. As the variety and amount of rationed goods available declined, Cubans increasingly turned to the black market to obtain basic food, clothing, household, and health amenities. The informal sector is characterized by what many Cubans call *sociolismo*. In addition, petty corruption in state industries, such as the pilferage of state assets to sell on the black market, is still common. In recent years, since the rise of Venezuela's Socialist President Hugo Chávez, Venezuelan economic aid has enabled Cuba to improve economically. Venezuela's assistance of the Cuban economy comes chiefly through its supply of up to 80,000 barrels of oil per day in exchange for professional services and agricultural products. In the last several years, Cuba has rolled back some of the market oriented measures undertaken in the 1990s. In 2004, Cuban officials publicly backed the Euro as a "global counter-balance to the U.S. dollar," and eliminated the US currency from circulation in its stores and businesses. Increased US government restrictions on travel by Cuban-Americans and on the numbers of dollars they could transport to Cuba strengthened Cuban government control over dollars circulating in the economy. In the last decade, Cubans had received between US\$600 million and US\$1 billion annually, mostly from family members in the U.S.. This number is influenced by the fact that U.S. government forbids its citizens to send more than \$1,200 to Cuba to immediate family members, and then only once per year.



Cuba, the largest of the Caribbean holiday islands, is becoming an increasingly popular tourist destination.

In 2005 Cuba exported \$2.4 billion, ranking 114 of 226 world countries, and imported \$6.9 billion, ranking 87 of 226 countries. Its major export partners are the Netherlands 18.5%, Canada 18.5%, China 16%, Bermuda 14.1%, Spain 5.1%; major import partners are Venezuela 27%, China 15.8%, Spain 9.7%, Germany 6.5%, Canada 5.6%, Italy 4.4%, US 4.4% (2006). Cuba's major exports are sugar, nickel, tobacco, fish, medical products, citrus, and coffee; imports include food, fuel, clothing, and machinery. Cuba presently holds debt in an amount estimated to be \$13 billion, approximately 38% of GDP. According to the Heritage Foundation, Cuba is dependent on credit accounts that rotate from country to country. Cuba's prior 35% supply of the world's export market for sugar has declined to 10% due to a variety of factors, including a global sugar commodity price drop making Cuba less competitive on world markets. At one time, Cuba was the world's most important sugar producer and exporter. As a result of diversification, underinvestment and natural disasters, however, Cuba's sugar production has seen a drastic decline. In 2002, more than half of Cuba's sugar mills were shut down. Cuba's most recent sugar harvest of 1.1 million metric tons was its worst in nearly one hundred years, comparable only to those of 1903 and 1904. Cuba holds 6.4% of the global market for nickel which constitutes about 25% of total Cuban exports. Recently, large reserves of oil were found in the North Cuba Basin leading US Congress members Jeff Flake and Larry Craig to call for a repeal of the US embargo of Cuba.

## Military

Under Fidel Castro, and partially because of invasions, assassination attempts and terrorist attacks, Cuba became a highly militarized society. From 1975 until the late 1980s, massive Soviet military assistance enabled Cuba to upgrade its military capabilities. Since the loss of Soviet subsidies Cuba has dramatically scaled down the numbers of military personnel, from 235,000 in 1994 to about 60,000 in 2003. The government now spends roughly 1.7% of GDP on military expenditures. As with all Cuban government data this information is not independently corroborated(see Freedom of information in Cuba section on this page). The present Minister for the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) is Raúl Castro, Fidel Castro's brother, who had played a major part as a leader in the Cuban Revolution.

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# Dominica

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The **Commonwealth of Dominica**, commonly known as **Dominica** (French: *Dominique*), is an island nation in the Caribbean Sea. The name is pronounced /ˌdɒmɪˈni:kə/ (dom-in-EE-cuh). In Latin, its name means "Sunday", which was the day on which it was discovered by Christopher Columbus.

Dominica's pre-Columbian name was *Wai'tu kubuli*, which means "Tall is her body". The indigenous people of the island, the Caribs, have a territory similar to the Indian reserves of North America. Because the island lies between two French overseas departments, Guadeloupe to the north and Martinique to the south, and because it was colonized by France for a time, it is sometimes called "French Dominica". However, its official language is English, though a French creole is commonly spoken.




Dominica has been nicknamed the "Nature Isle of the Caribbean" for its seemingly unspoiled natural beauty. It is one of the youngest islands in the Lesser Antilles, still being formed by geothermal-volcanic activity, as evidenced by the world's second-largest boiling lake. The island features lush mountainous rainforests, home of many very rare plant, animal, and bird species. There are xeric areas in some of the western coastal regions, but heavy rainfall can be expected inland. The Sisserou parrot, the island's national bird, is featured on the national flag. Dominica's economy is heavily dependent on both tourism and agriculture.

## History

The former indigenous people of Dominica, the Arawak people, were expelled or exterminated by Caribs in the fourteenth century. The Arawaks had been guided from the waters of the Orinoco River to Dominica and other islands of the Caribbean by the South Equatorial Current. These descendants of the early Tainos were overthrown by the Kalinago tribe of the Caribs.

The Caribs arrived on the island in special boats which they are still making at their own territory on the island. Christopher Columbus arrived at this island on Sunday, November 3, 1493. He and his crew soon left the island, having been defeated by the Caribs. In 1627 England tried and failed to capture Dominica. In 1635 the French claimed the island and sent missionaries, but they were unable to wrest Dominica from the Caribs. The French abandoned the island, along with the island of Saint Vincent, in the 1660s.

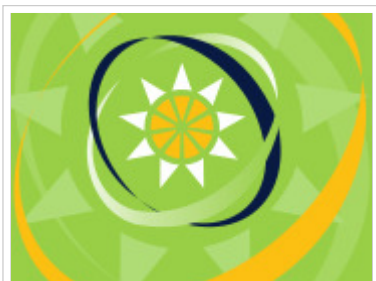
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Commonwealth of Dominica	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p><b>Motto:</b> <i>Après Bondie, C'est La Ter'</i> ( Antillean Creole) "After God is the Earth"</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Isle of Beauty, Isle of Splendour</i></p>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Roseau
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Demonym</b>	Dominican
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary republic
- President	Nicholas Liverpool
- Prime Minister	Roosevelt Skerrit
<b>Independence</b>	from the United Kingdom
- Date	November 3, 1978



For the next hundred years Dominica remained isolated, and even more Caribs settled there after being driven from surrounding islands as European powers entered the region. France formally ceded possession of Dominica to the United Kingdom in 1763. The United Kingdom then set up a government and made the island a colony in 1805. The emancipation of African slaves occurred throughout the British Empire in 1834, and, in 1838, Dominica became the first British Caribbean colony to have a Black-controlled legislature. In 1896, the United Kingdom reassumed governmental control of Dominica and turning it into a crown colony. Half a century later, from 1958 to 1962, Dominica became a province of the short-lived West Indies Federation. In 1978 Dominica finally became an independent nation.

## Politics



Flag of the OECS

Dominica is a parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth of Nations. The president is head of state, while executive power rests with the cabinet, headed by the prime minister. The unicameral parliament consists of the thirty-member House of Assembly, which consists of twenty-one directly elected members and nine senators, who may either be appointed by the president or elected by the other members of the House of Assembly.

Unlike other former British colonies in the region, Dominica was never a Commonwealth realm with the British monarch as head of state, as it instead became a republic on independence. Dominica is a full and participating member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Dominica is also a member of the International Criminal Court with a Bilateral Immunity Agreement of protection for the U.S. military, as covered under Article 98. In January 2008 Dominica joined the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas.

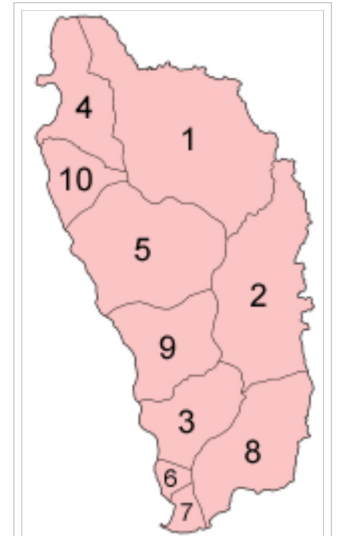
## Parishes

<b>Area</b>	
- Total	751 km <sup>2</sup> ( 184th) 290 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.6
<b>Population</b>	
- August 2006 estimate	71,727 ( 201st <sup>1</sup> )
- 2003 census	71,727
- Density	105/km <sup>2</sup> ( 95th) 272/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$468 million ( 177th)
- Per capita	\$6,520 ( 91st)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.798 (medium) ( 71st)
<b>Currency</b>	East Caribbean dollar ( XCD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC−4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.dm
<b>Calling code</b>	[[+ 1-767]]
<small><sup>1</sup> Rank based on 2005 UN estimate.</small>	



**Dominica** is divided into ten parishes:

1. Saint Andrew Parish
2. Saint David Parish
3. Saint George Parish
4. Saint John Parish
5. Saint Joseph Parish
6. Saint Luke Parish
7. Saint Mark Parish
8. Saint Patrick Parish
9. Saint Paul Parish
10. Saint Peter Parish



Parishes of Dominica

## Geography



Dominica is an island nation and borderless country in the Caribbean Sea, the northernmost of the Windward Islands. The size of the country is about 289.5 square miles (754 km<sup>2</sup>). The capital is Roseau.

Dominica is largely covered by rainforest and is home to the world's second-largest boiling lake. Dominica has many waterfalls, springs, and rivers. Some plants and animals thought to be extinct on surrounding islands can still be found in Dominica's forests. The volcanic nature of the island and the lack of sandy beaches have made Dominica a popular scuba diving spot. Dominica is home to several protected areas, including Cabrits National Park. Dominica has 365 rivers.

It is said that when his royal sponsors asked Christopher Columbus to describe this island in the "New World", he crumpled a piece of parchment roughly and threw it on the table. This, Columbus explained, is what Dominica looks like—completely covered with mountains with nary a flat spot.

Morne Trois Pitons National Park is a tropical forest blended with scenic volcanic features. It was recognized as a World Heritage Site on April 4, 1995. Within the Caribbean, it shares this distinction with historic World Heritage sites in San Juan (Puerto Rico), Willemstad (Curacao), Saint Kitts, Hispaniola (Dominican Republic/Haiti) and Cuba, and another natural World Heritage site in St. Lucia.

The Commonwealth of Dominica is engaged in a long-running dispute with Venezuela over Venezuela's territorial claims to the sea surrounding Isla Aves (literally Bird Island, but in fact called Bird Rock by Dominica authorities), a tiny islet located 70 miles (110 km) west of the island of Dominica.

The only two major cities are Roseau and Portsmouth.

## Climate

Dominica is especially vulnerable to hurricanes as the island is located in what is referred to as the hurricane region. In 1979, Dominica was hit directly by category 5 Hurricane David, causing widespread and extreme damage. On August 17, 2007, Hurricane Dean, a category 1 at the time, hit the island. A mother and her seven-year-old son died when a landslide caused by the heavy rains fell onto their house. In another incident two people were injured when a tree fell on their house. Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit estimated that 100 to 125 homes were damaged, and that the agriculture sector was extensively damaged, in particular the banana crop.

see also: Effects of Hurricane Dean in the Lesser Antilles

## Demographics

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Map of Dominica





Almost all nationals of Dominica today are descendants of African slaves, brought in by colonial planters in the eighteenth century. However there is a significant Mixed minority along with a Indo-Caribbean or East Indian groups, a small European origin minority (descendants of French, British, and Irish colonists) and there are small numbers of Lebanese, Syrians and Asians. Dominica is also the only Eastern Caribbean island that still has a population of pre-Columbian native Caribs, who were exterminated or driven from neighbouring islands. There are only about 3,000 Caribs remaining. They live in eight villages on the east coast of Dominica. This special Carib Territory was granted by the British Queen in 1903. There are also about 1,000 medical students from the United States and Canada who study at the Ross University School of Medicine in Portsmouth.

The population growth rate of Dominica is very low, due primarily to emigration to other Caribbean islands, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Canada.

It has recently been noted that Dominica has an incredibly high proportion of centenarians. As of March 2007, there are 22 centenarians out of the island's almost 70,000 inhabitants—three times the average incidence of centenarianism in developed countries. The reasons for this are the subject of current research being undertaken at Ross University School of Medicine.

About 80% of the population is Roman Catholic, though in recent years a number of Protestant churches have been established. Also, there is also a small but growing Muslim community in Dominica as the nation's first mosque is currently being built.

## Language

English is the official language of Dominica and is universally understood. However, because of historic French domination, and the island's location between the two French-speaking territories of Martinique and Guadeloupe, Antillean Creole Patois, a French-based creole language, is the mother tongue of 80% of the Dominican people. Dominica is therefore a member of the Francophonie organization.

The dialect of Dominica also includes Cocoy, along with Creole—French-based patois. Cocoy, or Kockoy, is a mix of Leeward Island English-Creole and Dominican Creole. It is mainly spoken in the northeastern villages of Marigot and Wesley.

## Culture



Dominica's East coast territory of the Kalinago (tribe)

Dominica is home to a wide range of people. Although it was historically occupied by several native tribes, only a Carib tribe remained by the time European settlers reached the island. French and British settlers each claimed the island and imported slaves from Africa. The remaining Caribs now live on a 3,700-acre (15 km<sup>2</sup>) territory on the east coast of the island. They elect their own chief. This mix of cultures is important to Dominica.

The famed novelist Jean Rhys was born and raised in Dominica. The island is obliquely depicted in her best-known book, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Recently, Caribbean writer Marie-Elena John's debut novel *Unburnable* has evoked much of the same spirit of Dominica captured by Rhys, prompting comparisons between the two novels in spite of the hundred-year difference, and suggesting that Dominica has remained one of the Caribbean's most pristine islands. Rhys's friend, the political activist and writer Phyllis Shand Allfrey, set her 1954 novel, *The Orchid House* ( ISBN 0-8135-2332-X), in Dominica.

## Film and TV

In 2004, Dominica was selected for the film *Pirates of the Caribbean*. In spring of 2007, CBS filmed its first pirate-related TV show called *Pirate Master* in Dominica.

## Economy

The Dominican economy is dependent on both tourism and agriculture. Twenty percent of Dominican workers are in the agricultural sector, and Dominica's primary agricultural exports include tobacco, bananas, vegetables, citrus, copra, coconut oil, and essential oils such as bay oil. The country's industries, other than tourism, include soap, furniture, cement blocks, and shoes. Dominica is further benefited by the presence of an offshore Devry-owned medical school, Ross University, in the northern town of Portsmouth. Over 1,000 students mainly from USA and Canada live and study in Portsmouth.



The Dominican economy has high poverty (30%), high unemployment (23%), and a low per capita income (US\$5,400) (see *GDP*). The Dominican economy has been hurt by problems in the banana industry. The entire economy suffers when weather conditions damage the banana crop or when the price of bananas falls. The European Union has phased out preferred access of Dominican bananas to its markets, causing banana demand to fall. In response, the Dominican government privatized the banana industry. The government has also moved to diversify the economy and has lifted price controls in an attempt to improve the lagging economy. The government is also trying to develop tourism, especially ecotourism. The lack of a large international airport or sandy beaches limit opportunities for standard tourism, but the island's heavily rainforested landscape and beautifully preserved environment could lure those looking for unparalleled ecotourism experiences. Indeed, it is remarked that of all the islands of the Caribbean, Dominica is the only one Christopher Columbus might still recognise.

## Agriculture

Bananas have traditionally formed the backbone of the island's economy. Between 1988 and 1999, banana production declined 63% with a 62% decline in export value, mainly due to the performance of the banana industry.



Market day occurs each weekend in Roseau.



## Tourism

Compared to many other Caribbean islands, Dominica's tourism industry may be considered to be underdeveloped (65,000 visitors per year). It does not have any world-famous chains of hotels.

However, Dominica has a few famous tourist spots, such as the Indian River in Portsmouth, Emerald Pool, Trafalgar Falls, Scotts Head (where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Caribbean Sea), and the world's second-largest boiling lake, which is inside Morne Trois Pitons National Park. The national park, itself, has been designated a World Heritage Site. A 2005 New York Times article reported that locals, who believe an earthquake to be the most likely culprit, claim the boiling lake had diminished in volume and effect (in the sense of impressing visitors) in recent years .

This island country also has many excellent diving spots due to its steep drop-offs, healthy marine environment, and reefs.

In 2004, because of its natural beauty, Dominica was chosen to be one of the primary filming locations for *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* and its follow-up, *At World's End*. Hampstead Beach, Indian River, Londonderry River, Soufriere, and Vieille Case, which is situated on the island's northern tip, were among the places selected for filming. The production ended on May 26, 2005. The cast and crew and their island hosts had a "Dominica Survivor Party".

Celebrity Cruises, Carnival Cruise Lines and Princess Cruise Lines have made Dominica one of their ports of call. The pier is located in the capital city of Roseau and is a simple pier. Other Caribbean islands -- such as St. Thomas, Barbados, St. Lucia, and Antigua -- have more extensive cruise pier facilities.

The Dominica straw markets open on Tuesdays when the cruise ship docks. These shops are operated by locals and are located on the main street directly in front of the pier, as well as directly behind the Dominica Museum. No other straw markets are located on the north side of the island.

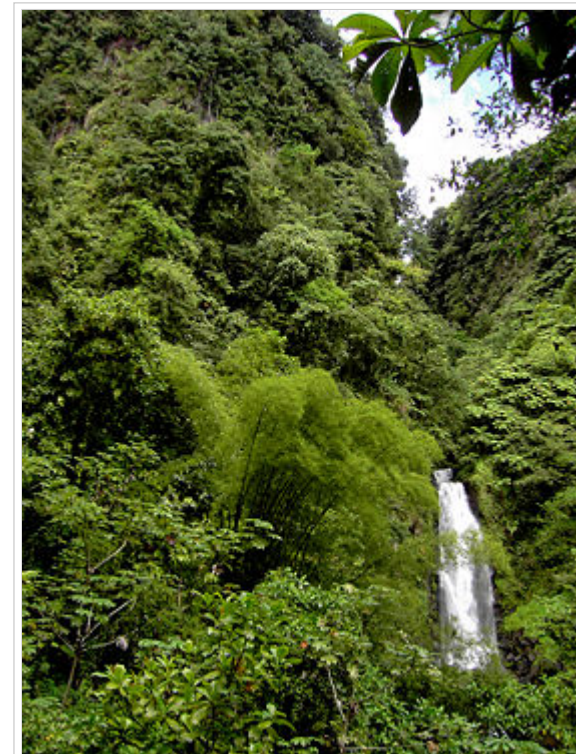
## Transportation

There are two small airports on the island: the main one is Melville Hall Airport (DOM), about one hour away from Roseau; the second one is Canefield (DCF) which is about fifteen minutes' travel from Roseau. Neither of them is big enough for typical commercial-size airplanes, although Melville Hall is under expansion. As of 2007, American Airlines and LIAT (who recently merged with Caribbean Star, a former competitor in that market) are the major airlines that service the Melville Hall airport, and Carib Aviation operates service from Canefield. There is no nighttime service, because the runways do not have lights.

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Calibishie, on Dominica's northern coast



Rainforest at the Trafalgar Falls



There is no major highway on the island. Before the road was built between Portsmouth and Roseau, people had to take boats, which took several hours. Now, it takes about one hour to drive from Portsmouth to Roseau. Minibus services form the major public transport system. It costs about EC\$ 1 to go anywhere in the Portsmouth area and about EC\$ 8 from Portsmouth to Roseau (2006). Many visitors opt to rent a 4x4 vehicle so that they can enjoy the freedom to explore on their own schedule.

## Education

The island has its own state college, formerly named Clifton Dupigny Community College. Some Dominicans get scholarships from the Cuban government to attend universities in Cuba. Others go to the University of the West Indies or to schools in the United Kingdom, the United States, or other countries for higher education. Ross University, a medical school, is located at Portsmouth. The Archbold Tropical Research and Education Centre, a biological field station owned by Clemson University, is located at Springfield Estate between Canefield and Pond Casse. In 2006, another medical school called All Saints University of Medicine opened in temporary facilities in Loubiere, with a permanent campus being constructed in Grand Bay. Currently All Saints is located in Roseau, Dominica

## Nature

Dominica possesses the most pristine wilderness in the Caribbean. Originally, it was protected by sheer mountains which led the European powers to build ports and agricultural settlements on other islands. More recently, the citizens of this island have sought to preserve its spectacular natural beauty by discouraging the type of high-impact tourism which has damaged nature in most of the Caribbean.

Visitors can find large tropical forests, including one which is on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites, hundreds of streams, spectacular coastlines and coral reefs.

The Sisserou parrot is Dominica's national bird and is indigenous to its mountain forests.

The Caribbean Sea offshore of the island of Dominica is home to many cetaceans. Most notably a group of sperm whales lives in this area year round. Other cetaceans commonly seen in the area include spinner dolphins, pantropical spotted dolphins and bottlenose dolphins. Less commonly seen animals include killer whales, false killer whales, pygmy sperm whales, dwarf sperm whales, Risso's dolphins, common dolphins, Atlantic spotted dolphins, humpback whales and Bryde's whales. This makes Dominica a popular destination for tourists interested in whale-watching.

## Sports

Cricket is a popular sport on the island, and Dominica competes in Test cricket as part of the West Indies cricket team. On October 24, 2007, the 8,000-seat Windsor cricket stadium was completed with a donation of EC\$33 million (US\$17 million, €12 million) from the government of the People's Republic of China. The 11th annual World Creole Music Festival was the first activity held there since its completion on October 27, 2007, part of the island's celebration of

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independence from Great Britain on November 3, marking 30 years.

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# Dominican Republic

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The **Dominican Republic** (Spanish: *República Dominicana*, pronounced [reˈpuβlika ðominiˈkana]) is a Latin American country located in the Greater Antilles archipelago on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. It shares the island with the Republic of Haiti, making Hispaniola one of two Caribbean islands that are split by two countries; the other is Saint-Martin/Sint Maarten. Hispaniola is the second-largest of the Greater Antilles, and lies west of Puerto Rico and east of Cuba and Jamaica.

The Dominican Republic is the site of the first permanent European settlement in the Americas, its capital Santo Domingo, which was also the first colonial capital in the Americas. It is the site of the first cathedral, university, European-built road, European-built fortress, and more.

For most of its independent history, the nation experienced political turmoil and unrest, suffering through many non-representative and tyrannical governments. However, since the death of military dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo in 1961, the Dominican Republic has moved toward representative democracy.

## History

### The Taínos

The island of Hispaniola, of which the Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds and the Republic of Haiti the western third, was inhabited by the Taínos, an Arawakan-speaking people, who may have arrived around A.D. 600, displacing earlier inhabitants. The Taínos lived in villages headed by chiefs and called the island Ayiti or Haiti ("mountainous land"), Bohio, and Quisqueya. By 1492 they were divided into five chiefdoms (*cacicazgos* in Spanish, from *cacique*, chief).

There are widely varying estimates of the population of Hispaniola in 1492, including 100,000, 300,000 3 million, and 7-8 million. They engaged principally in farming and fishing, as well as hunting and gathering.

### Spanish rule

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<b><i>República Dominicana</i></b> <b>Dominican Republic</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Dios, Patria, Libertad</i> " (Spanish) "God, Homeland, Liberty"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Himno Nacional</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Santo Domingo <sup>1</sup>
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Demonym</b>	Dominican
<b>Government</b> - President	Presidential republic Leonel Fernández



Christopher Columbus landed at Môle Saint-Nicolas on December 5, 1492, in his first voyage, and claimed the island for Spain. Nineteen days later, the *Santa Maria* ran aground near the present site of Cap-Haitien; Columbus was forced to leave 39 men, founding the settlement of La Navidad. He returned to Spain, voyaging back to America three more times. After initially friendly relations, the Taínos resisted the conquest. One of the earliest leaders to fight against the Spanish was the female Chief Anacaona of Xaragua, in the southwest, who married Chief Caonabo of Maguana, in the centre and south of the island. The two fought hard against the Europeans; she was captured by the Spanish and executed in front of her people. Other notables who resisted include Chief Guacanagari, Chief Guama, and Chief Hatuey, who later fled to Cuba and helped fight the Spaniards there. Chief Enriquillo fought victoriously against the Spaniards in the Baoruco Mountain Range, in the southwest, to gain freedom for himself and his people in a part of the island. The Taínos were by then nearly extinct. Most of the survivors mixed with runaway African slaves, called *cimarrones*, producing *zambos*. The mestizos increased in number as native women conceived to European men.

By the mid-1500s the majority of Taíno people had died out from mistreatment, disease, suicide, the breakup of family unity, starvation, forced labor, torture, and war with the Spaniards. In 1561 Bartolomé de las Casas wrote that when he reached Hispaniola in 1508 "There were 60,000 people living on this island, including the Indians; so that from 1494 to 1508, over three million people had perished from war, slavery and the mines. Who in future generations will believe this?" Due to the total lack of previous interaction with Europeans, and hence no previous exposure to European diseases, the Taíno had developed no immunity to smallpox — which they probably contracted in some cases via sexual relations with Europeans — and other contagious diseases, resulting in a catastrophic loss of life that some have termed a genocide.

The Taíno bloodline in Hispaniola diluted more and more as the decades went by, primarily due to the establishment of Africans and Mulattos on the island; however, it is believed that many Dominicans today retain some native ancestry. It has been stated that Las Casas exaggerated the Indian population decline in an effort to better persuade King Charles to intervene, and that encomenderos also exaggerated it, in order to receive permission to import more African slaves. Moreover, censuses of the time did not account for the number of Indians who had fled from the Spanish into remote communities, where they often lived alongside runaway Africans. To this are added further problems of racial categorization itself which, evidence suggests, was influenced by social factors: for instance, mestizos who were culturally Spanish were counted as Spaniards.

In 1496 Bartolomeo Columbus, Christopher's brother, built the city of Nueva Isabela (New Isabella), now Santo Domingo, in the south of Hispaniola. It was one of the first Spanish settlements, and became Europe's first permanent settlement in the New World. The Spaniards created a plantation economy on Hispaniola, particularly from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The island became a springboard for European conquest of the Caribbean islands, called " Antilles", and

- Vice President	Rafael Alburquerque
<b>Independence</b>	From Haiti
- Date	27 February 1844
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	48,921 km <sup>2</sup> ( 130th) 18,816 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.6
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2007 estimate	9,760,000 ( 82th)
- 2000 census	9,365,818
- Density	201/km <sup>2</sup> ( 38th) 523/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$89.87 billion ( 62th)
- Per capita	\$9,208 ( 71th)
<b>Gini (2003)</b>	51.7 ( <b>high</b> )
<b>HDI (2005)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.779 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 79th)
<b>Currency</b>	Peso ( <span> </span> DOP)
<b>Time zone</b>	Atlantic ( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.do
<b>Calling code</b>	+1spec. 1-809 and + 1-829
<sup>1</sup>	Known as Ciudad Trujillo from 1936 to 1961





soon after, the (then yet-unnamed) South American mainland, including what is modern-day coastal Venezuela and Colombia. Santo Domingo colony was for decades the headquarters of Spanish power in the New World. However, with the conquest of the mainland empires of the Aztecs and Incas, Hispaniola declined and Spain paid ever less attention to it. French bucaniers settled in the western part of the island, and in the 1697 Treaty of Ryswick Spain ceded that part of Hispaniola to France. It grew into the wealthy colony of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), with four times the population of Santo Domingo at the end of the 18th century.

## French rule

France came to own the whole island in 1795, when in the Treaty of Basel Spain ceded Santo Domingo as a consequence of the French Revolutionary Wars. At the time the slaves in the western part (Haiti), led by Toussaint Louverture, were in revolt against France. In 1801 Toussaint Louverture captured Santo Domingo from the French, thus gaining control of the entire island. However, an army sent by Napoleon captured him and sent him prisoner to France in 1802; still, Toussaint Louverture's successors, and yellow fever, expelled the French again from Haiti and gained independence, although France went on to recover Spanish Santo Domingo. In 1808, following Napoleon's invasion of Spain, the *criollos* of Santo Domingo revolted against French rule, and with Britain's (Spain's ally) and even Haiti's help, returned Santo Domingo to Spanish control.

## The Ephemeral Independence and Haitian rule

After a dozen years of Spanish misrule and neglect and failed independence plots by various groups, former Spanish lieutenant-governor José Núñez de Cáceres declared the colony's independence as the state of *Haití Español* (Spanish Haiti) on November 30, 1821, requesting admission to Simón Bolívar's Gran Colombia. But the new nation's independence was short-lived, as Haitian forces, led by Jean-Pierre Boyer, invaded just nine weeks later in February 1822. As Toussaint Louverture had done the first time, the Haitians abolished slavery; they also dispossessed the white landowners and closed down the university. Most whites fled Santo Domingo for Puerto Rico, Cuba (both under Spanish rule), and other nations. Pro-independence, pro-Spanish, pro-French, pro-British and other movements gathered force following the overthrow of Jean Pierre Boyer in 1843.

## Independence

In 1838 Juan Pablo Duarte founded a secret society called La Trinitaria that sought pure and simple independence of Santo Domingo without any foreign intervention. Ramón Matías Mella and Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, (the latter one having African ancestry) in spite of not being among the founding members, went on to be decisive in the fight for independence and are now hailed, along with Duarte, as the Founding Fathers of the Dominican Republic. On February 27, 1844, the *Trinitarios*, as the members of La Trinitaria were known, declared independence from Haiti, backed by Pedro Santana, a wealthy cattle-rancher from El Seibo who became general of the army of the nascent Republic and is known as "El Liberador." The Dominican Republic's first Constitution was adopted on November 6, 1844, and was modeled after the United States Constitution.

Image:Padres de la patria dom.JPG

The Founding Fathers: Left, Francisco del Rosario Sánchez; Middle, Juan Pablo Duarte; Right, Ramón Matías Mella

Yet the decades that followed were filled with tyranny, factionalism, economic difficulties, rapid changes of government, and exile for political opponents.

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Archrivals Santana and Buenaventura Báez held power most of the time, both ruling arbitrarily. They promoted competing plans to annex the new nation to another power: Santana favored Spain, and Báez the United States.

## Re-colonization and the Restoration War



General Gregorio Luperón,  
Restoration Hero.

In 1861, after forcibly silencing or exiling many of his opponents and mainly due to political and economic reasons, Santana signed a pact with the Spanish Crown and reverted the Dominican nation to a colonial status, the only Latin American country to do so. Opponents launched the War of the Restoration in 1863, led by a group of men including Santiago Rodríguez and Benito Monción among others; General Gregorio Luperón distinguished himself at the end of the war. Haitian authorities, fearful of the re-establishment of Spain as colonial power on their border, gave refuge and logistics to Dominican revolutionaries to re-establish independence. The United States, then fighting its own Civil War, vigorously protested the Spanish action. After two years of fighting, the Spanish troops abandoned the island. The Restoration was proclaimed on August 16, 1863.

Political strife again prevailed in the years that followed; warlords ruled, military revolts were extremely common, and the nation amassed debt. In 1869 it was the turn of Báez to act on his plan of annexing the country to the United States, with a payment of 1.5 million dollars by the U.S. as part of the deal, in order to alleviate the Dominican Republic's debts. U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant supported this plan, but the United States Senate refused on June 30, 1870, albeit by just one vote. President Grant thought that former American slaves could go to the Dominican Republic and live in peace, free of harassment by Southern whites.

Báez was toppled in 1874, returned, and was toppled for good in 1878. A new generation was now entirely in charge, with the passing of Santana (he died in 1864) and Báez from the scene. Relative peace came to the country in the 1880s, which saw the coming to power of General Ulises Heureaux.

The new president was initially popular. He was, however, "a consummate dissembler", who put the nation deep into debt while using much of the proceeds for his personal use and to maintain his police state. Heureaux's rule became more despotic with time and he all the more unpopular. In 1899 he was assassinated. However, the unprecedentedly long calm over which he'd presided allowed for some improvement in the Dominican economy. The sugar industry was modernized, and the country attracted foreign workers and immigrants, both from the Old World and the New.

From 1902 on, short-lived governments were again the norm and provincial leaders held much of the power. Furthermore, the national government was bankrupt and, unable to pay its debts, faced the threat of military intervention by France and other European powers seeking repayment.

## U.S. intervention



Ulises 'Lilís' Heureaux,  
President of the Dominican  
Republic 1882-84, 1886-99.



It was this situation that U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt sought to prevent, in great part in order to protect the vicinity of the Panama Canal, which was then under construction. He made a small military intervention to ward off the European powers, proclaimed his famous Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, and in 1906 the Dominican Republic and the United States entered into a 50-year treaty giving control of customs administration to the United States. In exchange the United States agreed to use the customs proceeds to help reduce the immense foreign debt of the Dominican Republic, and even assumed responsibility for said debt.

In 1914, the United States, due to extreme political internal instability in the Dominican Republic (inability to elect a president), expressed concern and stated that a leader must be elected, or the United States would impose one. As a result, Ramón Báez Machado was elected provisional president on August 27, 1914. Presidential elections held on October 25 returned Juan Isidro Jimenes Pereyra to the presidency. Despite his victory, however, Jimenes felt impelled to appoint leaders and prominent members of the various political factions to positions in his government in an effort to broaden its support. The internecine conflicts that resulted had quite the opposite effect, weakening the government and the President and emboldening Secretary of War Desiderio Arias to take control of both the armed forces and the Congress, which he compelled to impeach Jimenes for violation of the constitution and the laws. Although the United States ambassador offered military support to his government, Jimenes opted to step down on May 7, 1916.

Arias never assumed the presidency formally. The United States government, apparently tired of its recurring role as mediator, had decided to take more direct action. By this time, U.S. forces were occupying Haiti. The initial military administrator of Haiti, Rear Admiral William Caperton, had actually forced Arias to retreat from Santo Domingo by threatening the city with naval bombardment on May 13, 1916.

## **U.S. occupation**

The first Marines landed three days later, on May 19, 1916. Although they established effective control of the country within two months, the United States forces did not proclaim a military government until November. Most Dominican laws and institutions remained intact under military rule, although the shortage of Dominicans willing to serve in the Cabinet forced the military governor, Rear Admiral Harry S. Knapp, to fill a number of portfolios with United States naval officers. The press and radio were censored for most of the occupation, and public speech was limited.

The surface effects of the occupation were largely positive. The Marines restored order throughout most of the republic (with the exception of the eastern region); the country's budget was balanced, its debt was diminished, and economic growth resumed. Infrastructure projects produced new roads that linked all the country's regions for the first time in its history. A professional military organization, the Dominican Constabulary Guard, replaced the partisan forces that had waged a seemingly endless struggle for power. Most Dominicans, however, greatly resented the loss of their sovereignty to foreigners, few of whom spoke Spanish or displayed much real concern for the welfare of the republic.

The most intense opposition to the occupation arose in the eastern provinces of El Seibo and San Pedro de Macorís. From 1917 to 1921, the United States forces battled a guerrilla movement in that area known as the "gavilleros". The guerrillas enjoyed considerable support among the population, and they benefited from a superior knowledge of the terrain. The movement survived the capture and the execution of its leader, Vicente Evangelista, and some initially fierce encounters with the Marines. However, the gavilleros eventually yielded to the occupying forces' superior firepower, air power (a squadron of six Curtis Jennies), and determined (often brutal) counter-insurgency methods.



After World War I, public opinion in the United States began to run against the occupation. U.S. President Warren G. Harding, who succeeded Woodrow Wilson in March 1921, had campaigned against the occupations of both Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In June 1921, United States representatives presented a withdrawal proposal, known as the Harding Plan, which called for Dominican ratification of all acts of the military government, approval of a loan of US\$2.5 million for public works and other expenses, the acceptance of United States officers for the constabulary — now known as the Guardia Nacional (National Guard) — and the holding of elections under United States supervision.

Popular reaction to the plan was overwhelmingly negative. Moderate Dominican leaders, however, used the plan as the basis for further negotiations that resulted in an agreement allowing for the selection of a provisional president to rule until elections could be organized. Under the supervision of High Commissioner Sumner Welles, Juan Bautista Vicini Burgos assumed the provisional presidency on October 21, 1922. In the presidential election of March 15, 1924, former President Horacio Vásquez Lajara handily defeated Francisco J. Peynado. Vásquez's Alliance Party (Partido Alianza) also won a comfortable majority in both houses of Congress. With his inauguration on July 13, control of the republic returned to Dominican hands. He gave the country six years of good government, in which political and civil rights were respected and the economy grew strongly, in an atmosphere of peace.

## Trujillo era

The Dominican Republic was ruled by dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo from 1930 until his assassination in 1961. Trujillo ruled with an iron fist, persecuting anyone who opposed his regime. There was considerable economic growth during his rule, although a great deal of the wealth went to the dictator and other regime elements. He renamed many towns and provinces after himself and members of his family, including the capital city Santo Domingo, renamed Ciudad Trujillo (Trujillo City).

In 1937 Trujillo (who was himself one-quarter Haitian), in an event known as the Parsley Massacre or in the Dominican Republic as El Corte (The Cutting), ordered the Army to kill all Haitians on the Dominican side of the border. An estimated 17,000 to 35,000 Haitians were killed over approximately five days, from the night of October 2, 1937 through October 8, 1937. Haitians were cut down with machetes. The soldiers of Trujillo would go out and interrogate anyone with dark skin, hold up a sprig of *perejil* (parsley) and pronounce what they were holding up. Haitians who spoke French and/or Kreyol said the "r" in *perejil* with a flat long pronunciation, while Dominicans said it with a trilled "r" sound. This massacre was alleged to have been an attempt to seize money and property from Haitians living on the border. As a result of this massacre the Dominican Republic agreed to pay Haiti \$750,000.00, which was later reduced to US\$525,000. The Dominican government headed by Trujillo for a long time was supported by the USA, the Catholic Church, and the Dominican elite; even after the death of Dominicans in the political opposition and over 17,000 Haitians. Trujillo was assassinated on May 30, 1961 in Santo Domingo.

## Post-Trujillo

A democratically-elected government under leftist Juan Bosch took office in 1963, but was overthrown later in the year. After nineteen months of military rule, a pro-Bosch revolt took place in 1965. US Marines arrived in the Dominican Republic to restore order in Operation Powerpack, later to be joined by forces from the Organization of American States. They remained in the country for over a year and left after supervising elections, in which they ensured the victory of Joaquín Balaguer, who had been Trujillo's last puppet president, over Bosch.

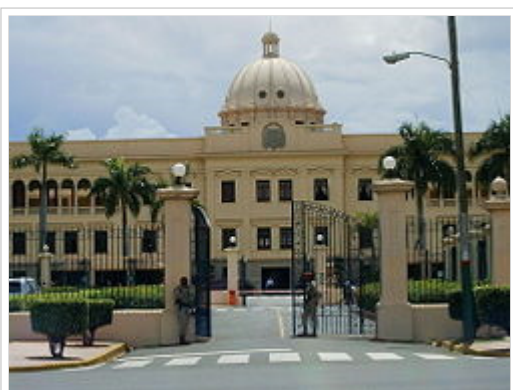


Balaguer remained in power as president for 12 years. His tenure was a period of repression of civil liberties, presumably to prevent pro-Cuba or pro-communist parties from gaining power in the country. Balaguer's rule was accompanied by a growing disparity between rich and poor.

## 1978 to present

In 1978, Balaguer was succeeded in the presidency by opposition candidate Antonio Guzmán Fernández, of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD). From 1978 to 1986, the Dominican Republic experienced a period of relative freedom and basic human rights. Balaguer regained the presidency in 1986, and was re-elected in 1990 and 1994, defeating PRD candidate José Francisco Peña Gómez, a former mayor of Santo Domingo. Both the national and international communities generally viewed these elections as a major fraud, leading to political pressure for Balaguer to step down. Balaguer responded by scheduling another presidential contest in 1996, which was won by Bosch's Dominican Liberation Party for the first time, with Leonel Fernández as its candidate. In 2000, Hipólito Mejía won the electorate when opposing candidates Danilo Medina and a very old Joaquín Balaguer decided that they would not force a runoff after the first got 49.8% of the votes. In 2004, Leonel Fernández was elected again, with 57% of the votes, defeating then-incumbent president Mejía.

## Government and politics



The National Palace, Santo Domingo,  
Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is a representative democracy, with national powers divided among independent executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The President of the Dominican Republic appoints the cabinet, executes laws passed by the legislative branch, and is commander in chief of the armed forces. The president and vice president run for office on the same ticket and are elected by direct vote for 4-year terms. Legislative power is exercised by a bicameral Congress composed of the Senate (with 32 members) and the Chamber of Deputies (with 178 members).

The Dominican Republic has a multi-party political system with national elections every 2 years (alternating between presidential elections and congressional/municipal elections). Presidential elections are held in years evenly divisible by four. Congressional and municipal elections are held in even numbered years not divisible by four. International observers have found that presidential and congressional elections since 1996 have been generally free and fair. Elections are supervised by a Central Elections Board (JCE) of 9 members chosen for a four-year term by the newly elected Senate. JCE decisions on electoral matters are final.

Under the constitutional reforms negotiated after the 1994 elections, the 16-member Supreme Court of Justice is appointed by a National Judicial Council, which comprises the President, the leaders of both houses of Congress, the President of the Supreme Court, and an opposition or non-governing-party member. One other Supreme Court Justice acts as secretary of the Council, a non-voting position. The Supreme Court has sole authority over managing the court system and in hearing actions against the president, designated members of his cabinet, and members of Congress when the legislature is in session.

The Supreme Court hears appeals from lower courts and chooses members of lower courts. Each of the 31 provinces is headed by a presidentially appointed governor. Mayors and municipal councils to administer the 124 municipal districts and the National District (Santo Domingo) are elected at the same time as



congressional representatives.

## Politics

The Dominican Republic holds elections every two years at both the presidential and the congressional levels. The country becomes highly politicized, as millions of dollars are spent in propaganda and campaigning. The political system is characterized by clientelism, which has corrupted the system throughout the years.

There are many political parties and interest groups and, new in this scenario, civil organizations. The three major parties are the conservative Social Christian Reformist Party (Spanish: Partido Reformista Social Cristiano [PRSC]), in power 1966–78 and 1986–96; the social democratic Dominican Revolutionary Party (Spanish: Partido Revolucionario Dominicano [PRD]), in power in 1963, 1978–86, and 2000–04); and the liberal Dominican Liberation Party (Spanish: Partido de la Liberación Dominicana [PLD]), in power 1996–2000 and since 2004.

## Foreign relations

The Dominican Republic maintains close relations with the nations of the Western Hemisphere and the principal nations of Europe. Relations with the U.S. are very close. The country is a member of the following international organizations: ACP, Caricom (observer), ECLAC, FAO, G-77, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICCt, ICRM, IDA (graduate), IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO (suspended), ILO, IMF, IMO, Intelsat (or ITSO), Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO (correspondent member), ITU, ITUC, LAES, LAIA (observer), MIGA, NAM, OAS, OPANAL, OPCW (signatory), PCA, Rio Group, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, Unión Latina, UNOCI, UNWTO (or WToO), UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO (or WTrO).

## Geography



Map of the Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is situated on the eastern part of the second-largest island in the Greater Antilles, Hispaniola. The Dominican Republic shares the island roughly at a 2:1 ratio with Haiti. The whole country measures an area of 48,730 km<sup>2</sup> (or 48,921 km<sup>2</sup>), making it the second largest country in the Antilles, after Cuba. The country's capital and greatest metropolitan area, Santo Domingo, is located on the southern coast.

To the north, at a distance between 100 and 200 km, are three extensive, largely submerged banks, which geographically are a southeast continuation of the Bahamas: Navidad Bank, Silver Bank and Mouchoir Bank. Navidad Bank and Silver Bank have been officially claimed by the Dominican Republic.

The country's mainland has four important mountain ranges. The most northerly of these ranges is the *Cordillera Septentrional* ("Northern Mountain Range"), which extends from the northwestern coastal town of Monte Cristi, near the Haitian border, to the Samaná Peninsula in the east, running parallel to the Atlantic coast. The highest range in the Dominican Republic — indeed, in the whole of the West Indies — is the *Cordillera Central* ("Central Mountain Range") (in Haiti known as the Massif du Nord). It gradually bends southwards and finishes near the town of Azua de Compostela on the Caribbean coast. The Cordillera

Central is home to the four highest peaks in the West Indies: Pico Duarte (3,087 m / 10,128 ft above sea level), La Pelona (3,085m), La Rucilla (3,049m) and Pico Yaque (2,760m).

In the southwest corner of the country, south of the Cordillera Central, there are two other ranges. The more northerly of the two is the *Sierra de Neiba*, while in the south the *Sierra de Bahoruco* is a continuation of the Massif de la Selle in Haiti.

There are other minor mountain ranges, such as the *Cordillera Oriental* ("Eastern Mountain Range"), *Sierra Martín García*, *Sierra de Yamasá* and *Sierra de Samaná*.

With mountain ranges running parallel to each other, the Dominican Republic boasts a number of valleys and plains. In between the Central and Septentrional mountain ranges lies the rich and fertile Cibao valley. This major valley is home to the city of Santiago de los Caballeros and to most of the farming areas in the nation. Rather less productive is the semi-arid San Juan Valley, south of the Cordillera Central and extending westward into Haiti. Still more arid is the Neiba Valley, tucked between the Sierra de Neiba and the Sierra de Bahoruco. This valley is also known in Haiti as the Cul-de-Sac. Much of the land in the Enriquillo Basin is below sea level, with a hot, arid, desert-like environment. There are other smaller valleys in the mountains such as the Constanza, Jarabacoa, Villa Altagracia and Bonao valleys.



Bust of Duarte on top of Pico Duarte, with La Pelona in the background.



Cayo Levantado Samana one of the many cays in the D.R.

There are many small offshore islands and cays that are part of the Dominican territory. The two largest islands near shore are Saona in the southeast and Beata in the southwest.

The *Llano Costero del Caribe* ("Caribbean Coastal Plain") is the largest of the plains in the Dominican Republic. Stretching north and east of Santo Domingo, it contains many sugar plantations in the savannahs that are common here. West of Santo Domingo its width is reduced to 10 km as it hugs the coast, finishing at the mouth of the Ocoa River. Another large plain is the *Plena de Azua* ("Azua Plain"), a very dry region in the Azua Province.

A few other small coastal plains are in the northern coast and in the Pedernales Peninsula.

Four major rivers drain the numerous mountains of the Dominican Republic. The Yaque del Norte carries excess water down from the Cibao Valley and empties into Monte Cristi Bay. Likewise, the Yuna River serves the Vega Real and empties into Samaná Bay. Drainage of the San Juan Valley is provided by the San Juan River, tributary of the Yaque del Sur, which empties into the Caribbean. The Artibonito is the longest river of Hispaniola and flows into Haiti. The Yaque del Norte is the longest and most important Dominican river.

There are many lakes and coastal lagoons; the largest lake is Lago Enriquillo, a saline lake at 40 m below sea level, the lowest point in the West Indies. Other important lakes are Laguna de Rincón or Cabral, with freshwater, and Laguna de Oviedo, a lagoon with brackish water.



South shore of Lake Enriquillo, looking northward to the Sierra de Neiba.

## Climate

The country is a tropical, maritime nation. Wet season is from May to November, and periodic hurricanes between June and November. Most rain falls in the northern and eastern regions. The average rainfall is 1346 mm, with extremes of 2500 mm in the northeast and 500 mm in the west. The main annual temperature ranges from 21 °C in the mountainous regions to 25 °C on the plains and the coast. The average temperature in Santo Domingo in January is 25 °C and 30 °C in July.



A beach on Saona Island.

## Environmental issues

Bajos de Haina, 12 miles (19 km) west of Santo Domingo, was included on the Blacksmith Institute's list of the world's 10 most polluted places, released in October 2006, due to lead poisoning by a battery recycling smelter closed in 1999. As the site never was cleaned up children continue to be born with high lead levels causing learning disabilities, impaired physical growth and kidney damage.





## Symbols, cultural institutions and monuments

Some of the important symbols include the flag of the Dominican Republic, the coat of arms, and the national anthem, titled *Himno Nacional*. The flag has a large white cross that divides it into four quarters. Two quarters are red and two are blue. Red represents the blood shed by the liberators. Blue expresses God's protection over the nation. The white cross symbolizes the struggle of the liberators to bequeath future generations a free nation. An alternate interpretation is that blue represents the ideals of progress and liberty, whereas white symbolizes peace and union amongst Dominicans. In the centre of the cross is the Dominican coat of arms, in the same colors as the national flag.

The national flower is the flower of the West Indies Mahogany The national bird is the *Cigua Palmera* or Palmchat.

Among the national monuments are:

The Museum of the Dominican Man, with the mission of studying, protecting, and promoting the national culture and to conserve and exhibit materials relating to the full sweep of Dominican history, both pre- and post-Columbian.

El Alcázar de Colón ( Diego Columbus' Castle) is the seat of the Americas' first viceroyalty. The palace is a national monument and museum, containing more than 800 pieces, including ceramics, tapestries, sculptures, furniture, and paintings, some of these dating from the thirteenth century to the twentieth.

The country has America's first cathedral, Catedral Metropolitana de Santa María de la Encarnación. It was begun in 1512 and consecrated in 1541. It is built in the Gothic style and has an Italian facade with Renaissance decoration. In its interior it contains quite a treasure trove of art, from furniture to paintings to bells to fine woodwork and more.

The Museo Faro a Colón, or Columbus Lighthouse Museum began construction in 1986 under President Joaquín Balaguer, and was completed in 1992, in time for the Quincentenary of Columbus' first voyage to the New World. The original idea goes back to Antonio Del Monte y Tejada, a Dominican historian, in 1852; the design was the work of the architect J.L. Gleave. It consists of an enormous cross, flat on the ground, facing the sky and bursting with lights. It houses the remains of Columbus, although Spain and Cuba also claim to have them. The lighthouse burns so brightly it can be seen from Puerto Rico, and is quite a tourist attraction.

## Economy

### Recent years



Santo Domingo.

The Dominican Republic is a lower middle-income developing country primarily dependent on natural resources and government services. Although the service sector has recently overtaken agriculture as the leading employer of Dominicans (due principally to growth in tourism and Free Trade Zones), agriculture remains the most important sector in terms of domestic consumption and is in second place, behind mining, in terms of export earnings. Tourism accounts for more than \$1.3 billion in annual earnings. Free Trade Zone earnings and tourism are the fastest-growing export sectors. Remittances ("remesas") from Dominicans living abroad are estimated to be more than \$2 billion dollars per year.

Following economic turmoil in the late 1980s and 1990, during which the gross domestic product (GDP) fell by up to 5% and consumer price inflation reached an unprecedented 100%, the Dominican Republic entered a period of moderate growth and declining inflation until 2002,

after which the economy entered a recession. This recession followed the collapse of the second-largest commercial bank of the country ( Baninter), linked to a major incident of fraud valued at \$3.5 billion during the administration of President Hipolito Mejia (2000-2004). The Baninter fraud had a devastating effect on the Dominican economy, with GDP dropping by 1% in 2003 while inflation ballooned by over 27%.



Sector of Piantini

Despite a widening merchandise trade deficit, tourism earnings and remittances have helped build foreign exchange reserves. The Dominican Republic is current on foreign private debt, and has agreed to pay arrears of about \$130 million to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation.

According to the 2005 Annual Report of the United Nations Subcommittee on Human Development in the Dominican Republic, the country is ranked #71 in the world for resource availability, # 79 for human development, and #14 in the world for resource mismanagement. These statistics emphasize national government corruption, foreign economic interference in the country, and the rift between the rich and poor.

The Dominican Republic has become trans-shipment point for South American drugs to Europe as well as the United States and Canada. Money laundering is favored by Colombian drug cartels via the Dominican Republic for the ease of illicit financial transactions.

The Dominican Republic enjoys a growing economy and a 2007 GDP per capita of \$9,208, in PPP terms, which is relatively high in Latin America. In the trimester of January - March 2007 it experienced an exceptional growth of 9.1% in its GDP, below the previous year's 10.9% in the same period. Growth was led by imports, followed by exports, with finance and foreign investment the next largest factors. The service sector in general has experienced growth in recent years, as has construction. Economic growth takes place in spite of a chronic energy shortage, which causes frequent blackouts and very high prices.

Santo Domingo, the capital of the Republic is the source of most of its GDP and has become one of the leading cities of the Caribbean.

## Currency



The Dominican peso (DOP) is the national currency of the country, although US dollars (USD) are accepted at most tourist sites. The peso was worth the same as the USD until the 1980s, but has depreciated. The exchange rate in 1993 was 14.00 pesos per USD and 16.00 pesos in 2000, but it jumped to 53.00 pesos per USD in 2003. In 2004, the exchange rate was back down to around 31.00 pesos per USD.

The U.S. dollar is implicated in almost all commercial transactions of the Dominican Republic; such dollarization is common in high inflation economies. On February 2005, 1.32 USD = one € = 29 DR pesos; in October 2005, 1.19 USD = one € = 32 DR pesos. As of September 2007 the value of the peso is 1 USD=0.7006 EUR=33.430 DOP.

## Tourism

According to the World Tourism Organization, the Dominican Republic is the Caribbean's number one tourist destination.

## Demographics

### Population

The population of Dominican Republic in 2007 was estimated by the United Nations at 9,760,000, which placed it as number 82 in population among the 193 nations of the world. In that year approximately 5% of the population was over 65 years of age, with another 35% of the population under 15 years of age. There were 103 males for every 100 females in the country in 2007. According to the UN, the annual population growth rate for 2006–2007 is 1.5%, with the projected population for the year 2015 at 10,121,000.

It was estimated by the Dominican government that the population density in 2007 was 192 per sq km (498 per sq mi), and 63% of the population lived in urban areas. The southern coastal plains and the Cibao Valley are the most densely populated areas of the country. The capital city, Santo Domingo, had a population of 3.0 million in 2007. Other important cities are Santiago de los Caballeros, La Romana, San Pedro de Macorís, San Francisco de Macorís, and Concepción de la Vega. According to the United Nations, the urban population growth rate for 2000–2005 was 2.3%.

### Ethnic composition



According to the CIA World Fact Book, the ethnic composition of the Dominican population is, 73% Mixed, 16% White and 11% Black. The mixed population is mostly mulatto with some people indirectly descended from the indigenous Taino. Other ethnic groups in the Dominican Republic include Haitians, Germans, Italians, French, Jews, Spaniards, and Americans. A smaller presence of East Asians (primarily ethnic Chinese and Japanese) and Middle Easterners (primarily Lebanese) can be found throughout the population.

## Racial issues

As elsewhere in the Spanish Empire, the original Spanish colony of Hispaniola employed a social system known as *casta*, wherein Peninsulares (Spaniards born in Spain) occupied the highest echelon. These were followed, in descending order of status, by: criollos, castizos, mestizos, mulattoes, Indians, zambos, and lastly, black slaves. The stigma of these social strata persisted for many years, reaching its culmination in the Trujillo regime, as the dictator used racial persecution and nationalistic fervor against Haitians.



Dominican girls at carnival in Taíno garments and makeup (2005).

According to a study by the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, about 90% of the contemporary Dominican population has African ancestry or has African roots. However, most Dominicans self-identify as being of mixed-race rather than "black" in contrast to African identity movements in other nations. A variety of terms are used to represent a range of skintones; these include "morena" (brown), "india" (Indian), "blanca oscura" (dark white), and "trigueño" (wheat colored), among others.

Many have claimed that this represents a reluctance to self-identify with African descent and the culture of the freed slaves. According to Dr. Miguel Anibal Perdomo, professor of Dominican Identity and Literature at Hunter College in New York City, "There was a sense of 'deculturación' among the African slaves of Hispaniola. [There was] an attempt to erase any vestiges of African culture from the Dominican Republic. We were, in some way, brainwashed and we've become westernized."

However, this view is not universal, as many also claim that Dominican culture is simply different and rejects the racial categorizations of other regions. Ramona Hernández, director of the Dominican Studies Institute at City College of New York asserts that the terms were originally an act of defiance in a time when being mulatto was stigmatized. "During the Trujillo regime, people who were dark skinned were rejected, so they created their own mechanism to fight it" She went on to explain "When you ask, 'What are you?' they don't give you the answer you want . . . saying we don't want to deal with our blackness is simply what you want to hear." The Dominican Republic is not unique in this respect either. In a 1976 census survey conducted in Brazil, respondents described their skin colour in 136 distinct terms.

## Religion

More than 95% of the population adheres to Christianity, mostly Roman Catholicism, followed by a growing contingent of Protestant groups such as Seventh-day Adventist, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Recent but small scale immigration has brought other religions, which make up small percentages of the population: Spiritist: 2.18%, Mormons: 1.0%, Buddhist: 0.10%, Bahá'í: 0.07%, Muslim: 0.02%, and Jewish: 0.01%.



Catholicism was introduced by Columbus and Spanish missionaries. Religion wasn't really the foundation of their entire society, as it was in other parts of the world at the time, and most of the population didn't attend church on a regular basis. Nonetheless, most of the education in the country was based upon the Catholic religion, as the Bible was required in the curriculum in all public schools. Children would use religious based dialogue when greeting a relative or parent. For example: a child would say "Bless me, mother," and the mother would reply "May God bless you."

The country has two patroness saints: *Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia* (Our Lady Of High Grace) is the patroness of the Dominican people, and *Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes* (Our Lady Of Mercy) is the patroness of the Dominican Republic.

Eventually the Catholic Church began to lose popularity in the late 1800s. This was due to a lack of funding, priests, and support programs. Because of this the Protestant evangelical movement began to gain support. Protestants emphasized biblical teachings like the Catholics, but also practiced rejuvenation and economic independence. The Protestants added diversity to the Dominican Republic, and there was almost no religious conflict with the Catholics.

There has always been religious freedom throughout the entire country. It wasn't until the 1950s that restrictions were placed upon churches by Trujillo. Letters of protest were sent against the mass arrests of government adversaries. Trujillo began a campaign against the church and planned to arrest priests and bishops who preached against the government. This campaign ended before it was even put into place, with his assassination.

Judaism appeared in the Dominican Republic in the late 1930s. During World War Two, a group of Jews escaping Nazi Germany fled to the Dominican Republic and founded the city of Sosua. It has remained the centre of the Jewish population since.

## Education

Primary education is officially free and compulsory for children between the ages of 7 and 14, although those who live in isolated areas have limited access to schooling. Primary schooling is followed by a two-year intermediate school and a four-year secondary course, after which a diploma called the *bachillerato* is awarded. Relatively few lower-income students succeed in reaching this level, because the system is designed to encourage middle- and upper-income students to prepare for admittance to a university. Most wealthier students attend private schools, which are frequently sponsored by religious institutions. Some public and private vocational education is available, particularly in the field of agriculture, but this too reaches only a tiny percentage of the population.

## Health statistics

In 2007 the Dominican Republic had a birth rate of 22.91 per 1000, and a death rate of 5.32/1000. Dengue and malaria are endemic to the country. There is currently a mission based in the United States to combat the AIDS rate in the Dominican Republic.

## Immigration



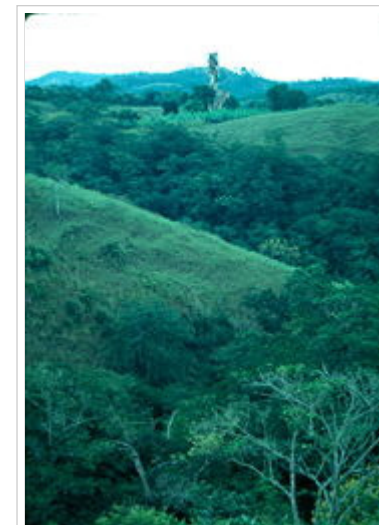
During the Haitian rule over the whole island of Hispaniola (1822-1844) former Black slaves and escapees from the United States were invited by the Haitian government to settle there. In the late 1800s and early 1900s large groups immigrated to the country from Venezuela and Puerto Rico, so much so that two of the country's former presidents and life long political rivals, Juan Bosch and Joaquín Balaguer both had Puerto Rican parents. During the first decades of the 20th century many Arabs primarily from Lebanon settled in the country. There is also a sizable Indian and Chinese population. The town of Sosúa has many Jews who settled there during World War II.

In recent decades, immigration from Haiti has increased once again. Most Haitian immigrants arrive in the Dominican Republic illegally, and work at low-paying, unskilled labor jobs, including construction work, household cleaning, and on sugar plantations. Current estimates put the Haitian-born population in the Dominican Republic as high as 1 million. Working conditions on these sugar plantations have caused controversy, including assertions that conditions are near-slavery. Moreover, the children of illegal Haitian immigrants are denied citizenship and basic health care, and there are frequent physical attacks and roundups on adult immigrants.

Some Dominican and Haitian officials deny such accusations of slavery, with the Haitian ambassador Fritz Cineas stating "I still have not received any complaint of violation of human rights against the Haitian immigrants in the country". However, the President of the Dominican Republic, Leonel Fernández stated publicly during a seminar on immigration policy in 2005 that collective expulsions of Haitians were carried out "in an abusive and inhuman way". Selective enforcement of deportation rules is much criticized in Haiti, and it has been said that "the Dominicans could help heal many of Haiti's open political wounds by extraditing back to Haiti many of the criminals of the 1991 coup d'etat and the Duvalier dictatorship who enjoy de facto political asylum in the Dominican Republic." These people enjoy de facto political asylum in the Dominican Republic, critics say. When asked for a response for the current situation, Fernandez stated "There must exist an extradition treaty between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, but there isn't one between our two countries," Exploitation of Haitians immigrants in the Dominican Republic is the subject of the 2007 political documentary narrated by Paul Newman, *The Price of Sugar*.

### Stateless Haitians

Haiti, a nation with a similar population but with 1/2 the land size, is much poorer than the Dominican Republic. Many Haitian nationals come to the Dominican Republic in search of work, but are often relegated to second class status. Although anyone born in the Dominican Republic is theoretically a citizen, many children born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian nationals find themselves stateless, as they are not granted citizenship, due to the fact that their parents are deemed to be transient. However, the Haiti's Constitution said in tje Title II, Article 11: "Any person born of a Haitian father or Haitian mother who are themselves native-born Haitians and have never renounced their nationality possesses Haitian nationality at the time of birth. Competition for jobs has led to the deportation of many Haitians in an effort to save native Dominican rights. Unofficially there are 800,000 Haitians living in the Dominican Republic accounting for almost 10% of the population. After a UN delegation issued a preliminary report stating that it found a profound problem of racism and discrimination against people of Haitian origins, Dominican Foreign Minister Morales issued a communiqué denouncing it and stating that "Our border with Haiti has its problems, this is our reality and it must be understood. It is important not to confuse national sovereignty with indifference, and not to confuse security with



A border watch tower to control illegal immigration from Haiti located in the Cordillera Central of the Dominican Republic.



xenophobia..."

## Emigration



A photo of the Dominican Day Parade in New York City, a major location of emigration of Dominicans

The Dominican Republic has experienced three distinct waves of emigration in the second half of the twentieth century. The first period began in 1961, when a coalition of high-ranking Dominicans, with assistance from the CIA, assassinated General Rafael Trujillo, the nation's military dictator. In the wake of his death, fear of retaliation by Trujillo's allies, and political uncertainty in general, spurred migration from the island. In 1965, the United States began a military occupation of the Dominican Republic and eased travel restrictions, making it easier for Dominicans to obtain American visas. From 1966 to 1978, the exodus continued, fueled by high unemployment and political repression. Communities established by the first wave of immigrants to the U.S. created a network that assisted subsequent arrivals. In the early 1980s, underemployment, inflation, and the rise in value of the dollar all contributed to a third wave of migration from the island nation. Today, emigration from the Dominican Republic remains high, facilitated by the social networks of now-established Dominican communities in the United States.

## Crime

The Dominican Republic has served as a transportation hub for Colombian drug cartels. In 2004 it was estimated that 8% of all cocaine smuggled into the United States has come through the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic responded with increased efforts to seize drug shipments, arrest and extradite those involved, and combat money-laundering. A 1995 report stated that social pressures and poverty have led to a rise in prostitution within the Dominican Republic. Though prostitution is illegal within the country and the age of consent is 18, even child prostitution is a growing phenomenon in impoverished areas.

In an environment where young girls are often denied employment opportunities offered to boys, prostitution frequently becomes a source of supplementary income. UNICEF estimated in 1994 that at least 25,000 children were involved in the Dominican sex trade, 63% of that figure being girls.

## Culture



The culture of the Dominican Republic, like its Caribbean neighbors, is a blend of the European colonists, Taínos and Africans, and their cultural legacies. Spanish, also known as *Castellano* (Castilian) is the official language. Other languages such as Haitian Creole, English, French, German, and Italian are also spoken to varying degrees. Haitian Creole is spoken fluently by 159,000 or as many as 1.2 million Haitian nationals and Dominicans of Haitian descent, and is the third most spoken language after Spanish and English. European, African and Taíno cultural elements are most prominent in food, family structure, religion and music. Many Arawak/Taíno names and words are used in daily conversation and for many items endemic to the DR.

## Cuisine

Dominican Republic cuisine is predominantly made up of a combination of Spanish, Taino and African influences over the last few centuries. Typical cuisine is quite similar to what can be found in other Latin American countries but, many of the names of dishes are different. Breakfast usually consists of eggs and *mangú* (mashed, boiled plantain). For heartier versions, these are accompanied by deep-fried meat and/or cheese. Similar to Spain, lunch is generally the largest and most important meal of the day. Lunch usually consists of some type of meat (chicken, pork or fish), rice and beans, and a side portion of salad. "La Bandera" (literally, The Flag), the most popular lunch dish, consists of broiled chicken, white rice and red beans.

Typical Dominican cuisine usually accommodates all four food groups, incorporating meat or seafood; rice, potatoes or plantains; and is accompanied by some other type of vegetable or salad. Many dishes are made with *sofrito*, which is a mix of local herbs and spices sautéed to bring out all of the dish's flavours. Throughout the south-central coast, bulgur, or whole wheat, is a main ingredient in *quipes* or *tipili* (bulgur salad). Other favorite Dominican dishes include *chicharron*, *yucca*, *casave*, and *pastelitos*. Some treats Dominicans enjoy are *arroz con leche*/*arroz con dulce*, *biscocho dominicano*, *habichuelas con dulce*, flan, *frio frio*, dulce de leche, and *caña* or sugar cane. The beverages Dominicans enjoy include *Morir Soñando*, Ron Brugal (Brugal rum), Cerveza Presidente (Presidente beer), *Mamajuana*, *batida* (smoothie), *ponche*, *mabey*, and coffee.

## Music

Musically, the Dominican Republic is known for the creation of Merengue music, a type of lively, fast-paced rhythm and dance music consisting of a tempo of about 120 to 160 beats per minute (it varies wildly) based on musical elements like drums, brass and chorded instruments, as well as some elements unique to the music style of the DR, such as the marimba. Its syncopated beats use Latin percussion, brass instruments, bass, and piano or keyboard. Not known for social content in its commercial form (Merengue Típico or Perico Ripiao is very socially charged), it is primarily a dancehall music that was declared the national music during the Trujillo regime. Well-known merengue singers include Juan Luis Guerra, Fernando Villalona, Eddy Herrera, Sergio Vargas, Toño Rosario, Johnny Ventura, and Milly Quezada. Merengue became popular mostly on the east coast of the United States during the 1980s and 90s, when many Puerto Rican groups such as Elvis Crespo were produced by Dominican bandleaders and writers living in the US territory. The emergence of Bachata- Merengue along with a larger number of Dominicans living among other Latino groups (particularly Cubans and Puerto Ricans in New York, New Jersey, and Florida) contributed to the music's growth in popularity..

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 264 of 637







Bachata, a form of music and dance that originated in the countryside and rural marginal neighborhoods of the Dominican Republic, has become quite popular in recent years. Its subjects are often romantic; especially prevalent are tales of heartbreak and sadness. In fact, the original term used to name the genre was "amargue" ("bitterness," or "bitter music"), until the rather ambiguous (and mood-neutral) term *bachata* became popular.

Bachata grew out of — and is still closely related to — the pan-Latin American romantic style called bolero. Over time, it has been influenced by merengue and by a variety of Latin American guitar styles.

## Sports

Baseball is by far the most popular sport in the Dominican Republic today. After the United States, the Dominican Republic has the second-highest number of baseball players in the U.S. Major League Baseball (MLB). These include Sammy Sosa, Albert Pujols, Pedro Martínez, Vladimir Guerrero, David Ortiz, Jose Reyes, Manny Ramírez, Robinson Canó and Luis Castillo. Alex Rodriguez was born in New York to parents that immigrated from the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic has participated in the Baseball World Cup winning one Gold (1948), three Silver (1942, 1950, 1952), and two Bronze (1943, 1969), second behind Cuba's record of twenty-five Gold (1939, 1940, 1942, 1943, 1950, 1952, 1953, 1961, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2005), two Silver (1941, 2007) and two Bronze (1944, 1951).

Historically, the Dominican Republic has been linked to MLB since Ozzie Virgil, Sr. became the first Dominican to play there. Other very notable players were Juan Marichal, Bartolo Colón, Felipe Alou, Rico Carty, George Bell, and Stan Javier, among many others.

The Dominican Republic also has its own baseball league, which runs its season from October to January (called The Winter League by MLB), and includes six teams: Tigres del Licey (Licey Tigers), Aguilas Cibaeñas (Cibao Eagles), Gigantes del Cibao (Cibao Giants), Azucareros del Este (Eastern Sugar-makers), Estrellas Orientales (Eastern Stars), and Leones del Escogido (Escogido Lions). Many MLB players and minor leaguers play in this six-team league during the off-season. As such, the Dominican winter league serves as an important "training ground" for MLB.

The 2007-2008 Caribbean Tournament (series) will be held In Santiago, Dominican Republic.

Olympic gold medalist and world champion over 400 m hurdles Félix Sánchez, and NFL football player Luis Castillo both hail from the Dominican Republic, as does current NBA player Al Horford.

## Holidays



Dominican Citizen and Major League Baseball player David Ortiz



Date	Name	
January 1	New Year's Day	Non-working day.
January 6	Catholic day of the Epiphany	Movable.
January 21	<i>Virgen de la Altagracia</i>	Non-working day. Patroness Day (Catholic).
January 26	Duarte's day	Movable. Founding Father.
February 27	Independence Day	Non-working day. National Day.
(Variable date)	Holy Week	Working days, except Good Friday. A Catholic holiday.
May 1	Labour Day	Movable.
(Variable date)	Catholic Corpus Christi	Non-working day. A Thursday in June (60 days after Easter Sunday).
August 16	Restoration Day	Movable.
September 24	<i>Virgen de las Mercedes</i>	Non-working day. A Patroness Day (Catholic)
November 6	Constitution Day	Movable.
December 25	Christmas Day	Non-working day. Birth of Jesus Christ

#### Notes:

- *In those years when there is a new president, August 16 is a non-working holiday and is not moved to another day.*
- *The non-working holidays are not moved to another day.*
- *If a movable holiday falls on Saturday, Sunday or Monday then it is not moved to another day. If it falls on Tuesday or Wednesday, the holiday is moved to the previous Monday. If it falls on Thursday or Friday, the holiday is moved to the next Monday.*

## Military

Congress authorizes a combined military force of 44,000 active duty personnel. Actual active duty strength is approximately 32,000. However, approximately 50% of those are used for non-military activities such as security providers for government-owned non-military facilities, highway toll stations, prisons, forestry work, state enterprises, and private businesses. The Commander in Chief of the military is the President. The principal missions are to defend the nation and protect the territorial integrity of the country. The army, larger than the other services combined with approximately 20,000 active duty personnel, consists of six infantry brigades, a combat support brigade, and a combat service support brigade. The air force operates two main bases, one in the southern region near



Santo Domingo and one in the northern region near Puerto Plata. The navy operates two major naval bases, one in Santo Domingo and one in Las Calderas on the southwestern coast, and maintains 12 operational vessels. In the Caribbean, only Cuba has a larger military force.

The armed forces have organized a Specialized Airport Security Corps (CESA) and a Specialized Port Security Corps (CESEP) to meet international security needs in these areas. The Secretary of the Armed Forces has also announced plans to form a specialized border corps (CESEF). Additionally, the armed forces provide 75% of personnel to the National Investigations Directorate (DNI) and the Counter-Drug Directorate (DNCD).

The Dominican National Police force contains 32,000 agents. The police are not part of the Dominican armed forces, but share some overlapping security functions. Sixty-three percent of the force serve in areas outside traditional police functions, similar to the situation of their military counterparts.

## Services and transportation

There are two transportation services in the Dominican Republic, one controlled by the government through the Oficina Técnica de Transito Terrestre (O.T.T.T.) and the Oficina Metropolitana de Servicios de Autobuses (OMSA), and the other controlled by private business, among them, Federación Nacional de Transporte La Nueva Opción (FENATRANO) and the Confederación Nacional de Transporte (CONATRA).

The government transportation system covers large routes in metropolitan areas, such as Santo Domingo and Santiago, for very inexpensive prices. In December 2006, the price was DOP\$5.00(US\$0.15), and air-conditioned bus rides were priced at DOP\$10 (US\$0.30). It should be noted that most OMSA buses are currently in very poor condition, and OMSA has been criticized for its incapability to fully meet the people's needs.

FENATRANO and CONATRA offer their services with *voladoras* (vans) or *conchos* (cars), which have routes in most parts of the cities. These cars have roofs painted in yellow or green in order to identify them. The cars have scheduled days to work, depending on the colour of the roof, and have been described as unsafe.

## Communications

The Dominican Republic has a well developed telecommunications infrastructure. With extensive mobile phone services and landline services. The telecommunications regulator in the country is INDOTEL, Instituto Dominicano De Telecomunicaciones. The Dominican Republic offers cable internet and DSL in most parts of the country, and many ISPs provide 3G wireless internet service. Projects to extend Wi-Fi hot spots have been made in Santo Domingo. As of October 2007 a new service was introduced in the country via WiMax, by both OneMax and the former Codetel, now Claro, that provides telephony over IP as well as nation-wide broadband services to both residential and commercial users. In fact the DR is the only country in all Latin America to have this kind of service up to this date at a national level.

Numerous television channels are available, including digital cable Telecable Nacional and Aster. Many other companies provide digital television services with channels from Latin America and the world. The reported speeds are from 256 kbit/s /128 kbit/s for residential services and up to 4 MB / 2 MB for commercial service ( denotes downstream/upstream speed).



The DR commercial radio stations are in the process of transferring to the digital spectrum via HD Radio.

As of October 2007, there are five major communication companies: CODETEL, Orange, Tricom, Centennial Communications and Onemax.

On February 1, 2007, Verizon changed the names of its wireless services to Claro and CODETEL. The company has been owned since 2006 by Carlos Slim Helú's América Móvil. Claro is now the official name of the Wireless Division and CODETEL (the original Compañía Dominicana de Teléfonos) is the updated name for the Verizon Dominicana landline and broadband market.

## Highways

The Dominican Republic has five major highways, which take travelers to every important town in the country. The three major highways are Autopista Duarte, Autopista Del Este, and Autopista Del Sur, which go to the north, east, and western side of the country. Dominican Republic lacks a good system of routes interconnecting small towns, and most of these routes are unpaved or in bad condition.

## Electricity

Electrical services in the country have been a headache for the population, as well as the business and other areas for more than 40 years. Due to the extreme corruption within the government, no administration has been able to cope with this problem. In 1998, three regional electricity distribution systems were privatized via sale of 50% of shares to foreign operators; in an unexpected decision, the Mejía administration repurchased all foreign-owned shares in two of these systems in late 2003. The third, serving the eastern provinces, is operated by U.S. concerns and is 50% U.S.-owned. Industry experts estimated distribution losses for 2006 surpassed 40%, primarily due to low collection rates, theft, and corruption. At the close of 2006, the government had exceeded its budget for electricity subsidies, spending close to U.S. \$650 million.

Household and general electrical service is delivered at 110 volts alternating at 60 Hz; electrically-powered items from the United States work with no modifications. The majority of the country has access to electricity. Still in 2007, some areas have outages lasting as long as 20 hours a day. Tourist areas tend to have more reliable power as do business, travel, healthcare, and vital infrastructure. The situation improved in 2006, with 200 circuits (40% of the total) providing permanent electricity, as 85% of electric demand overall was met and blackouts were reduced from 6.3 hours per day to 3.7. Concentrated efforts were announced to increase efficiency of delivery to places where the payment rate reached 70%. The electricity sector is highly politicized, and with 2008 presidential election campaigning already in motion the prospect of further effective reforms of the sector is poor. Debts, including government debt, amount to more than U.S. \$500 million. Some generating companies are undercapitalized and at times unable to purchase adequate fuel supplies.

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# Easter Island

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**Easter Island** (**Rapa Nui** in the Rapa Nui language, **Isla de Pascua** in Spanish language), is a Polynesian island in the southeastern Pacific Ocean, at the southeasternmost point of the Polynesian triangle. The island is a special territory of Chile. Easter Island is famous for its monumental statues, called *moai* (IPA: /ˈmoʊaɪ/), created by the Rapanui people. It is a world heritage site with much of the island protected within the Rapa Nui National Park.



## Name

The name "Easter Island" was given by the island's first recorded European visitor, the Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen, who encountered Easter Island on Easter Sunday 1722, while searching for Davis or David's island. The island's official Spanish name, *Isla de Pascua*, is Spanish for "Easter Island".

The current Polynesian name of the island, "Rapa Nui" or "Big Rapa", was coined by labor immigrants from Rapa in the Bass Islands, who likened it to their home island in the aftermath of the Peruvian slave deportations in the 1870s. However, Thor Heyerdahl has claimed that the naming would have been the opposite, *Rapa* being the original name of Easter Island, and *Rapa Iti* was named by its refugees.

There are several hypotheses about the "original" Polynesian name for Easter Island, including *Te pito o te henua*, or "The Navel of the World" due to its isolation. Legends claim that the island was first named as *Te pito o te kainga a Hau Maka*, or the "Little piece of land of Hau Maka". Another name, *Mata-ki-Te-rangi*, means "Eyes that talk to the sky."

## Location and physical geography

<b>Rapa Nui</b> <b>Easter Island/Isla de Pascua</b>	
	
	
Easter Island map showing Terevaka, Poike, Rano Kau, Motu Nui, Orongo, and Mataveru; major Ahus are marked with Moai	
<b>Capital</b>	Hanga Roa
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish, Rapa Nui
<b>Ethnic groups</b> (2002)	Rapanui 60%, Chilean 39%, Amerindian 1%
<b>Demonym</b>	Rapa Nui or Pascuense
<b>Government</b>	Special territory of Chile



Easter Island is one of the world's most isolated inhabited islands. It is 3,600 km (2,237 mi) west of continental Chile and 2,075 km (1,290 mi) east of Pitcairn ( Sala y Gómez, 415 kilometres to the east, is closer but uninhabited).

It has a latitude close to that of Caldera, Chile, an area of 163.6 km<sup>2</sup> (63 sq mi), and a maximum altitude of 507 metres. There are three *Rano* (freshwater crater lakes), at Rano Kau, Rano Raraku and Rano Aroi, near the summit of Terevaka, but no permanent streams or rivers.

## Geology

Easter Island is a volcanic high island, consisting of three extinct volcanoes: Terevaka (altitude 507 metres) forms the bulk of the island. Two other volcanoes, Poike and Rano Kau, form the eastern and southern headlands and give the island its approximately triangular shape. There are numerous lesser cones and other volcanic features, including the crater Rano Raraku, the cinder cone Puna Pau and many volcanic caves including lava tubes.

Easter Island and surrounding islets such as Motu Nui, Motu Iti are the summit of a large volcanic mountain which rises over two thousand metres from the sea bed. It is part of the Sala y Gómez Ridge, a (mostly submarine) mountain range with dozens of seamounts starting with Pukao and then Moai, two seamounts to the west of Easter Island, and extending 2,700 km (1,700 mi) east to the Nazca Seamount.

Pukao, Moai and Easter Island were formed in the last 750,000 years, with the most recent eruption a little over a hundred thousand years ago. They are the youngest mountains of the Sala y Gómez Ridge, which has been formed by the Nazca Plate floating over the Easter hotspot. Only at Easter Island, its surrounding islets and Sala y Gómez does the Sala y Gómez Ridge form dry land.

In the first half of the 20th century, steam came out of the Rano Kau crater wall. This was photographed by the island's manager, Mr Edmunds.

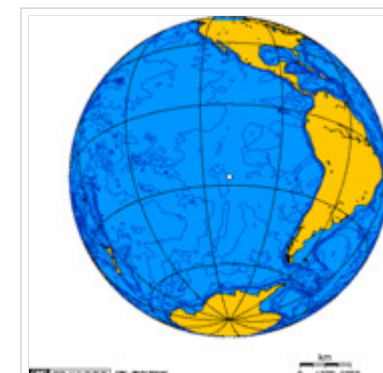
## History

The history of Easter Island is incredibly rich and highly controversial. Its inhabitants have endured famines, epidemics, civil war, slave raids and colonialism, and the crash of their ecosystem; their population has declined

- Provincial governor	Melania Carolina Hotu Hey (2006-)
- Mayor	Pedro Pablo Edmunds Paoa
<b>Annexation</b>	to Chile
- Treaty signed	September 9, 1888
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	163.6 km <sup>2</sup> 63.1 sq mi
<b>Population</b>	
- 2002 census	3,791
- Density	23.17/km <sup>2</sup> 60.08/sq mi
<b>Time zone</b>	Central Time Zone ( UTC-6)
<b>Calling code</b>	+56 32



Easter Island, Sala y Gómez, South America and the islands in between



Orthographic projection centered on Easter Island.

**Rapa Nui National Park\***




precipitously more than once. They have left a cultural legacy that has brought them fame out of all proportion to their numbers.

Contemporary to the arrival of the first settlers of Hawaii, 300-400 CE was published as a date for initial settlement of Easter Island. Although some scholars argue for initial settlement of 700-800 CE, there is an on-going study by archaeologists Terry Hunt and Carl Lipo that states: “Radiocarbon dates for the earliest stratigraphic layers at Anakena, Easter Island, and analysis of previous radiocarbon dates imply that the island was colonized late, about 1200 CE. Significant ecological impacts and major cultural investments in monumental architecture and statuary thus began soon after initial settlement.”

## UNESCO World Heritage Site



<b>State Party</b>	 Chile
<b>Type</b>	Cultural
<b>Criteria</b>	i, iii, v
<b>Reference</b>	715
<b>Region**</b>	Oceanic Continent

### Inscription history

<b>Inscription</b>	1995 (19th Session)
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\* Name as inscribed on World Heritage List.

\*\* Region as classified by UNESCO.



According to legends recorded by the missionaries in the 1860s, the island originally had a very clear class system, with an *ariki*, king, wielding absolute god-like power ever since Hotu Matua had arrived on the island. The most visible element in the culture was production of massive moai that were part of the ancestral worship. With a strictly unified appearance, moai were erected along most of the coastline, indicating a homogeneous culture and centralized governance.



Motu Nui islet, part of the Birdman Cult ceremony

For unknown reasons, a coup by military leaders called *matatoa* had brought a new cult based around a previously unexceptional god Make-make. The cult of the birdman (Rapanui: *tangata manu*) was largely to blame for the island's misery of the late 18th and 19th centuries. With the island's ecosystem fading, destruction of crops quickly resulted in famine, sickness and death.

European accounts from 1722 and 1770 still saw only standing statues, but by Cook's visit in 1774 many were reported toppled. The *huri mo'ai* - the "statue-toppling" - continued into the 1830s as a part of fierce internecine wars. By 1838 the only standing Moai were on the slopes of Rano Raraku and Hoa Hakananai'a at Orongo.

The first recorded European contact with the island was on 5 April (Easter Sunday) 1722 when Dutch navigator Jacob Roggeveen visited for a week and estimated there were 2,000 to 3,000 inhabitants on the island. The next foreign visitors (on 15 November 1770) were two Spanish ships, *San Lorenzo* and *Santa Rosalia*. They reported the island as largely uncultivated, with a seashore lined with stone statues. Four years later, in 1774, British explorer James Cook visited Easter Island, he reported the statues as being neglected with some having fallen down. In 1825, the British ship, HMS Blossom, visited and reported no standing statues.

Easter Island was approached many times during the 19th century, but by now the islanders had become openly hostile towards any attempt to land, and very little new information was reported before the 1860s.

A series of devastating events killed almost the entire population of Easter Island in the 1860s. In December 1862, Peruvian slave raiders struck Easter Island. Violent abductions continued for several months, eventually capturing or killing around 1500 men and women, about half of the island's population. A dozen islanders managed to return from the horrors of Peru, but brought with them smallpox and started an epidemic, which decimated the island's population to the point where some of the dead were not even buried. Contributing to the chaos were violent clan wars with the remaining people fighting over the newly available lands of the deceased, bringing further famine and death among the dwindling population. The first Christian missionary, Eugène Eyraud, brought tuberculosis to the island in 1867 which took a quarter of the island's remaining population of 1,200.

Jean-Baptiste Dutrou-Bornier bought up all of the island apart from the missionaries area around Hanga Roa and moved a couple of hundred Rapanui to Tahiti to work for his backers. In 1871 the missionaries, having fallen out with Dutrou-Bornier, evacuated all but 171 Rapanui to the Gambier islands. Those who remained were mostly older men. Six years later, there were just 111 people living on Easter Island, and only 36 of them had any offspring.



Ahu Tongariki near Rano Raraku, a 15- Moai Ahu excavated and restored in the 1990s





From that point on and into the present day, the island's population slowly recovered. But with over 97% of the population dead or left in less than a decade, much of the island's cultural knowledge had been lost.

Easter Island was annexed by Chile on September 9, 1888, by Policarpo Toro, by means of the "Treaty of Annexation of the island" (Tratado de Anexión de la isla), that the government of Chile signed with the Rapanui people.

Until the 1960s, the surviving Rapanui were confined to the settlement of Hanga Roa and the rest of the island was rented to the Williamson-Balfour Company as a sheep farm until 1953. The island was then managed by the Chilean Navy until 1966 and at that point the rest of the island was reopened. In 1966, the Rapanui were given Chilean citizenship.

On July 30, 2007, a constitutional reform gave Easter Island and Juan Fernández Islands the status of *special territories* of Chile. Pending the enactment of a special charter, the island will continue to be governed as a province of the Valparaíso Region.

## Ecology



View of Easter Island from space, 2001. The Poike peninsula is on the right.

Easter Island, together with its closest neighbour, the tiny island of Isla Sala y Gómez 415 km further east, is recognized by ecologists as a distinct ecoregion, the Rapa Nui subtropical broadleaf forests. Having relatively little rainfall contributed to eventual deforestation. The original subtropical moist broadleaf forests are now gone, but paleobotanical studies of fossil pollen and tree moulds left by lava flows indicate that the island was formerly forested, with a range of trees, shrubs, ferns, and grasses. A large palm, *Paschalococos disperta*, related to the Chilean wine palm (*Jubaea chilensis*), was one of the dominant trees, as was the toromiro tree (*Sophora toromiro*). The palm is now extinct, and the toromiro is extinct in the wild. However, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the Göteborg Botanical Garden are jointly leading a scientific program to reintroduce the toromiro to Easter Island. The island is, and has been for at least the last three centuries, mainly covered in grassland with nga'atu or bulrush in the crater lakes of Rano Raraku and Rano Kau. Presence of these reeds (which are called *totorá* in the Andes) was used to support the argument of a South American origin of the statue builders, but pollen analysis of lake sediments shows these reeds have grown on the island for over 30,000 years. Before the arrival of humans, Easter Island had vast seabird colonies, no longer found on the main island, and several species of landbirds, which have become

extinct.

## Destruction of the ecosystem

"The overall picture for Easter is the most extreme example of forest destruction in the Pacific, and among the most extreme in the world: the whole forest gone, and all of its tree species extinct."



"Queen Mother" Koreto with her daughters "Queen" Caroline and Harriette in 1877



Panorama of Anakena beach, Easter Island. The moai pictured here was the first to be raised back into place upon its ahu in 1955 by islanders using the ancient method.

Trees are sparse on modern Easter Island, rarely forming small groves. The island once had a forest of palms, and it has generally been thought that native Easter Islanders deforested the island in the process of erecting their statues. Experimental archaeology has clearly demonstrated that some statues certainly could have been placed on "Y" shaped wooden frames called *miro manga erua* and then pulled to their final destinations on ceremonial sites. Rapanui traditions metaphorically refer to spiritual power (*mana*) as the means by which the moai were "walked" from the quarry. But, given the island's southern latitude, the climatic effects of the Little Ice Age (about 1650 to 1850) may have contributed to deforestation and other changes, though such speculation is unproven.

Jared Diamond disregards the influence of climate but still gives an extensive look into the collapse of the ancient Easter Islanders in his book *Collapse*. The disappearance of the island's trees seems to coincide with a decline of its civilization around the 17th and 18th century. Midden contents show a sudden drop in quantities of fish and bird bones as the islanders lost the means to construct fishing vessels and the birds lost their nesting sites. Soil erosion due to lack of trees is apparent in some places. Sediment samples document that up to half of the native plants had become extinct and that the vegetation of the island was drastically altered. Chickens and rats became leading items of diet and there are contested hints that cannibalism occurred, based on human remains associated with cooking sites, especially in caves.

In his article "From Genocide to Ecocide: The Rape of Rapa Nui", Benny Peiser notes evidence of self-sufficiency on Easter Island when Europeans first arrived. Although stressed, the island may still have had some (small) trees, mainly toromiro. Cornelis Bouman, Jakob Roggeveen's captain, stated in his log book, "... of yams, bananas and small coconut palms we saw little and no other trees or crops." According to Carl Friedrich Behrens, Roggeveen's officer, "The natives presented palm branches as peace offerings. Their houses were set up on wooden stakes, daubed over with luting and covered with palm leaves," (presumably from banana plants as the island was by then deforested). The stakes indicate that either driftwood or living trees were still available, though the reliability of Behrens as a source is questionable. By contrast, Peiser considers these reports to indicate that considerable numbers of large trees still existed at that time, which is explicitly contradicted by the Bouman quote above.

In his book *A Short History of Progress*, Ronald Wright speculates that for a generation or so, "there was enough old lumber to haul the great stones and still keep a few canoes seaworthy for deep water". When the day came the last boat was gone, wars broke out over "ancient planks and wormeaten bits of jetsam". But this statement is flawed since the sea going craft the islanders used were not made of wood, but of bundles of freshwater reeds planted in the Rano Kao crater which, according to Wright, were planted by one of the first "long-ear" settlers. A one-man craft of bound *Scirpus totora* reeds was called a *pora*. There were larger reed ships, some containing three masts with reed sails and capable of holding over 400 individuals, and are depicted in petroglyphs, roof paintings and sculptures.

By the end of the third epoch in the island's history, with only one "long-ear" surviving, there were more than a thousand moai (stone statues), which was one for every ten islanders (Wright, 2004). When the Europeans arrived in the 18th century, the worst was over and they only found one or two living souls per statue.



Easter Island has suffered from heavy soil erosion in recent centuries, perhaps aggravated by agriculture and massive deforestation. This process seems to have been gradual and may have been aggravated by extensive sheep farming throughout most of the 20th century. Jakob Roggeveen reported that Easter Island was exceptionally fertile. "Fowls are the only animals they keep. They cultivate bananas, sugar cane, and above all sweet potatoes." In 1786 M. de La Pérouse visited Easter Island and his gardener declared that "three days' work a year" would be enough to support the population.

Rollin, a major in the Perouse expedition of 1786, wrote, "Instead of meeting with men exhausted by famine... I found, on the contrary, a considerable population, with more beauty and grace than I afterwards met in any other island; and a soil, which, with very little labour, furnished excellent provisions, and in an abundance more than sufficient for the consumption of the inhabitants."

That oral traditions of the islanders are obsessed with cannibalism is sometimes taken as evidence supporting a rapid collapse. For example, to severely insult an enemy one would say, "The flesh of your mother sticks between my teeth." Diamond suggests that this means the food supply of the people ultimately ran out; however, cannibalism was widespread across Polynesian cultures, rendering his conclusion speculative.

## Culture

### Mythology

The most important myths are:

- Tangata manu, the Birdman cult which was practiced until the 1860s.
- Make-make, an important god.
- Aku-aku, the guardians of the sacred family caves.
- Moai-kava-kava a ghost man of the Hanau epe (long-ears.)
- Hekai ite umu pare haonga takapu Hanau epe kai noruego sacred chant to appease the aku-aku before entering a family cave.

### Stone work

Rapa Nui is a volcanic island consisting of geologically recent igneous rock. The Rapa Nui people had a Stone Age civilisation and made extensive use of several different types of indigenous stone:

- Basalt, a hard, dense stone used for toki and at least one of the moai.
- Obsidian, a volcanic glass with sharp edges used for sharp-edged implements such as Mataa and also for the black pupils of the eyes of the moai.
- Red Scoria from Puna Pau, a very light red stone used for the pukao and a few moai.
- Tuff from Rano Raraku, a much more easily worked rock than basalt, and was used for most of the moai.



Birdmen ( Tangata manu) paintings in the so-called "Cave of the Men Eatresses".



## Moai (statues)



Moai with replica eyes at Ahu Ko Te Riku in Hanga Roa, with Chilean Navy ship *Buque Escuela Esmeralda* behind.

The large stone statues, or *moai*, for which Easter Island is world-famous, were carved during a relatively short and intense burst of creative and productive megalithic activity. A total of 887 monolithic stone statues have been inventoried on the island and in museum collections. Although often identified as "Easter Island heads", the statues are actually complete torsos, the figures kneeling on bent knees with their hands over their stomach. Some upright moai have become buried up to their necks by shifting soils.

The period when the statues were produced remains disputed, with estimates ranging from 400 CE to 1500–1700 CE. Almost all (95%) moais were carved out of distinctive, compressed, easily worked volcanic ash or tuff found at a single site inside the extinct volcano Rano Raraku. The native islanders who carved them used only stone hand chisels, mainly basalt *toki*, which still lie in place all over the quarry. The stone chisels were re-sharpened by chipping off a new edge when dulled. The volcanic stone the moai were carved from was first wetted to soften it before sculpting began, then again periodically during the process. While many teams worked on different statues at the same time, a single moai would take a team of five or six men approximately one year to complete. Each statue represents a deceased long-ear chief or important person, their body

interred within the ahu, or coastal platforms, the moai stand upon.

Only a quarter of the statues were installed, while nearly half still remain in the quarry at Rano Raraku and the rest elsewhere on the island, probably on their way to final locations. Moving the huge statues required a *miro manga erua*, a Y-shaped sledge with cross pieces, pulled with ropes made from the tough bark of the hau-hau tree, and tied fast around the statue's neck. Anywhere from 180 to 250 men were required for pulling, depending on the size of the moai. Some 50 of the now standing statues have been re-erected in modern times. The first moai was re-erected on the beach of Anakena in 1958 using traditional methods during an expedition to the island by Thor Heyerdahl.

While the vast majority of moai follow a fairly standard design, a few are radically different, in most parts badly eroded and broken. These are believed to predate the better-known moai, including a kneeling statue with hands on its knees, parts of a statue with clearly carved ribs and a headless, rectangularly shaped torso. Similarities to Indian stone statues around Lake Titicaca in South America are striking, whether this is accidental or not.

### *Ahu*



Tukuturi, an unusual bearded kneeling moai.



*Ahu* are stone platforms which vary greatly in layout. Many have been significantly reworked during or after the *huri mo'ai* or *statue-toppling* era; many became ossuaries; one was dynamited open; and Ahu Tongariki was swept inland by a tsunami. Of the 313 known *ahu*, 125 carried stone *moai*—usually just one, probably due to the shortness of the *moai* period and difficulties in transporting them. Ahu Tongariki, one kilometer from Rano Raraku, had the most and tallest *moai*, 15 in total. Other notable *ahu* with *moai* are Ahu Akivi, restored in 1960 by William Mulloy, Nau Nau at Anakena and Tahai. Ahu without stone *moai* may have had statues made of wood, now lost.

The classic elements of *ahu* design are:

- A retaining rear wall several feet high, usually facing the sea.
- A platform behind the wall.
- Pads or cushions on the platform.
- A sloping ramp covered with evenly sized, wave-rounded boulders on the inland side of the platform rising most of, but not all, the way up the side of the platform.
- A pavement in front of the ramp.
- Inside the Ahu was a fill of rubble.

On top of many Ahu would have been:

- Moai on the pads looking out over the pavement with their backs to the rear wall.
- Pukao on the moai's heads.
- And in their eye sockets, white coral eyes with black obsidian pupils.

*Ahu* evolved from the traditional Polynesian *marae* in which the word *ahu* was only used for the central stone platform, though on Easter Island *ahu* and *moai* evolved to a much greater size. The biggest *ahu* contained 20 times as much stone as a *moai*; however, most of this stone was sourced very locally (apart from broken, old *moai*, fragments of which have also been used in the fill). Also individual stones are mostly far smaller than the *moai*, so less work was needed to transport the raw material.

*Ahu* are found mostly on the coast, where they are distributed fairly evenly except on the western slopes of Mount Terevaka and the Rano Kau and Poike headlands. These are the three areas with the least low-lying coastal land, and apart from Poike the furthest areas from Rano Raraku. One *ahu* with several *moai* was recorded on the cliffs at Rano Kau in the 1880s, but had fallen to the beach by the time of the Routledge expedition in 1914.

### Stone walls

One of the highest-quality examples of Easter Island stone masonry is the rear wall of the *Ahu* at Vinapu. Made without mortar by shaping hard basalt rocks of up to seven tons to match each other exactly, it has a superficial similarity to some Inca stone walls in South America.

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 277 of 637



Two *ahu* at Hanga Roa. In foreground Ahu Ko Te Riku (with a Pukao on its head). In the mid-ground is a side view of an Ahu with five *moai* showing retaining wall, platform, ramp and pavement.



Ahu Akivi, one of the few inland *ahu* with the only *moai* facing the ocean



## Stone houses

Some 1,233 prehistoric stone "houses", called *tupa* in earlier times and *hare moa* ("chicken house") later, are more conspicuous than the remains of the prehistoric human houses which only had stone foundations (except for those at Orongo). Stone houses were up to 6 meters long, with a distinctive boat-shaped structure combined with a stick and palm leaf or thatch superstructure. The entrances were very low, and getting in required crawling.

Germans excavated some of the *Hare Moa* in 1882 and found human remains inside. Locals told them that they were resting places for the *ariki*, Easter Island kings and chiefs. Each house had two small holes—if a hostile spirit entered through one, the spirit of the deceased could escape through the other. As such and also by their old name, the stone houses are seen similar to Indian *chullpas* in Peru and Bolivia. Noteworthy is that the remaining numbers of the stone houses and moais are quite close to each other, possibly meaning that for each person buried in a stone house, a moai was immediately constructed. Usage of stone houses as graves seems to have ceased around the same time when production of *moais* ended and ancestral worship declined. During the turmoils of the late 18th century, the islanders seem to have started to bury their dead among the ruined *ahus*—the *moai* platforms—and use the stone houses as chicken shelters. There are no human remains in them any more.

## Petroglyphs

*Petroglyphs* are pictures carved into rock, and Easter Island has one of the richest collections in all Polynesia. Around 1,000 sites with more than 4,000 petroglyphs are catalogued. Designs and images were carved out of rock for a variety of reasons: to create totems, to mark territory or to memorialize a person or event. There are distinct variations around the island in terms of the frequency of particular themes among petroglyphs, with a concentration of Birdmen at Orongo. Other subjects include sea turtles, Komari (vulvas) and Make-make, the chief god of the *Tangata manu* or Birdman cult. (Lee 1992)

Petroglyphs are also common in the Marquesas islands.

## Caves

The island and neighbouring Motu Nui are riddled with caves, many of which show signs of past human use and fortification, including narrowed entrances and crawl spaces with ambush points. Many caves feature in the myths and legends of the Rapa Nui.

## Rongorongo



The undeciphered Easter island script rongorongo may be one of the very few writing systems created *ex nihilo*, without outside influence. Alternatively, the islanders' brief but very visible exposure to Western writing during the Spanish visit in 1770 inspired the ruling class to establish rongorongo as a religious tool. Legends claim that Hotu Matu'a brought the original tablets with him when he first landed at Anakena. Rongorongo has few similarities to the petroglyph corpus; however, there is not a single line of rongorongo carved in stone despite thousands of petroglyphs and other remarkable stonework. Rongorongo probably originated on Easter Island in a rather late period.

Rongorongo was first reported by a French missionary, Eugène Eyraud, in 1864. At that time, several islanders still claimed to be able to understand the scripture, but all attempts to read them were unsuccessful. According to traditions, only a small part of the population was ever literate, rongorongo being a privilege of the ruling families and priests. This contributed to the total loss of knowledge of how to read rongorongo in the 1860s, when the island's elite was annihilated by slave raids and disease.

Of the hundreds of wooden tablets and staffs reportedly having rongorongo writing carved on them, only 26 survive, all in museums around the world and none remaining on Easter Island. Decades of numerous attempts to decipher proved unfruitful, and the scientific community does not agree on whether rongorongo was truly a form of writing.

## Wood carving

Wood was scarce on Easter Island during the 18th and 19th centuries, but a number of highly detailed and distinctive carvings have found their way to the world's museums. Particular forms include:

- Reimiro, a gorget or breast ornament of crescent shape with a head at one or both tips. The same design appears on the flag of Rapa Nui. Two Rei Miru at the British Museum are inscribed with Rongorongo.
- Moko-Miro, a man with a lizard head.
- Moai-Miro, human images often emaciated and sometimes with long ears.
- Ao, a large dancing paddle.

## Contemporary culture



Sample of rongorongo.



The Rapanui have:

- An annual cultural festival, the *Tapati*, celebrating Rapanui culture.
- A "national" football team.
- Three diskos in the town of Hanga Roa.
- A musical tradition that combines South American and Polynesian influences (*see music of Easter Island*).
- A vibrant carving tradition.

## Demography

### 2002 census

Population at the 2002 census was 3,791 (3,304 in Hanga Roa alone). 60% were Rapanui, Chileans of mixed mestizo descent were 39% of the population, and the remaining 1% were Native Americans from mainland Chile.

Rapanui have also migrated out of the island. At the 2002 census, 2,269 Rapanui lived on Easter Island, while 2,378 lived in the mainland of Chile (half of them in the metropolitan area of Santiago).

Population density on Easter Island is only 23 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (60 per sq mi), much lower than in the 17th century heyday of the moai building when there were possibly as many as 15,000 inhabitants, or roughly 92 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (214 per sq mi).

### Demographic history

The population was 1,936 inhabitants in 1982. This increase in population is partly due to the arrival of people of European descent from the mainland of Chile. Consequently, the island is losing its native Polynesian identity. In 1982 around 70% of the population were Rapanui (the native Polynesian inhabitants). Population had already declined to only 2,000–3,000 inhabitants before the slave raids of 1862. In the 19th century, disease due to contacts with Europeans, as well as deportation of 2,000 Rapanui to work as slaves in Peru, and the forced departure of the remaining Rapanui to Chile, carried the population of Easter Island to the all-time low of 111 inhabitants in 1877. Out of these 111 Rapanui, only 36 had descendants, but all of today's Rapanui claim descent from those 36.

## Administration and legal status

Easter Island shares with Juan Fernández Islands the sui generis constitutional status of *special territory* of Chile, granted in 2007. A special charter for the island is currently being discussed, therefore it continues to be considered a province of the Valparaíso Region, containing a single commune. Both the province and the commune are called "Easter Island" and encompass the whole island and its surrounding islets and rocks, plus Isla Salas y Gómez, some 380 km to the east.



Polynesian dancing with feather costumes is on the tourist itinerary





## Authorities

- Provincial governor: Melania Carolina Hotu Hey. Appointed by the President of the Republic.
- Mayor: Pedro Pablo Edmunds Paoa ( PDC). Directly-elected for four years. Municipality located in Hanga Roa.
- Municipal council:
  - Hipólito Juan Icka Nahoe ( PH)
  - Eliana Amelia Olivares San Juan ( UDI)
  - Nicolás Haoa Cardinali (Ind., centre-right)
  - Marcelo Icka Paoa ( PDC)
  - Alberto Hotus Chávez ( PPD)
  - Marcelo Pont Hill ( PPD)

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# Ecuador

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**Ecuador** (IPA: /'ɛkwədɔər/), officially the **Republic of Ecuador** (Spanish: *República del Ecuador* Spanish pronunciation: [re'puβlika ðel ekwa'ðor]), literally, "Republic of the equator") is a representative democratic republic in South America, bordered by Colombia on the north, by Peru on the east and south, and by the Pacific Ocean to the west. It is one of only two countries in South America (with Chile) that does not have a border with Brazil. The country also includes the Galápagos Islands in the Pacific, about 965 kilometers (600 miles) west of the mainland. Ecuador straddles the equator, from which it takes its name, and has an area of 256,371 square kilometers (98,985 mi<sup>2</sup>). Its capital city is Quito; its largest city is Guayaquil.

## History

Evidence of human cultures in Ecuador exists from c. 3500 B.C. Many civilizations rose throughout Ecuador, such as the Valdivia Culture and Machalilla Culture on the coast, the Quitus (near present day Quito) and the Cañari (near present day Cuenca). Each civilization developed its own distinctive architecture, pottery, and religious interests. After years of fiery resistance by the Cayambes and other tribes, as demonstrated by the battle of Yahuarcocha (Blood Lake) where thousands of resistance fighters were killed and thrown in the lake, what is now Ecuador fell to the Incan expansion and was assimilated loosely into the Incan empire.

## The Inca Empire

Through a succession of wars and marriages and among the nations that inhabited the valley, the region became part of the Inca Empire in 1463. Atahualpa, one of the sons of the Inca emperor Huayna Capac, could not receive the crown of the Empire since the emperor had another son, Huascar, born in Cusco, the capital of the Inca Empire. Upon Huayna Capac's death in 1525, the empire was divided in two: Atahualpa received the north, with his capital in Quito; Huascar received the south, with its capital in Cusco. In 1530, Atahualpa defeated Huascar and conquered the entire Empire for the crown of Quito.

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Republic of Ecuador	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p><b>Motto:</b> <i>Dios, patria y libertad</i>" (Spanish)  <i>Pro Deo, Patria et Libertate</i>" (Latin)            "God, homeland and liberty"</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Salve, Oh Patria</i> (Spanish)  <i>We Salute You, Our Homeland</i></p>	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Quito
<b>Largest city</b>	Guayaquil
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Demonym</b>	Ecuadorian, Ecuadorean



Most of current-day **Ecuador** was under control of the Incan Empire which was governed from Cusco for almost 70 years, and from Quito for several months. Throughout the 336 year period of the Incan civilization, (1197-1533) Cusco was the capital for almost the entire period except for the last few months when Quito was the capital. Despite Quito being the capital, for a few months at the end, the emperor Atahualpa, did not actually rule from the capital, Quito as he was fighting the Spanish at Cajamarca.

## Colonization by Spain

Barely a year later, in 1531, the Spanish conquistadors, under Francisco Pizarro, arrived to find an Inca empire torn by civil war. Atahualpa wanted to reestablish a unified Incan empire; the Spanish, however, had conquest intentions and established themselves in a fort in Cajamarca, captured Atahualpa during the Battle of Cajamarca, and held him for ransom. The Incas filled one room with gold and two with silver to secure his release. Despite being surrounded and vastly outnumbered, the Spanish executed Atahualpa. To escape the confines of the fort, the Spaniards fired all their cannons and broke through the lines of the bewildered Incans. In subsequent years, the Spanish colonists became the new elite, centering their power in the vice-royalties of Nueva Granada and Lima.

<b>Government</b>	Presidential republic
- President	Rafael Correa
- Vice President	Lenín Moreno
<b>Independence</b>	
- from Spain	May 24, 1822
- from Gran Colombia	May 13, 1830
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	256,370 km <sup>2</sup> ( 73rd) 98,985 sq mi
- Water (%)	8.8
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	13,755,680 ( 65th)
- Density	53.8/km <sup>2</sup> ( 147th) 139.4/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$61.7 billion ( 70th)
- Per capita	\$4,776 ( 111th)
<b>Gini</b>	42 (medium)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.772 (medium) ( 89th)
<b>Currency</b>	U.S. dollar <sup>2</sup> ( USD)
<b>Time zone</b>	ECT, GALT ( UTC-5, -6)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ec
<b>Calling code</b>	+593
<p>1 Quichua and other Amerindian languages spoken by indigenous communities.</p> <p>2 Sucre until 2000, followed by the U.S. dollar and Ecuadorian centavo coins</p>	



The indigenous population was decimated by disease during the first decades of Spanish rule — a time when the natives also were forced into the "encomienda" labor system for Spanish landlords. In 1563, Quito became the seat of a royal audiencia (administrative district) of Spain and part of the Vice-Royalty of Lima, and later the Vice-Royalty of Nueva Granada.

After nearly 300 years of Spanish colonization, Quito still was a small city of only 10,000 inhabitants. It was there, on August 10, 1809 (the national holiday), that the first call for independence from Spain was made in Latin America ("Primer Grito de la Independencia"), under the leadership of the city's *criollos* like Carlos Montúfar, Eugenio Espejo and Bishop Cuero y Caicedo. Quito's nickname, "Luz de América" ("Light of America"), comes from the idea that this first attempt produced the inspiration for the rest of Spanish America.

## Independence

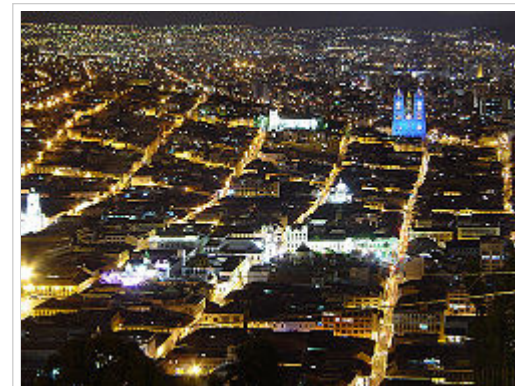
On October 9, 1820, Guayaquil became the first city in Ecuador to gain its independence from Spain. It was not until May 24, 1822 (the Glorious May Revolution) that the rest of Ecuador gained its independence after Field Marshal Antonio José de Sucre defeated the Spaniard Royalist forces at the Batalla de Pichincha (Battle of Pichincha) near Quito. Following the battle, Ecuador joined Simón Bolívar's Republic of Gran Colombia, only to become a republic in 1830.

The 19th century for Ecuador was marked by instability, with a rapid succession of rulers. The first president of Ecuador was the Venezuelan born Juan José Flores, who was ultimately deposed, followed by many authoritarian leaders such as Vicente Rocafuerte, José Joaquín de Olmedo, José María Urbina, Diego Noboa, Pedro José de Arteta, Manuel de Ascáubi and Flores's own son, Antonio Flores Jijón, among others. The conservative Gabriel García Moreno unified the country in the 1860s with the support of the Roman Catholic Church. In the late 19th century, world demand for cocoa tied the economy to commodity exports and led to migrations from the highlands to the agricultural frontier on the coast.

## The liberal revolution

A coastal-based liberal revolution in 1895 under Eloy Alfaro reduced the power of the clergy and the conservative land owners of the highlands, and this liberal wing retained power until the military "Julian Revolution" of 1925. The 1930s and 1940s were marked by instability and emergence of populist politicians such as five-time President José María Velasco Ibarra.

## War with Peru



Old downtown Quito, first world heritage by UNESCO.



Control over territory in the Amazon basin led to a long-lasting dispute between Ecuador and Peru. In 1941, amid fast-growing tensions between the two countries, war broke out. Peru claimed that Ecuador's military presence in Peruvian-claimed territory was an invasion; Ecuador, for its part, claimed that Peru had invaded Ecuador. In July 1941, troops were mobilized in both countries. Peru had an army of 11,681 troops who faced a poorly-supplied and inadequately-armed Ecuadorian force of 2,300, of which only 1,300 were deployed in the southern provinces. Hostilities erupted on July 5, 1941, when Peruvian forces crossed the Zarumilla river at several locations, testing the strength and resolve of the Ecuadorian border troops. Finally, on July 23, 1941, the Peruvians launched a major invasion, crossing the Zarumilla river in force and advancing into the Ecuadorian province of El Oro.

During the course of the war, Peru gained control over some part of the disputed territory and some part of the province of El Oro, and some parts of the province of Loja, demanding that the Ecuadorian government give up its territorial claims. The Peruvian Navy tried to block the port of Guayaquil, almost cutting supplies to the Ecuadorian troops. After a few weeks of war and under pressure by the U.S. and several Latin American nations, all fighting came to a stop. Ecuador and Peru came to an accord formalized in the Rio Protocol, signed on January 29, 1942, in favour of hemispheric unity against the Axis Powers in World War II. As a result of its victory, Peru was awarded the disputed territory.

Due to the fact that a small river in the conflict region was not cataloged in the Rio de Janeiro Protocol, Ecuadorian governments determined the Rio Protocol was not valid. It would take two more undeclared wars before a peace agreement was finally reached in October 1998 to end hostilities. (See Paquisha Incident and Cenepa War.)

Recession and popular unrest led to a return to populist politics and domestic military interventions in the 1960s, while foreign companies developed oil resources in the Ecuadorian Amazon. In 1972, construction of the Andean pipeline was completed. The pipeline brought oil from the east side of the Andes to the coast, making Ecuador South America's second largest oil exporter.

### **Military governments (1972-1979)**



Colonial city gates of Loja



That same year a "revolutionary and nationalist" military junta overthrew the government of Velasco Ibarra. The coup d'etat was led by General Guillermo Rodríguez and executed by navy commander Jorge Queirolo G. The new president exiled José María Velasco to Argentina remaining in power until 1976, when he was removed by another military government. It was a military junta led by Admiral Alfredo Poveda, who was declared chairman of the Supreme Council. The Supreme Council had two other members as well, general Guillermo Durán Arcentales and general Luis Leoro Franco. After the country stabilized, socially and economically, this Supreme Council proceeded to hold democratic elections and stepped down to hand presidential duties over to the newly democratically elected president.

## Return to a new democracy

Elections were held in 1979 under a new Constitution. Jaime Roldós Aguilera was elected President, governing until May 24, 1981, when he died in a plane crash. By 1982, the government of Osvaldo Hurtado faced an economic crisis, characterized by high inflation, budget deficits, a falling currency, mounting debt service, and uncompetitive industries, leading to chronic government instability.

The 1984 presidential elections were narrowly won by León Febres Cordero Rivadeneira, of the Social Christian Party (PSC). During the first years of his administration, Febres-Cordero introduced free-market economic policies, took a strong stand against drug trafficking and terrorism, and pursued close relations with the United States. His tenure was marred by bitter wrangling with other branches of Government and his own brief kidnapping by elements of the military. A devastating earthquake in March 1987 interrupted oil exports and worsened the country's economic problems.

Rodrigo Borja Cevallos of the Democratic Left (Izquierda Democrática or ID) party won the presidency in 1988, running in the runoff election against Abdalá Bucaram of the PRE. His government was committed to improving human rights protection and carried out some reforms, notably an opening of Ecuador to foreign trade. The Borja government concluded an accord leading to the disbanding of the small terrorist group, " ¡Alfaro Vive, Carajo!" ("Alfaro Lives, Dammit!") named after [[Eloy Alfaro. However, continuing economic problems undermined the popularity of the ID, and opposition parties gained control of Congress in 1990.

Many years of mismanagement, starting with the mishandling of the country's debt during the 1970s military regime, had left the country essentially ungovernable. Since the mid 1990s, the government of Ecuador has been characterized by a weak executive branch that struggles to appease the ruling classes represented in the legislative and judiciary. The three democratically elected presidents during the period 1996-2006 all failed to finish their terms.

The emergence of the indigenous population (approximately 25 percent) as an active constituency has added to the democratic volatility of the country in recent years. The population have been motivated by government failures to deliver on promises of land reform, lower unemployment and provision of social services, and historical exploitation by the land-holding elite.

Their movement, along with the continuing destabilizing efforts by both the Elite and Leftist movements, have led to a deterioration of the executive office. The populace and the other branches of government give the president very little political capital, as illustrated by the most recent ouster of a president. In April 2005, Ecuador's congress ousted President Lucio Gutiérrez.



Quito during the 1900's.



The vice-president, Alfredo Palacio, took his place and remained in office until the presidential election of 2006, which did not produce a conclusive winner until a runoff election on 26 November elected Rafael Correa over Alvaro Noboa.

## Politics

The executive branch includes 25 ministries. Provincial governors and councilors (mayors, aldermen, and parish boards) are directly elected. Congress meets throughout the year except for recesses in July and December. There are 69 seven-member congressional committees. Justices of the Supreme Court are appointed by the Congress for indefinite terms.

On September 30, 2007 Ecuador elected a constituent assembly, dominated by President Rafael Correa's PAIS Alliance, charged with rewriting the Constitution of Ecuador.

Ecuador has often placed great emphasis on multilateral approaches to international issues. Ecuador is a member of the United Nations (and most of its specialized agencies) and a member of many regional groups, including the Rio Group, the Latin American Economic System, the Latin American Energy Organization, the Latin American Integration Association, and The Andean Pact.

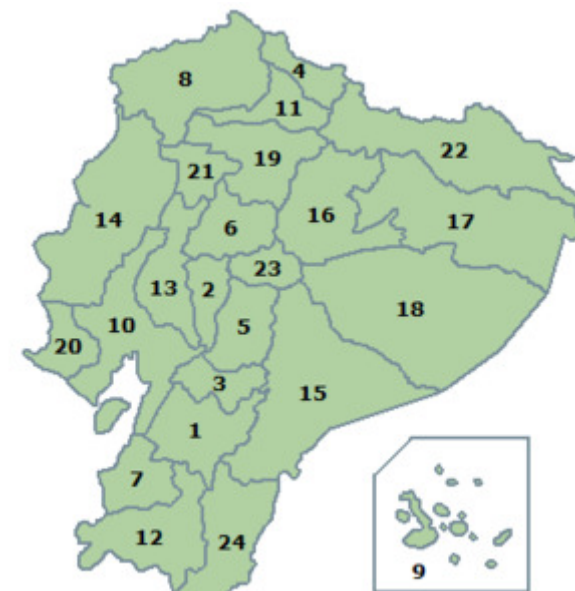
## Provinces and cantons

Ecuador is divided into 24 provinces (*provincias*), each with its own administrative capital:



Map Key	Province	Capital
1	<b>Azuay</b>	Cuenca
2	<b>Bolívar</b>	Guaranda
3	<b>Cañar</b>	Azogues
4	<b>Carchi</b>	Tulcán
5	<b>Chimborazo</b>	Riobamba
6	<b>Cotopaxi</b>	Latacunga
7	<b>El Oro</b>	Machala
8	<b>Esmeraldas</b>	Esmeraldas
9	<b>Galápagos</b>	Puerto Baquerizo Moreno
10	<b>Guayas</b>	Guayaquil
11	<b>Imbabura</b>	Ibarra
12	<b>Loja</b>	Loja
13	<b>Los Ríos</b>	Babahoyo

Map Key	Province	Capital
14	<b>Manabi</b>	Portoviejo
15	<b>Morona-Santiago</b>	Macas
16	<b>Napo</b>	Tena
17	<b>Orellana</b>	Puerto Francisco de Orellana
18	<b>Pastaza</b>	Puyo
19	<b>Pichincha</b>	Quito
20	<b>Santa Elena</b>	Santa Elena
21	<b>Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas</b>	Santo Domingo de los Colorados
22	<b>Sucumbíos</b>	Nueva Loja
23	<b>Tungurahua</b>	Ambato
24	<b>Zamora-Chinchi</b>	Zamora







The provinces are divided into cantons, and further subdivided into parishes (*parroquias*).

## Nations of Ecuador

Ecuador is a plurinational state. In addition to whites, blacks, and mestizos, many Ecuadorians belong to indigenous nations, principally:

- Achuar
- Awá
- Chachi
- Cofán
- Epera
- Huaorani
- Kichua
- Manta
- Secoya
- Shuar
- Siona
- Tsáchila
- Huancavilca
- Záparo

## Geography and climate



Ecuador has three main geographic regions, plus an insular region in the Pacific Ocean:

- *La Costa*, or the coast, comprises the low-lying land in the western part of the country, including the Pacific coastline.
- *La Sierra* ("the highlands") is the high-altitude belt running north to south along the centre of the country, its mountainous terrain dominated by the Andes mountain range.
- *El Oriente* ("the east") comprises the Amazon rainforest areas in the eastern part of the country, accounting for just under half of the country's total surface area, though populated by under 5 percent of the population.
- The *Región Insular* is the region comprising the Galápagos Islands, some 1,000 kilometers (620 mi) west of the mainland in the Pacific Ocean.

Ecuador's capital is Quito, which is in the province of Pichincha in the Sierra region. Its largest city is Guayaquil, in the province of Guayas on the Coast. Cotopaxi, which is just south of Quito, features one of the world's highest active volcanoes. The top of Mount Chimborazo (6,310-m above sea level) is considered to be the most distant point from the centre of the earth, given the ovoidal shape of the planet (wider at the equator).

Although the country is not particularly large (the size of the U.S. state of Colorado), there is great variety in the climate, largely determined by altitude. The Pacific coastal area has a tropical climate, with a severe rainy season. The climate in the Andean highlands is temperate and relatively dry; and the Amazon basin on the eastern side of the mountains shares the climate of other rain forest zones.

Because of its location at the equator, Ecuador experiences little variation in daylight hours during the course of a year.

## Biodiversity





Ecuador is one of 17 megadiverse countries in the world according to Conservation International. With 1600 bird species (15 percent of the world's known bird species) in the continental area, and 38 more endemic in the Galápagos. In addition to 25,000 species of plants, the country has 106 endemic reptiles, 138 endemic amphibians, and 6,000 species of butterfly. The Galápagos Islands are well known as a region of distinct fauna, famous as the place of birth of Darwin's Theory of Evolution, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Despite being on the UNESCO list, the Galapagos islands are endangered by a range of negative environmental effects, threatening the existence of this exotic ecosystem.

## Economy

Ecuador has substantial petroleum resources and rich agricultural areas. Because the country exports primary products such as oil, bananas, flowers and shrimp, fluctuations in world market prices can have a substantial domestic impact. Industry is largely oriented to servicing the domestic market, and some exports to the Andean Common market. Deteriorating economic performance in 1997-98 culminated in a severe economic and financial crisis in 1999. The crisis was precipitated by a number of external shocks, including the El Niño weather phenomenon in 1997, a sharp drop in global oil prices in 1997-98, and international emerging market instability in 1997-98. These factors highlighted the Government of Ecuador's unsustainable economic policy mix of large fiscal deficits and expansionary money policy and resulted in a 7.3 percent contraction of GDP, annual year-on-year inflation of 52.2 percent, and a 65 percent devaluation of the national currency, the Sucre, in 1999, which helped precipitate a default on external loans later that year.

On January 9, 2000, the administration of President Jamil Mahuad announced its intention to adopt the U.S. dollar as the official currency of Ecuador to address the ongoing economic crisis. The formal adoption of the dollar as currency on September 10, 2000, as opposed to merely pegging the Sucre to the dollar as Argentina had done, theoretically meant that the benefits of seigniorage would accrue to the U.S. economy. Subsequent protests related to the economic and financial crises led to the removal of Mahuad from office and the elevation of Vice President Gustavo Noboa to the presidency.

However, the Noboa government confirmed its commitment to dollarize as the centerpiece of its economic recovery strategy. The government also entered into negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), culminating in the negotiation of a 12-month standby arrangement with the Fund. Additional policy initiatives include efforts to reduce the government's fiscal deficit and to implement structural reforms to strengthen the banking system and regain access to private capital markets.

Buoyed by high oil prices, the Ecuadorian economy experienced a modest recovery in 2000, with GDP rising 1.9 percent. However, 70 percent of the population was estimated to live below the poverty line that year, more than double the rate in 1995.



Galápagos turtle



Skyline of downtown Quito.



In April 2007, after winning a referendum on constitutional reform, President Correa announced that he no longer intended that the country would make repayments to the IMF nor deal with the World Bank.

## Demographics

Ecuador's population is ethnically diverse. The largest ethnic group (as of 2007) is the *Mestizos*, who are the mixed descendants of Spanish colonists and indigenous Indians and who constitute 62 percent of the population. Amerindians account for around 25 percent of the current population. Whites, mainly *criollos*, the unmixed descendants of early Spanish colonists, as well as immigrants from other European countries, account for about 10 percent. The small Afro-Ecuadorian minority, including Mulattos and *zambos*, largely based in Esmeraldas and Imbabura provinces, make up 5 percent.

There are sizable expatriate Ecuadorian communities in Spain, the United Kingdom (Ecuadorian Britons), and Italy, as well across Europe, the United States, Canada, Chile, Venezuela, Mexico and Japan. It is estimated that 700,000 people emigrated from Ecuador following the 1999 economic crisis, and that the expatriate Ecuadorian population totals 2.5 million.

The tropical forest region to the east of the mountains (El Oriente) remains sparsely populated and contains only about three percent of the population.

The public education system is free at the point of delivery, and attendance is mandatory from ages five to 14. Provision of public schools falls far below the levels needed, and class sizes are often very large, and families of limited means often find it necessary to pay for education. However, the Ministry of Education reports that only 76 percent of children finish six years of schooling. In rural areas, only 10 percent of the children go on to high school. Ministry statistics give the mean number of years completed as 6.7.

Ecuador has 61 universities, many of which offer graduate degrees, although only 87 percent of the faculty in public universities possess graduate degrees. About 300 higher institutes offer two to three years of post-secondary vocational or technical training.



Chimborazo volcano seen from a highway.



Las Peñas neighbourhood, emblematic district of Guayaquil.



Guayaquil, the largest city of the country

### City Populations 2001

- Guayaquil 2,100,000
- Quito 1,800,000
- Cuenca 420,000
- Machala 205,000
- Santo Domingo de los Colorados 200,000
- Manta 200,000
- Eloy Alfaro 175,000
- Portoviejo 172,000
- Ambato 154,000
- Riobamba 125,000
- Loja 125,000

## Religion

Approximately 67% percent of Ecuadorians are Roman Catholic. In the rural parts of Ecuador, indigenous beliefs and Christianity are sometimes syncretized. There also are Latter Day Saint and Protestant denominations as well as a small Muslim minority numbering in the low hundreds. The Jewish community numbers just below a thousand and is mostly of German and Italian origin. There also are some few Sephardic Jews.

Most festivals and annual parades are based on religious celebrations, many incorporating a mixture of rites and icons.

## Culture



Cuenca's cathedral



Ecuador's mainstream culture is defined by its mestizo majority and, like their ancestry, is a mixture of European and Amerindian influences infused with African elements inherited from enslaved ancestors. Ecuador's indigenous communities are integrated into that mainstream culture to varying degrees, but some may also practice their own autochthonous cultures, particularly the more remote indigenous communities of the Amazon basin.

The Panama hat is of Ecuadorian origin, and is known there as "Sombrero de paja toquilla", or a Jipijapa. It is made principally in Montecristi (Pile, Pampas, Cruces) in the Province of Manabi. Its manufacture (particularly that of the *Montecristi superfino*) is considered a great craft.

Notable people born in Ecuador include painters Tábara, Guayasamín, Kingman, Rendón, Arauz, Constanté, Viteri, Molinari, Maldonado, Gutierrez, Endara Crow, Villacís, Egas, Villafuerte and Faini; animator Mike Judge; poet and statesman José Joaquín de Olmedo y Maruri, scholar Benjamín Urrutia, and tennis player Pancho Segura.

## Sports

The most popular sport in Ecuador, as in most South American countries, is soccer (fútbol/football). Its best known professional teams include *Barcelona S.C.* and *C.S. Emelec*, from Guayaquil, *Liga Deportiva Universitaria de Quito*, *Deportivo Quito* and *El Nacional* (the Ecuadorian Armed Forces team) from Quito, *Olmedo* from Riobamba, and *Deportivo Cuenca*, from Cuenca.

The matches of the Ecuador national football team are the most watched sports events in the country. In June 2007, FIFA adopted a resolution prohibiting international soccer games at or higher than 2,500 meters above sea level. Rafael Correa, and his presidential counterparts in Peru, Bolivia and Colombia, issued a joint letter of protest against this ruling. Ecuador qualified for the final rounds of both the 2002 and 2006 FIFA World Cups. Ecuador finished ahead of Poland and Costa Rica to come in second to Germany in Group A in the 2006 World Cup. Futsal, often referred to as *índor*, is particularly popular for mass participation.



Basilica del Sagrado Voto Nacional on street Venezuela



Salinas beach, main touristy beach in Ecuador

There is considerable interest in tennis in the middle and upper classes in Ecuadorian society, and several Ecuadorian professional players have attained considerable international fame, including Francisco Segura and Andrés Gómez. Basketball also has a high profile, while Ecuador's specialties include *Ecuavolley*, a three-person variation of volleyball. Bullfighting is practiced at a professional level in Quito, during the annual festivities that commemorate the Spanish founding of the city. Bullfighting is found in smaller towns, notably El Chaco (east of Quito).

Rugby union is also found to some extent in Ecuador, and Quito has its own club

Ecuador obtained its first Olympic gold medal in Atlanta's 1996 Olympic Games, through Jefferson Pérez, on the 20 km race-walk. There is flourishing activity in nontraditional sports such as mountain biking, motorbiking, surfing, and paintball. Since 2005, Ecuador has held the Guayaquil Marathon, which is an international foot race.

Some costal resorts, particularly Montañita and Ayampe, have been developed as surfing centres. Ecuador also hosted the 2007 Youth World Championship for Rock Climbing, held in Ibarra, becoming the first country outside

of Europe or Asia to host the event..

## Food

The food in Ecuador is diverse, varying with altitude and associated agricultural conditions. Pork, chicken, beef, and “cuy” ( guinea pig) are popular in the mountain regions and are served with a variety of grains (especially rice and corn) or potatoes. A popular street food in mountain regions of Ecuador consists of potatoes served with roasted pig (hornado). Fanesca, a fish soup including several types of bean, is often eaten during Lent and Easter. During the week before the commemoration of the deceased or "día de los muertos", the fruit beverage "Colada Morada" is typical, accompanied by "Guaguas de Pan", which is stuffed bread shaped like children.



Guatita plate.



The food is somewhat different in the southern mountain area, featuring typical Loja food such as "repe", a soup prepared with green bananas; "cecina", roasted pork; and "miel con queso" or "cuajada" as dessert.

A wide variety of fresh fruit is available, particularly at lower altitudes, including granadilla, passionfruit, naranjilla, several types of bananas, uvilla, taxo, and tree tomato.

Seafood is very popular at the coast, where prawns, shrimp and lobster are key parts of the diet. Plantain- and peanut-based dishes are the basis of most coastal meals, which are usually served in two courses. The first course is *caldo* soup, which may be *aguado* (a thin soup, usually with meat) or *caldo de leche*, a cream vegetable soup. The second course might include rice, a little meat or fish with a *menestra* (stew), and salad or vegetables. Patacones are popular side dishes with coastal meals.

Some of the typical dishes in the coastal region are: ceviche, pan de almidón, corviche, guatita, encebollado and empanadas; in the mountain region: hornado, fritada, humitas, tamales, llapingachos, lomo saltado, and churrasco.

In the rainforest, a dietary staple is the yuca, elsewhere called cassava. The starchy root is peeled and boiled, fried, or used in a variety of other dishes. Many fruits are available in this region, including bananas, tree grapes, and peach palms.

Aguardiente, a sugar cane-based spirit, is probably the most popular national alcohol. Drinkable yogurt, available in many fruit flavours, is extremely popular and is often consumed with *pan de yuca*, which is a light bread filled with cheese and eaten warm.

## Art

The best known art tendencies from Ecuador belonged to the Escuela Quiteña, which developed from the XVI to XVIII centuries.

There are many contemporary Ecuadorian writers, including the novelist Jorge Enrique Adoum; the poet Jorge Carrera Andrade; the essayist Benjamín Carrión; the poet Fanny Carrión de Fierro; the novelist Enrique Gil Gilbert; the novelist Jorge Icaza (author of the novel *Huasiungo*, translated to many languages); the short story author Pablo Palacio; the novelist Alicia Yanez Cossio; the novelist Jorge Queirolo B.; the prominent author and essayist, Juan Montalvo, and U.S.-based, half Ecuadorian poet Emanuel Xavier.

Ecuador has produced many world renowned master painters including: Oswaldo Guayasamín, Camilo Egas and Eduardo Kingman from the Indigenist Movement; and Manuel Rendon, Enrique Tábara, Aníbal Villacís and Estuardo Maldonado from the Informalist Movement.

## Film

The Ecuador Film Company was founded in Guayaquil, in 1924. During early twenties to early thirties, Ecuador enjoyed its

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Ecuadorian ceviche, made of shrimp, lemon and tomato sauce



Museum of Anthropology and Contemporary Art (MAAC), near the breakwater in Guayaquil.





Cinema Golden Age Era. Unfortunately, the production of motion pictures declined with the coming of sound.

- The Waorani tribe of Ecuador is portrayed in the 2006 theatrical release of *The End of the Spear*, the story of five missionaries speared to death, as told through the eyes of Christian movie makers.
- The 2006 film *Qué Tan Lejos*, written and directed by Tania Hermida, takes place in the rural sierras and Pacific coast of southern Ecuador. A workers' strike delays a bus from Quito to Cuenca and the story unfolds as two young women decide to complete the journey on their own, hitchhiking the rest of the way. Along the way they meet interesting characters who help them reevaluate the purpose of their journey. The movie contains beautiful scenic shots and Ecuadorian humor that sometimes gets lost in translation.
- The 2005 film *Crónicas*, written and directed by Ecuadorian Sebastián Cordero and starring John Leguizamo in his Spanish-language debut, is set and filmed entirely in Ecuador.
- Although set in Colombia, the 2004 film *Maria Full of Grace* was partially shot in Ecuador.
- The 2003 film *The Dancer Upstairs*, directed by John Malkovich and starring Javier Bardem, was filmed in Ecuador.
- *Beyond the Gates of Splendor* (2002), directed by Jim Hanon, is a documentary about five missionaries killed by the Huaorani Indians in the 1950s. He recycles the story in the 2006 Hollywood production *The End of the Spear*. Most of this film was shot in Panama.
- The film *Proof of Life* (2000), starring Meg Ryan and Russell Crowe, was filmed in Ecuador, although the story takes place in a fictitious South American country named Tecala. The guerrilla movement depicted in the film is reminiscent of Peru's Shining Path or Colombia's FARC.
- *Ratas, Ratones, Rateros* (1999), written and directed by Sebastián Cordero, relates the story of an 18-year-old quiteño whose cousin, a thief from Ecuador's coastal city Guayaquil, embroils all those around him in his affairs. The film has been accused by several critics of painting an extremely distorted contrast between the coast (Guayaquil) and the highlands (Quito), which stems from the ever-present feelings of regionalism.
- *Entre Marx y una Mujer Desnuda* (*Between Marx and a Nude Woman*, 1995), by Ecuadorian Camilo Luzuriaga, provides a window into the life of young Ecuadorian leftists living in a country plagued by the remnants of feudal systems and coup d'etats. It is based on a novel by Jorge Enrique Adoum.
- The 1991 film *Sensaciones* was shot in Ecuador and directed by Ecuadorian siblings Juan Esteban Cordero and Viviana Cordero. Viviana Cordero was subsequently involved in the production of *Ratas, Ratones, y Rateros* (see above) and later produced *Un Titán en el Ring* (2002).
- The 1980s film *Vibes*, starring Cyndi Lauper and Jeff Goldblum, was shot in Ecuador. Various Andean cities served as a backdrop for the film.

In addition to film, there are numerous books and novels based on Ecuador, including the science fiction novel by Rod Glenn, *The King of America*, and the science fiction novel *Galápagos* by Kurt Vonnegut.



## Transportation

Ecuador has a network of national highways maintained by the *Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Comunicaciones* (Ministry of Public Works and Communication) government agency. The Pan-American Highway connects the northern and southern portions of the country as well as connecting Ecuador with Colombia to the north and Peru to the south. The quality of roads, even on truck routes, is highly variable. There is an extensive network of intercity buses that use these mountain roads and highways.

The most modern Ecuadorian Highway communicates Guayaquil with Salinas, in about two hours. The Interandean Railroad communicates Quito and Cotopaxi in about two hours.

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# El Salvador

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SOS Children works in El Salvador. For more information see SOS Children in El Salvador

**El Salvador** (*República de El Salvador*, Spanish pronunciation: [reˈpuβlika ðe (e)l salβaˈðoɾ]) is a country in Central America. The area was originally called by the Pipil "Cuzcatl", in Spanish "Cuzcatlan", which in Nahuatl means "The Land Of Precious Things".

After the Spanish conquest, the land was baptized by Spanish conquistadors as "Provincia De Nuestro Señor Jesucristo El Salvador Del Mundo" ("Province of Our Lord Jesus Christ, The Savior Of The World"), now abbreviated as "República de El Salvador".

The country borders the Pacific Ocean between Guatemala and Honduras. With a population of approximately 5.8 million people, it is the most densely populated nation in Central America and is undergoing rapid industrialization.

## History

In the early sixteenth century, the Spanish conquistadors ventured into ports to extend their dominion to the area that would be known as El Salvador. They were firmly resisted by the Pipil and their remaining Mayan-speaking neighbors. Pedro de Alvarado, a lieutenant of Hernán Cortés, led the first effort by Spanish forces in June 1524.

The people defeated the Spaniards and forced them to withdraw to Guatemala. Two subsequent expeditions took place—the first in 1525, followed by a smaller group in 1528—to bring the Pipil under Spanish rule.

Towards the end of 1810, a combination of internal and external factors allowed Central American élites to attempt to gain independence from the Spanish crown. The internal factors were mainly the interest the élites had in controlling the territories they owned without involvement from Spanish authorities. The external factors were the success of the French and American revolutions in the eighteenth century and the weakening of the military power of the Spanish crown because of its wars against Napoleonic France.

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<i><b>República de El Salvador</b></i> <b>Republic of El Salvador</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Dios, Unión, Libertad</i> " (Spanish) "God, Union, Liberty"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Himno Nacional de El Salvador</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	San Salvador
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Demonym</b>	Salvadoran
<b>Government</b>	Presidential republic



The independence movement was consolidated on November 5, 1811, when the Salvadoran priest, Jose Matias Delgado, sounded the bells of the Iglesia La Merced in San Salvador, making a call for the insurrection. After many years of internal fights, the *Acta de Independencia* (Act of Independence) of Central America was signed in Guatemala on September 15, 1821. When these provinces were joined with Mexico in early 1822, El Salvador resisted, insisting on autonomy for the Central American countries.

In 1823, the United Provinces of Central America was formed by the five Central American states under General Manuel José Arce. When this federation was dissolved in 1838, El Salvador became an independent republic. El Salvador's early history as an independent state was marked by frequent revolutions.

From 1872 to 1898, El Salvador was a prime mover in attempts to reestablish an isthmian federation. The governments of El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua formed the Greater Republic of Central America via the Pact of Amapala in 1895. Although Guatemala and Costa Rica considered joining the Greater Republic (which was rechristened the United States of Central America when its constitution went into effect in 1898), neither country joined. This union, which had planned to establish its capital city at Amapala on the Golfo de Fonseca, did not survive a seizure of power in El Salvador in 1898.

The enormous profits that coffee yielded as a monoculture export served as an impetus for the process whereby land became concentrated in the hands of an oligarchy of few families. A succession of presidents from the ranks of the Salvadoran oligarchy, nominally both conservative and liberal, throughout the last half of the nineteenth century generally agreed on the promotion of coffee as the predominant cash crop, on the development of infrastructure (railroads and port facilities) primarily in support of the coffee trade, on the elimination of communal landholdings to facilitate further coffee production, on the passage of anti-vagrancy laws to ensure that displaced campesinos and other rural residents provided sufficient labour for the coffee fincas (plantations), and on the suppression of rural discontent. In 1912, the national guard was created as a rural police force.

The coffee industry grew inexorably in El Salvador. As a result, the élite provided the bulk of the government's financial support through import duties on goods imported with the foreign currencies that coffee sales earned. This support, coupled with the humbler and more mundane mechanisms of corruption, ensured the coffee growers of overwhelming influence within the government.

El Salvador's early history as an independent state was marked by frequent revolutions; not until the period 1900-30 was relative stability achieved. The economic élite, based on agriculture and some mining, ruled the country in conjunction with the military.

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- President	Antonio Saca
<b>Independence</b>	
- from Spain	September 15, 1821
- from the UPCA	1842
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	21,040 km <sup>2</sup> 8,124 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.4
<b>Population</b>	
- estimate	7.1 million ( 98th)
- 2008 census	5.8 million
- Density	318.7/km <sup>2</sup> ( 34th) 823.6/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$38.617 billion ( 89th)
- Per capita	\$5,600 ( 103rd)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	52.4 (high)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.735 (medium) ( 103rd)
<b>Currency</b>	United States dollar (\$) (2001-present) <sup>2</sup> ( USD "\$")
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-6)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.sv
<b>Calling code</b>	+503 <sup>1</sup>
<p>1 Telephone companies (market share): Tigo (45%), Claro (25%), Movistar (24%), Digicel (5.5%), Red (0.5%).</p> <p>2 The United States dollar is the currency in use. Financial information can be expressed in US Dollars and in Salvadoran colón, but it is out of circulation. <a href="http://www.bcr.gob.sv/ingles">http://www.bcr.gob.sv/ingles</a></p>	



The economy, based on coffee-growing after the mid-19th century, as the world market for indigo withered away, prospered or suffered as the world coffee price fluctuated. From 1931—the year of the coup in which Gen. Maximiliano Hernández Martínez came to power until he was deposed in 1944 there was brutal suppression of rural resistance. The most notable event was the 1932 Salvadoran peasant uprising, commonly referred to as La Matanza (the massacre), headed by Farabundo Martí and the retaliation led by Martínez's government, in which approximately 30,000 indigenous people and political opponents were murdered, imprisoned or exiled. Until 1980, all but one Salvadoran temporary president was an army officer. Periodic presidential elections were seldom free or fair and an oligarchy in alliance with military forces ruled the nation. Atrocities of the regular troops, such as the El Mozote massacre, and the murder of Catholic missionaries and other religious aid workers, such as Jean Donovan, by death squads, established by parts of the landowners, to stop the Land reform from 1983, result in the Salvadoran Civil War (1980-1991). In 1972 José Napoleón Duarte ( PDC) was elected President but betrayed by the military Party, Party of National Conciliation, tortured and had to flee. After a Coup d'état in October 1979, the RGJunta and elections in 1984 he became president. The war lasted until the Chapultepec Peace Accords were signed in January 1991. Five different factions of the guerrillas formed the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional party ( FMLN) in order to seek office through democratic elections. Since then, the FMLN has gradually gained representation, particularly in the Legislative Assembly and local governments. Since 1989 the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) party, founded by Roberto D'Aubuisson, has won every presidential election.

/integracion/ley.html

In 1998, El Salvador became one of three Latin-American countries where abortion is illegal with no exceptions, along with Chile and Nicaragua.

## Politics

The political framework of El Salvador is a presidential representative democratic republic with a multiform multi-party system. The President of El Salvador, currently Antonio Saca, is both head of state and head of government. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the Legislative Assembly. The Judiciary branch is independent of the executive and the legislative branches.

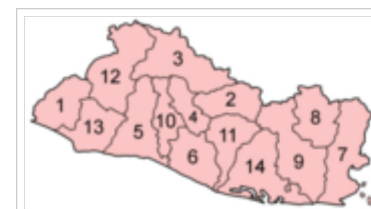
## Departments and municipalities

El Salvador is divided into 14 departments (*departamentos*), which, in turn, are subdivided into 267 municipalities (*municipios*).

Department names and abbreviations for the 14 Salvadoran Departments:



1. **AH** Ahuachapán
2. **CA** Cabañas
3. **CH** Chalatenango
4. **CU** Cuscatlán
5. **LI** La Libertad
6. **PA** La Paz
7. **UN** La Unión
8. **MO** Morazán
9. **SM** San Miguel
10. **SS** San Salvador
11. **SV** San Vicente
12. **SA** Santa Ana
13. **SO** Sonsonate
14. **US** Usulután



Departments of El Salvador

## Geography



Shaded relief map of El Salvador



The scenic Jiboa Valley and San Vicente volcano



San Vicente Volcano



El Salvador is located in Central America. It has a total area of 8,123 square miles (21,040 km<sup>2</sup>), smaller than that of the U.S. state of Massachusetts. It is the smallest country in continental America, and is affectionately called the "Tom Thumb of the Americas" (*Pulgarcito de America*). It has 123.6 square miles (320& km<sup>2</sup>) of water within its borders. Several small rivers flow through El Salvador into the Pacific Ocean, including the Goascorán, Jiboa, Torola, Paz and the Río Grande de San Miguel. Only the largest river, the Lempa River, flowing from Honduras across El Salvador to the ocean, is navigable for commercial traffic. Volcanic craters enclose lakes, the most important of which are Lake Ilopango (70 km<sup>2</sup>/27 sq mi) and Lake Coatepeque (26 km<sup>2</sup>/10 sq mi). Lake Güija is El Salvador's largest natural lake (44 km<sup>2</sup>/17 sq mi). Several artificial lakes were created by the damming of the Lempa, the largest of which is Embalse Cerrón Grande (350 km<sup>2</sup>/135 sq mi).

El Salvador shares borders with Guatemala (126 mi/203 km) and Honduras (212.5 mi/342 km). It is the only Central American country that does not have a Caribbean coastline. The highest point in the country is Cerro El Pital at 8,957 feet (2,730 meters), which shares a border with Honduras.

## Climate

El Salvador has a tropical climate with pronounced wet and dry seasons. Temperatures vary primarily with elevation and show little seasonal change. The Pacific lowlands are uniformly hot; the central plateau and mountain areas are more moderate. The rainy season extends from May to October. Almost all the annual rainfall occurs during this time, and yearly totals, particularly on southern-facing mountain slopes, can be as high as 217 centimeters. Protected areas and the central plateau receive lesser, although still significant, amounts. Rainfall during this season generally comes from low pressure over the Pacific and usually falls in heavy afternoon thunderstorms. Hurricanes occasionally form in the Pacific with the notable exception of Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

From November through April, the northeast trade winds control weather patterns. During these months, air flowing from the Caribbean has had most of the precipitation wrung out of it while passing over the mountains in Honduras. By the time this air reaches El Salvador, it is dry, hot, and hazy.

## Crime

In the past years El Salvador has experienced high crime rates including gang-related crimes, and gangs in general. Some say that this was a result of the deportation of thousands of Salvadorans from the U.S, the majority of whom were members of MS13 (Mara Salvatrucha), in the mid-90s. The gangs in which Salvadorans had been involved in the United States began to show up in El Salvador. In 1996, San Salvador was considered the second most dangerous city in the western hemisphere, according to statistics.

Today El Salvador experiences some of the highest murder rates in the world, it is also considered an epicenter of the gang crisis, along with Guatemala and Honduras. In response to this, the government has set up countless programs to try to guide the youth away from gang membership, but so far its efforts have not produced any quick results. One of the government programs was a gang-reform called *Super Mano Dura* (Super Firm Hand). *Super Mano Dura* had little



San Vicente Volcano



Survey marker at the summit of Cerro El Pital





success and was highly criticized by the U.N., it saw temporary success in 2004 but then saw a rise in crime after 2005. In 2004, the rate of intentional homicides per 100,000 citizens was 41, with 60% of the homicides committed were gang-related. The Salvadoran government reported that the *Super Mano Dura* gang legislation led to a 14% drop in murders in 2004. However, El Salvador recorded a total of 552 murders in January and February 2005 alone. In addition, crime rose 7.5% in just a year, from 2005-2006. Homicides are among the highest with respect to the overall crime rate. Intentional homicides reported in 2006 reached up to 3,928 from 3,778 in 2005, and a rate of 55 violent deaths per every 100,000 people.

In the first half of 2007 La Policía Nacional Civil of El Salvador statistics showed lower numbers in homicide, and extortions as well as robbery and theft of vehicles. In 2007 homicides in El Salvador had reduced 22%, extortions reduced 7%, and robbery and theft of vehicles had gone down 18%, all in comparison with the same period in 2006. Despite the lower numbers of homicides in the first half of 2007, El Salvador continues to have the highest homicide rate in Central America and one of the highest in Latin America.

## Natural disasters

El Salvador lies along the Pacific ring of fire, and is thus subject to significant tectonic activity, including frequent earthquakes and volcanic activity. Recent examples include the earthquake on January 13, 2001 that measured 7.7 on the Richter scale and caused a landslide that killed more than eight hundred people; and another earthquake only a month after the first one February 13, 2001, killing 255 people and damaging about 20% of the nation's housing. Luckily, many families were able to find safety from the landslides caused by the earthquake. El Salvador's most recent destructive volcanic eruption took place on October 1, 2005, when the Ilamatepec volcano spewed up a cloud of ash and rocks, which fell on nearby villages and caused two deaths (Óscar Armando Guerrero Ventura and José Rafael Guevara).

El Salvador's position on the Pacific Ocean also makes it subject to severe weather conditions, including heavy rainstorms and severe droughts, both of which may be made more extreme by the El Niño and La Niña effects. In the summer of 2001, a severe drought destroyed 80% of the country's crops, causing famine in the countryside. On October 4, 2005, severe rains resulted in dangerous flooding and landslides, which caused a minimum of fifty deaths. El Salvador's location in Central America also makes it vulnerable to hurricanes coming off the Caribbean, however this risk is much less than for other Central American countries.

The Santa Ana volcano in El Salvador is currently dormant, but while it was still erupting it was very dangerous. Lago de Coatepeque (One of El Salvador's lakes.) was caused by a massive eruption.



A landslide caused by one of the 2001 El Salvador earthquakes

## Economy

According to the IMF and CIA World Factbook, El Salvador has the third largest economy in the region (behind Costa Rica and Guatemala) when looking at nominal Gross Domestic Product and purchasing power GDP. El Salvador's GDP per capita stands at US\$5,800 , however, this " developing country" still faces



many social issues and is among the 10 poorest countries in Latin America. Approximately 2.4 million (30.7%) people live below the poverty line, its GDP real growth rate is low compared to its neighbors, and 6% of the population is unemployed with much underemployment.

Most of El Salvador's economy has been hampered by natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes, but El Salvador currently has a steadily growing economy.

GDP in purchasing power parity (PPP) in 2007 was estimated at \$41.65 billion USD. The service sector is the largest component of GDP at 60.7%, followed by the industrial sector at 29.6% (2006 est.). Agriculture represents only 7.6% of GDP (2006 est.).

The Salvadoran economy has experienced mixed results from the recent government's commitment to free market initiatives and conservative fiscal management that include the privatization of the banking system, telecommunications, public pensions, electrical distribution, and some electrical generation, reduction of import duties, elimination of price controls, and an improved enforcement of intellectual property rights. The GDP has been growing since 1996 at an annual rate that averages 2.8% real growth. In 2006 the GDP's real growth rate was 4.2%. A problem that the Salvadoran economy faces is the inequality in the distribution of income. In 1999, the richest fifth of the population received 45% of the country's income, while the poorest fifth received only 5.6%.

In December 1999, net international reserves equaled US\$1.8 billion or roughly five months of imports. Having this hard currency buffer to work with, the Salvadoran government undertook a monetary integration plan beginning January 1, 2001 by which the U.S. dollar became legal tender alongside the Salvadoran colón and all formal accounting was done in U.S. dollars. This way, the government has formally limited its possibility of implementing open market monetary policies to influence short term variables in the economy. As of September 2007, net international reserves stood at \$2.42 billion.

Since 2004, the colón stopped circulating and is now never used in the country for any type of transaction. In general, there was discontent with the shift to the U.S. dollar, primarily because of wage stagnation vis-a-vis basic commodity pricing in the marketplace. Additionally there are contentions that, according to Colin's Law, a reversion to the colón would be disastrous to the economy. The change to the dollar also precipitated a trend toward lower interest rates in El Salvador, helping many to secure much needed credit for house or car purchases.

A challenge in El Salvador has been developing new growth sectors for a more diversified economy. As many other former colonies, for many years El Salvador was considered a mono-export economy (an economy that depended heavily on one type of export). During colonial times, the Spanish decided that El Salvador would produce and export indigo, but after the invention of synthetic dyes in the 19th century, Salvadoran authorities and the newly created modern state turned to coffee as the main export. Since the cultivation of coffee required the highest lands in the country, many of these lands were expropriated from indigenous reserves and given or sold cheaply to those that could cultivate coffee. The government provided little or no compensation to the indigenous peoples. On occasion, this compensation implied merely the right to work for seasons in the newly created coffee farms and to be allowed to grow their own food. Such actions provided the basis of conflicts that would shape the political landscape of El Salvador for years to come.

For many decades, coffee was one of the only sources of foreign currency in the Salvadoran economy. The Salvadoran Civil War in the 1980s and the fall of international coffee prices in the 1990s pressured the Salvadoran government to diversify the economy. The government has followed policies that intend to develop other export industries, such as textiles and sea products. Tourism is another industry Salvadoran authorities see as a possibility. But rampant crime rates, lack of infrastructure, and inadequate social capital have prevented this resource from being properly exploited and is still underdeveloped.



There are 15 free trade zones in El Salvador. The largest beneficiary has been the maquila industry, which provides 88,700 jobs directly, and consists primarily of supplying labor for the cutting and assembling of clothes for export to the United States.

El Salvador signed the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) — negotiated by the five countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic — with the United States in 2004. CAFTA requires that the Salvadoran government adopt policies that foster free trade. El Salvador has signed free trade agreements with Mexico, Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Panama and increased its trade with those countries. El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua also are negotiating a free trade agreement with Canada. In October 2007, these four countries and Costa Rica began free trade agreement negotiations with the European Union. Negotiations started in 2006 for a free trade agreement with Colombia.

Fiscal policy has been the biggest challenge for the Salvadoran government. The 1992 peace accords committed the government to heavy expenditures for transition programs and social services. The Stability Adjustment Programs (PAE, for the initials in Spanish) initiated by President Cristiani's administration committed the government to the privatization of banks, the pension system, and the electric and telephone companies. The total privatization of the pension system has implied a serious burden for the public finance system, because the newly created private Pension Association Funds did not absorb coverage of retired pensioners covered under the old system. The government lost the revenues from contributors and absorbed completely the costs of coverage of retired pensioners. This has been the main source of fiscal imbalance. ARENA governments have financed this deficit with the emission of bonds, something the leftist FMLN has opposed. Debates surrounding the emission of bonds have stalled the approval of the national budget for many months on several occasions. The emission of bonds and the approval of government loans need a qualified majority (3/4 of the votes) in the National Legislature. If the deficit is not financed through a loan it is enough with a simple majority to approve the budget (50% of the votes plus 1).

Despite such challenges to keep public finances in balance, El Salvador still has one of the lowest tax burdens in the American continent (around 11% of GDP). Many specialists claim that it is impossible to advance significant development programs with such little public sector aid. (The tax burden in the United States is around 25% of the GDP and in developed countries of the EU it can reach around 50%.) The government has focused on improving the collection of its current revenues with a focus on indirect taxes. Leftist politicians criticize such a structure since indirect taxes (like the value-added tax) affect everyone alike, whereas direct taxes can be weighed according to levels of income. A 10% value-added tax (IVA ins Spanish), implemented in September 1992, was raised to 13% in July 1995. The VAT is the biggest source of revenue, accounting for about 52.3% of total tax revenues in 2004.

Inflation has been steady and among the lowest in the region. Since 1997 inflation has averaged 3%, with recent years increasing to nearly 5%. From 2000 to 2006 total exports have grown 19% from \$2.94 billion to \$3.51 billion. During this same period total imports have risen 54% from \$4.95 billion to \$7.63 billion. This has resulted in a 102% increase in the trade deficit from \$2.01 billion to \$4.12 billion.

Remittances from Salvadorans living and working in the United States, sent to family in El Salvador, are a major source of foreign income and offset the substantial trade deficit of \$4.12 billion. Remittances have increased steadily in the last decade and reached an all-time high of \$3.32 billion in 2006 (an increase of 17% over the previous year). approximately 16.2% of gross domestic product(GDP).

Remittances have had positive and negative effects on El Salvador. In 2005 the number of people living in extreme poverty in El Salvador was 16%, according to a United Nations Development Program report, without remittances the number of Salvadorans living in extreme poverty would rise to 37%. While Salvadoran education levels have gone up, wage expectations have risen faster than either skills or productivity. For example, some Salvadorans are no longer



willing to take jobs that pay them less than what they receive monthly from family members abroad. This has led to an influx of Hondurans and Nicaraguans who are willing to work for the prevailing wage. Also, the local propensity for consumption over investment has increased. Money from remittances have also increased prices for certain commodities such as real estate. Many Salvadorans abroad earning much higher wages can afford higher prices for houses in El Salvador than local Salvadorans and thus push up the prices that all Salvadorans must pay.

## Tourism

The only airport serving international flights in the country is Comalapa International Airport (airport code: SAL). This airport is located in Comalapa, about 30 minutes southeast of the capital. The airport is commonly known as Comalapa International or El Salvador International.

El Salvador's tourism industry has grown dynamically over recent years as the Salvadoran government focuses on developing this sector. Last year tourism accounted for 4.6% of GDP; only 10 years ago, it accounted for 0.4%. In this same year, tourism grew 4.5% worldwide. Comparatively, El Salvador saw an increase of 8.97%, from 1.15 million to 1.27 million tourists. This has led to revenue from tourism growing 35.9% from \$634 million to \$862 million. As a reference point, in 1996 tourism revenue was \$44.2 million. Also, there has been an even greater increase in the number of excursionists (visits that do not include an overnight stay). 222,000 excursionists visited El Salvador in 2006, a 24% increase over the previous year.

Most North American and European tourists are seeking out El Salvador's beaches and nightlife. Besides these two choices, El Salvador's tourism landscape is slightly different than those of other Central American countries. Because of its geographical size and urbanization, there aren't many nature-themed tourist destination such as ecotours or archaeological monuments. Surfing, however, is a natural tourist sector that is gaining popularity as more surfers visit El Zonte, Sunzal, and La Libertad, surfing spots that are not yet overcrowded. Also, the use of the United States dollar as Salvadoran currency and direct flights of 4-6 hours from most cities in the United States are important things to note for first-time travelers from the United States. Urbanization and Americanization of Salvadoran culture has also led to something else that first time tourists might be surprised to see: the abundance of American-style malls, stores, and restaurants in the three main urban areas, especially greater San Salvador.

Currently, tourists to El Salvador can be classified into four groups: Central Americans; North Americans; Salvadorans living abroad, primarily in the United States; and Europeans and South Americans. The first three represent the vast majority of tourists. Recently, El Salvador is attempting to broaden its tourist base and looking to the last group. Early indicators show that the government's efforts are working. When comparing January-March 2007 to the same period in 2006 (most recent data available), overall tourism has grown 10%, while from North America 38%, Europe 31%, and South America 36%. In the fall, Livingston Airlines will initiate the only direct flight between Europe (departing from Milan) and El Salvador. The Decameron Salinitas, a recently inaugurated resort, has contributed to the growth of tourists from South America (because of name recognition of the resort chain) and is looking to do the same with Europeans. It is interesting to note that Decameron Salinitas is responsible for half the initial bookings on the Milan-San Salvador flights. This demonstrates a synergy between two of the few businesses that cater to European tourists and is evident of what is necessary in this nascent sector.



Additionally, more and more tourists continue to be drawn by El Salvador's turbulent past. Some of the latest tourist attractions in the former war-torn El Salvador are gun fragments, pictures, combat plans, and mountain hideouts. Since 1992, residents in economically depressed areas are trying to profit from these remains. The mountain town of Perquin was considered the "guerrilla capital." Today it is home to the "Museum of the Revolution," featuring cannons, uniforms, pieces of Soviet weaponry, and other weapons of war once used by the FMLN's (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front) headquarters. El Salvador continues to grow as an attraction. 40% of El Salvador visitors want to enjoy the sun and the country's beautiful beaches; 38% of El Salvador visitors enjoy the colonial structures and the country's history; and 22% enjoy the nature and El Salvador mountains and volcanoes. According to El Salvador newspaper El Diario De Hoy the top 10 attractions are the beaches in La Libertad, Ruta Las Flores, Suchitoto, Playa Las Flores in San Miguel, La Palma, Santa Ana where you find the country's tallest volcano, Nahuizalco, Apaneca, Juayua, San Ignacio.



Mural in Perquin, former "guerrilla capital" and now a tourist destination.

## Culture

The Roman Catholic Church plays an important role in the Salvadoran culture. Significant foreign personalities in El Salvador were the Jesuit priests and professors Ignacio Ellacuria, Ignacio Martín-Baró, and Segundo Montes, who were murdered in 1989 by the Salvadoran Army during the heat of the civil war. Painting, ceramics and textile goods are the main manual artistic expressions. Writers Francisco Gavidia (1863–1955), Salarrué (Salvador Salazar Arrué) (1899-1975), Claudia Lars, Alfredo Espino, Pedro Geoffroy Rivas, Manlio Argueta, José Roberto Cea, and poet Roque Dalton are among the most important writers to stem from El Salvador. Notable 20th century personages include the late filmmaker Baltasar Polio, artist Fernando Llort, and caricaturist Toño Salazar. Amongst the more renowned representatives of the graphic arts are the painters Noe Canjura, Carlos Cañas, Julia Díaz, Camilo Minero, Ricardo Carbonell, Roberto Huezo, Miguel Angel Cerna (the painter and writer better known as MACLo), Esael Araujo, and many others.

The wife of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (author of the children's book *The Little Prince*) was a Salvadoran aristocrat, Consuelo de Saint-Exupéry.

The local Spanish vernacular is called *Caliche*.



## Holidays

Date	English name	Local name	
January 16	Peace Accords Day	<i>Día de los Acuerdos de Paz</i>	Celebrates the peace accords signing between the government and the guerrilla in 1992 that finished the 12-year civil war. Mostly political events.
March/April	Holy Week/Easter	<i>Semana Santa</i>	Celebrated with Carnival-like events in different cities by the large Catholic population.
May 1	Labor Day	<i>Día del trabajo</i>	International Labour Day
May 10	Mother's Day	<i>Día de las Madres</i>	
August 1–7	August Festivals	<i>Fiestas de agosto</i>	Week-long festival in celebration of <i>El Salvador del Mundo</i> , patron saint of El Salvador.
September 15	Independence Day	<i>Día de la Independencia</i>	Celebrates independence from Spain, achieved in 1821.
October 12	Day of the Indians	<i>Día de los indios</i>	Celebration in dedication to the Indians (Amerindians).
November 2	Day of the Dead	<i>Día de los Santos Difuntos</i>	A day on which most people visit the tombs of deceased loved ones. ( November 1 may be commemorated as well.)
November 21	Queen of the Peace Day	<i>Día de la Reyna de la Paz</i>	Day of the Queen of Peace, the patron saint. Also celebrated, the San Miguel Carnival, (carnaval de San Miguel) a known feast in El Salvador, celebrated in in San Miguel City, similar to Mardi Gras of New Orleans, where you can enjoy about 45 music bands on the street.
December 24	Christmas Day	<i>Navidad</i>	In many communities, December 24 ( Christmas Eve) is the major day of celebration, often to the point that it is considered the actual day of <i>Navidad</i> — with December 25 serving as a day of rest.



## Education

El Salvador has several universities:

- Universidad de El Salvador, UES
- Universidad Centroamericana “José Simeón Cañas”, UCA
- Universidad Francisco Gavidia, UFG
- Universidad Tecnológica, UTEC
- Universidad Don Bosco, UDB
- Universidad Evangelica
- Universidad de Nueva San Salvador, UNSS
- Universidad Albert Einstein
- Universidad Alberto Masferrer
- Universidad Modular Abierta, UMA
- Universidad Polytecnica
- Universidad Catolica de Occidente, UNICO

## Cuisine

El Salvador's most notable dish is the pupusa. Pupusas are a thick hand-made corn tortilla (made using masa de maíz or masa de arroz, a maize or rice flour dough used in Latin American cuisine) stuffed with one or more of the following: cheese (usually a soft Salvadoran cheese, a popular example is Quesillo con loroco), chicharrón (a ground pork product, often mixed with tomato paste), and refried beans. Loroco is a vine flower bud native to Central America. There are also vegetarian options, often with ayote (a type of squash) or garlic. Some adventurous restaurants even offer pupusas stuffed with shrimp or spinach.

Pupusas come from the pipil-nahuatl word, *pupushahua*. The pupusa's exact origins are debated, although its presence in El Salvador is known to predate the arrival of Spaniards.

Two other typical Salvadoran dishes are yuca frita and panes rellenos. Yuca frita, which is deep fried cassava root served with curtido (a pickled cabbage, onion and carrot topping) and pork rinds or pepesquitas (fried baby sardines). The Yuca is sometimes served boiled instead of fried. Pan con pavo (bread with turkey) is a warm turkey submarine sandwich similar to a hoagie. The turkey is marinated and then roasted with Pipil spices and handpulled. This sandwich is traditionally served with turkey, tomato, and watercress.

## Music



Salvadoran woman at a food stall



El Salvador is a Central American country whose culture is a mixture of Pipil and Spanish. Its music includes religious songs (mostly Roman Catholic) used to celebrate Christmas and other holidays, especially feast days of the saints. Satirical rural lyrical themes are common. Due to the Americanization of El Salvador, popular English music is played on most national radio stations. In 2007, census showed that 67% of the music played on the most popular radio station, consisted of English music.

## Demographics

The 2008 estimated population is 7,066,403. El Salvador has lacked authoritative demographic data for many years due to the fact that until 2007, a national census had not been undertaken since 1992. Prior to the 2007 census, patterns in population growth led many officials (including within the Salvadoran government) to estimate the country's size at between 6.7 and 6.9 million people . However, on May 12, 2008, El Salvador's Ministry of Economy finally released statistics gathered in the census of the previous May These data present a surprisingly low figure for the total population - 5,744,113. Challenges to the 2007 census on a number of grounds are forthcoming.

90% of Salvadorans are mestizo (mixed Native American and Spanish origin). 9% report their race as being White; this population is mostly of Spanish descent. There are also some of French, German, Swiss, Chinese, and Italian descent. El Salvador is 1% indigenous, mostly Pipil, Lenca and Kakawira (Cacaopera). Very few Native Americans have retained their native customs, traditions, or languages, especially in the wake of the deliberate 1932 massacres in which the Salvadoran military murdered somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 peasants. El Salvador is the only Central American country that has no visible African population because of its lack of an Atlantic coast and access to the slave trade that occurred along the east coast of the continent. In addition, General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez instituted race laws in 1930 that prohibited blacks from entering the country; this changed during the 1980s and the law was removed.

Among the few immigrant groups that reached El Salvador, Palestinian Christians stand out. Though few in number, their descendants have attained great economic and political power in the country, as evidenced by President Antonio Saca — whose opponent in the 2004 election, Schafik Handal, was likewise of Palestinian descent — and the flourishing commercial, industrial, and construction firms owned by them.

Spanish is the official language and therefore spoken by virtually all inhabitants (some of the indigenous still speak their native tongues, but all speak Spanish). English is also spoken by some throughout the republic. Many have studied or lived in English speaking countries (primarily the U.S., but also Canada and Australia), including many young Salvadorans deported from the United States, many of whom had grown up speaking only English. Furthermore, today all public schools teach English as a required course in both primary and secondary school.

Although the majority of El Salvador's residents are Roman Catholic, Protestantism is growing rapidly and is already representing more than 20% of the population. Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-Day Adventist churches are all growing, as are Pentecostals and Mormons.

The capital city of San Salvador has about 2.1 million people; an estimated 42% of El Salvador's population live in rural areas. Urbanization expanded at a phenomenal rate in El Salvador since the 1960s, driving millions to the cities and creating growth problems for cities around the country.





According to the most recent United Nations survey, life expectancy for men was 68 years and 74 years for women. Education in El Salvador is free through ninth grade. The national literacy rate is 84.1%.

As of 2004, there were approximately 3.2 million Salvadorans living outside El Salvador, some of whom are undocumented immigrants in the United States. Many other Salvadoran Americans are legal immigrants, many becoming citizens or residents through the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. The USA has traditionally been the destination of choice for Salvadorans looking for greater economic opportunity. Salvadorans also live in nearby Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. The majority of expatriates emigrated during the civil war of the 1980s for political reasons and later because of adverse economic and social conditions. Other countries with notable Salvadoran communities include Canada, Mexico, the Cayman Islands, Sweden, Brazil, Italy, and Australia.

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# Falkland Islands

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

The **Falkland Islands** (Spanish: *Islas Malvinas*) are an archipelago in the South Atlantic Ocean, located 300 miles (483 km) from the coast of Argentina, 671 miles (1,080 km) west of the Shag Rocks (South Georgia), and 584 miles (940 km) north of the British Antarctic Territory (which overlaps with the Argentine and Chilean claims to Antarctica in that region). They consist of two main islands, East Falkland and West Falkland, together with 776 smaller islands. Stanley, on East Falkland, is the capital. The islands are a self-governing Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, but have been the subject of a claim to sovereignty by Argentina since the re-establishment of British rule in 1833.

In pursuit of this claim in 1982, the islands were invaded by Argentina, precipitating the two-month-long undeclared Falklands War between Argentina and the United Kingdom, which resulted in the defeat and withdrawal of Argentine forces. Since the war there has been strong economic growth in both fisheries and tourism. The inhabitants of the islands are full British citizens (since a 1983 Act) and under Argentine Law are eligible for Argentine citizenship. Many trace their origins on the islands to early 19th-century Scottish immigration. The islands' residents reject the Argentine sovereignty claim.

## Name

The islands are referred to in the English language as "[The] Falkland Islands". This name dates from an expedition led by John Strong in 1690, who named the islands after his patron, Anthony Cary, 5th Viscount Falkland. The Spanish name for the islands, *Islas Malvinas*, is derived from the French name *Îles Malouines*, bestowed in 1764 by Louis Antoine de Bougainville, after the mariners and fishermen from the Breton port of Saint-Malo who became the island's first known settlers. The ISO designation is "Falkland Islands (Malvinas)".

As a result of the continuing sovereignty dispute, the use of many Spanish names is considered offensive in the Falkland Islands, particularly those associated with the 1982 invasion of the Falkland Islands. General Sir Jeremy Moore would not allow the use of *Islas Malvinas* in the surrender document, dismissing it as a propaganda term.

Falkland Islands	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> "Desire the right"	
<b>Anthem:</b> " God Save the Queen"	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Stanley
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Demonym</b>	Falkland Islander
<b>Government</b>	British Overseas Territory
- Head of state	Queen Elizabeth II
- Governor	Alan Huckle



## History

The Falkland Islands have had a complex history since their discovery, with France, Britain, Spain, and Argentina all claiming possession, and establishing as well as abandoning settlements on the islands. The Falklands Crisis of 1770 was nearly the cause of a war between a Franco-Spanish Alliance and Britain. The Spanish government's claim was continued by Argentina after the latter's independence in 1816 and the independence war in 1817. The United Kingdom returned to the islands in 1833 following the destruction of the Argentine settlement at Puerto Luis by the American sloop USS *Lexington* ( 28 December 1831). Argentina has continued to claim sovereignty over the islands, and the dispute was used by the military junta as a pretext to invade and briefly occupy the islands before being defeated in the two-month-long Falklands War in 1982 by a United Kingdom task force which returned the islands to British control.

The islands were uninhabited when they were first discovered by European explorers. There is disputed evidence of prior settlement, based on:

- The existence of the Falkland Island fox, or Warrah (now extinct). It is thought that humans brought it to the islands, but it may have reached the islands via a land bridge when the sea level was much lower during the last ice age.
- A scattering of undated artefacts including arrowheads and the remains of a canoe.

The first European explorer to sight the islands is widely thought to be Sebald de Weert, a Dutch sailor, in 1600. Although several British and Spanish historians maintain their own explorers discovered the islands earlier, some older maps, particularly Dutch ones, used the name "Sebald Islands", after de Weert.

In January 1690, English sailor John Strong, captain of the *Welfare*, was heading for Puerto Deseado (in Argentina); but driven off course by contrary winds, he reached the Sebald Islands instead and landed at Bold Cove. He sailed between the two principal islands and called the passage "Falkland Channel" (now Falkland Sound), after Anthony Cary, 5th Viscount Falkland (1659–1694), who as Commissioner of the Admiralty had financed the expedition, later becoming First Lord of the Admiralty. From this body of water the island group later took its collective English name.

- Chief Executive	Tim Thorogood
<b>British overseas territory</b>	
- Liberation Day	14 June 1982
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	12,173 km <sup>2</sup> ( 162nd) 4,700 sq mi
- Water (%)	0
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2005 estimate	3,060 ( 226th)
- Density	0.25/km <sup>2</sup> ( 240th) 0.65/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$75 million ( 223th)
- Per capita	\$25,000 (2002 estimate) ( <i>not ranked</i> )
<b>HDI (n/a)</b>	n/a (n/a) ( n/a)
<b>Currency</b>	Falkland Islands pound <sup>1</sup> ( FKP)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
- Summer ( DST)	( UTC-3)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.fk
<b>Calling code</b>	+500
<sup>1</sup> Fixed to the Pound sterling (GBP).	



Upland.



Camp settlement.

The first settlement on the Falkland Islands, called Port St. Louis, was founded by the French navigator and military commander Louis Antoine de Bougainville in 1764 on Berkeley Sound, in present-day Port Louis, East Falkland.

Unaware of the French presence, in January 1765 British captain John Byron explored and claimed Saunders Island, at the western end of the group, where he named the harbour of Port Egmont, and sailed near other islands, which he also claimed for King George III. A British settlement was built at Port Egmont in 1766. Also in 1766, Spain acquired the French colony, and after assuming effective control in 1767, placed the islands under a governor subordinate to the Buenos Aires colonial administration. Spain attacked Port

Egmont, ending the British presence there in 1770. The expulsion of the British settlement brought the two countries to the brink of war, but a peace treaty allowed the British to return to Port Egmont in 1771 with neither side relinquishing sovereignty.

As a result of economic pressures resulting from the forthcoming American War of Independence, the United Kingdom unilaterally chose to withdraw from many of her overseas settlements in 1774. Upon her withdrawal in 1776 the UK left behind a plaque asserting her claims. From then on, Spain alone maintained a settlement ruled from Buenos Aires under the control of the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata until 1811. On leaving in 1811, Spain, too, left behind a plaque asserting her claims.

When Argentina declared its independence from Spain in 1816, it laid claim to the islands according to the *uti possidetis* principle, since they had been under the administrative jurisdiction of the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata. On 6 November 1820, Colonel David Jewett raised the flag of the United Provinces of the River Plate (Argentina) at Port Louis. Jewett was an American sailor and privateer in the employment of businessman Patrick Lynch to captain his ship, the frigate *Heroína* (Lynch had obtained a corsair licence from the Buenos Aires Supreme Director Jose Rondeau). Jewett had put into the islands the previous month, following a disastrous eight month voyage with most of his crew disabled by scurvy and disease. After resting in the islands and repairing his ship he returned to Buenos Aires.

Occupation began in 1828 with the foundation of a settlement and a penal colony. The settlement was destroyed by United States warships in 1831 after the Argentinian governor of the islands Luis Vernet seized U.S. seal hunting ships during a dispute over fishing rights. They left behind escaped prisoners and pirates. In November 1832, Argentina sent another governor who was killed in a mutiny.

In January 1833, British forces returned and informed the Argentine commander that they intended to reassert British sovereignty. The existing settlers were allowed to remain, with an Irish member of Vernet's settlement, William Dickson, appointed as the Islands' governor. Vernet's deputy, Matthew Brisbane, returned later that year and was informed that the British had no objections to the continuation of Vernet's business ventures provided there was no interference with British control.



The Royal Navy built a base at Stanley, and the islands became a strategic point for navigation around Cape Horn. A World War I naval battle, the Battle of Falkland Islands, took place in December 1914, with a British victory over the Germans. During World War II, Stanley served as a Royal Navy station and serviced ships which took part in the Battle of the River Plate.

Sovereignty over the islands became an issue again in the latter half of the 20th century. Argentina, which had never renounced its claim to the islands, saw the creation of the United Nations as an opportunity to present its case before the rest of the world. In 1945, upon signing the UN Charter, Argentina stated that it reserved its right to sovereignty of the islands, as well as its right to recover them. The United Kingdom responded in turn by stating that, as an essential precondition for the fulfilment of UN Resolution 1514, regarding the de-colonisation of all territories still under foreign occupation, the Falklanders first had to vote for the British withdrawal at a referendum to be held on the issue.

Talks between British and Argentine foreign missions took place in the 1960s, but failed to come to any meaningful conclusion. A major sticking point in all the negotiations was that the two thousand inhabitants of mainly British descent preferred that the islands remain British territory.

## Argentine links

There were no air links to the islands until 1971, when the Argentine Air Force (FAA), which operates the state airline LADE, began amphibious flights between Comodoro Rivadavia and Stanley using Grumman HU-16 Albatross aircraft. Following a FAA request, the UK and Argentina reached an agreement for the FAA to construct the first runway. Flights began using Fokker F27 and continued with Fokker F28 aircraft twice a week until 1982. This was the only air link to the islands. YPF, the Argentine national oil and gas company, now part of Repsol YPF, supplied the islands' energy needs.

## Falklands War



The flag of the Falklands was banned when Argentina invaded

On 2 April 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands and other British territories in the South Atlantic (South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands). The military junta which had ruled Argentina since 1976 sought to maintain power by diverting public attention from the nation's poor economic performance. They attempted to do this by playing off long-standing feelings of the Argentines towards the islands. British writers hold that the United Kingdom's reduction in military capacity in the South Atlantic also encouraged the invasion.

The United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 502, calling on Argentina to withdraw forces from the Islands and for both parties to seek a diplomatic solution. International reaction ranged from support in the Latin American countries (with the exception of Chile), to opposition in Europe (with the exception of Spain), the Commonwealth, and eventually the United States. The British sent an expeditionary force to retake the islands, leading to the Falklands War. After short but fierce naval



Road sign to the capital.



Stanley.



and air battles, the British landed at San Carlos Water on 21 May, and a land campaign followed until the Argentine forces surrendered on 14 June.

Following the war, the British increased their military presence on the islands, constructing RAF Mount Pleasant and increasing the military garrison. Although the United Kingdom and Argentina resumed diplomatic relations in 1989, no further negotiations on sovereignty have taken place.

## Politics

Executive authority is vested in the Queen and is exercised by the Governor on her behalf. The Governor is also responsible for the administration of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, as these islands have no native inhabitants. Defence and Foreign Affairs are the responsibility of the United Kingdom. The current Governor is Alan Huckle, appointed July 2006.

Under the constitution, the latest version of which came into force in 1985, there is an Executive Council and a Legislative Council of the Falkland Islands. The Executive Council, which advises the Governor, is also chaired by the Governor. It consists of the Chief Executive, Financial Secretary and three Legislative Councillors, who are elected by the other Legislative Councillors. The Legislative Council consists of the Chief Executive, Financial Secretary and the eight Legislative Councillors, of whom five are elected from Stanley and three from Camp, for four-year terms. It is presided over by the Speaker, currently Darwin Lewis Clifton.

The loss of the war against the United Kingdom over control of the islands led to the collapse of the Argentine military dictatorship in 1983. Disputes over control of the islands continue. In 1992 Argentina and Britain resumed diplomatic relations and reopened their embassies in each other's countries. In 1998, in retaliation for the arrest in London of the former Chilean president Augusto Pinochet, the Chilean government banned flights between Punta Arenas and Port Stanley, thus isolating the islands from the rest of the world. Uruguay and Brazil refused to authorise direct flights between their territories and Port Stanley, forcing the Islands' government to enter negotiations with the Argentine government which led to Argentina authorising direct flights between its territory and Stanley, on condition that Argentine citizens be allowed on the islands. In 2001, British Prime Minister Tony Blair became the first Prime Minister to visit Argentina since the war. On the twenty-second anniversary of the war, Argentina's President Néstor Kirchner gave a speech insisting that the islands would once again be part of Argentina. Kirchner, campaigning for president in 2003, regarded the islands as a top priority. In June 2003 the issue was brought before a United Nations committee, and attempts have been made to open talks with the United Kingdom to resolve the issue of the islands. As far as the Falkland Islands Government and people are concerned, there is no issue to resolve. The Falkland Islanders themselves are almost entirely British and maintain their allegiance to the United Kingdom.

On 2 April 2007 (exactly 25 years after the Argentine invasion), Argentina renewed its claim over the Falkland Islands, asking for the UK to resume talks on sovereignty.

Falkland Islanders were granted full British citizenship from 1 January 1983 under the British Nationality (Falkland Islands) Act 1983.

22 September 2007, The Guardian reported the UK government was preparing to stake new claims on the sea floor around the Falklands and other UK remote



A Falkland stamp commemorating the coronation of King George VI of the United Kingdom.



island possessions, in order to exploit natural resources that may be present. In October 2007, a British spokeswoman confirmed that Britain intended to submit a claim to the UN to extend seabed territory around the Falklands and South Georgia, in advance of the expiry of the deadline for territorial claims following Britain's ratification of the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention.. If the claim is disputed, the UN will suspend the claim until the dispute is settled. The claim is largely theoretical and does not affect the Antarctic treaty or confirm new rights upon Britain. Neither does it permit the exploitation of oil or gas reserves, since these are banned by a protocol to the treaty. It would enable Britain to police fishing within the zone to prevent over exploitation of natural resources by commercial fishing in line with Britain's obligations under the treaty. Nevertheless many commentators have criticised the move for going against the *spirit* of the Antarctic treaty. Argentina has indicated it will challenge any British claim to Antarctic territory and the area around the Falkland Islands and South Georgia.

## Geography



Map of the Falkland Islands.



The position of the Falklands relative to Argentine and Chilean Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia





The Falkland Islands comprise two main islands, East Falkland and West Falkland (in Spanish Isla Gran Malvina and Isla Soledad respectively), and about 776 small islands. The total land area is 4,700 square miles (12,173 km<sup>2</sup>), approximately the same area as Connecticut or Northern Ireland, with a coastline estimated at 800 miles (1,288 km).

Much of the land is part of the two main islands separated by the Falkland Sound: East Falkland, home to the capital of Stanley and the majority of the population, and West Falkland. Both islands have mountain ranges, rising to 2,313 feet (705 m) at Mount Osborne on East Falkland. There are also some boggy plains, most notably Lafonia, on the southern half of East Falkland. Virtually the entire area of the islands is used as pasture for sheep.

Smaller islands surround the main two. They include Barren Island, Beaver Island, Bleaker Island, Carcass Island, George Island, Keppel Island, Lively Island, New Island, Pebble Island, Saunders Island, Sealion Island, Speedwell Island, Staats Island, Weddell Island, and West Point Island. The Jason Islands lie to the north west of the main archipelago, and Beauchene Island some distance to its south. Speedwell Island and George Island are split from East Falkland by Eagle Passage.

The islands claim a territorial sea of 12 nautical miles (22 km) and an exclusive fishing zone of 200 nautical miles (370 km), which has been a source of disagreement with Argentina.

Surrounded by cool South Atlantic waters, the Falkland Islands have a climate very much influenced by the ocean with a narrow annual temperature range of only 7°C. January averages about 9°C, with average daily high of 13°C, while July averages about 2°C with average daily high 4°C. Rainfall is relatively low at about 24 inches (610 mm). Humidity and winds, however, are constantly high. Snow is rare, but can occur at almost any time of year.

Biogeographically, the Falkland Islands are classified as part of the Neotropical realm, together with South America. It is also classified as part of the Antarctic Floristic Kingdom.

## Economy

Sheep farming (as of 2002, there were 583,000 sheep on the island) was formerly the main source of income for the islands, and still plays an important part with high quality wool exports going to the UK, but efforts to diversify introduced in 1984 have made fishing the largest part of the economy and brought increasing income from tourism.

The government sale of fishing licences to foreign countries has brought in more than £40 million a year in revenues, and local fishing boats are also in



San Carlos Water, one of many inlets on East Falkland. The islands are heavily indented by sounds and fjords



operation. More than 75% of the fish taken are squid, and most exports are to Spain. Tourism has shown rapid growth, with more than 30,000 visitors in 2001. The islands have become a regular port of call for the growing market of cruise ships. Attractions include the scenery and wildlife conservation with penguins, seabirds, seals and sealions, as well as visits to battlefields, golf, fishing and wreck diving.

An agreement with Argentina had set the terms for exploitation of offshore resources including large oil reserves, however, in 2007 Argentina unilaterally withdrew from the agreement. In response, Falklands Oil and Gas Limited has signed an agreement with BHP Billiton to investigate the potential exploitation of oil reserves. Climatic conditions of the southern seas mean that exploitation will be a difficult task, though economically viable, and the continuing sovereignty dispute with Argentina is hampering progress.

Defence is provided by the UK, and British military expenditures make a significant contribution to the economy. The islands are self sufficient except for defence; exports account for more than £125 million a year.

The largest company in the islands used to be the Falkland Islands Company (FIC), a publicly quoted company on the London Stock Exchange which was responsible for the majority of the economic activity on the islands, though its farms were sold in 1991 to the Falkland Islands Government. The FIC now operates several retail outlets in Stanley and is involved in port services and shipping operation.

The currency in use is the Falkland Pound, which remains in parity with the pound sterling. Sterling notes and coins circulate interchangeably with the local currency. The Falkland Islands also mint their own coins, and issue stamps, which forms a source of revenue from overseas collectors.

## Demographics



Christ Church Cathedral with whale bone arch, Stanley.

The population is 2,967 (July 2003 estimate), the majority of which are of British descent (approximately 70%), as a result of primarily Scottish and Welsh immigration to the islands. The native-born inhabitants call themselves "Islanders". Outsiders often call Islanders "Kelpers", from the kelp which grows profusely around the islands, but the name is no longer used in the Islands. Those people from the United Kingdom who have obtained Falkland Island status became what are known locally as 'belongers'. A few Islanders are of French, Gibraltarian (such as the Pitalaugas), Portuguese and Scandinavian descent. Some are the descendants of whalers who reached the Islands during the last two centuries. Furthermore there is a small minority of South American, mainly Chilean origin, and in more recent times many people from Saint Helena have also come to work in the Islands. The Falkland Islands have been a centre of English language learning for South Americans.

The main religion is Christianity. The main denominations are Church of England, Roman Catholic, United Free Church, and Lutheran-based denominations. Other smaller numbers of Christian churches are active, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventist and Greek Orthodox; with the latter being due to Greek fishermen passing through. There is also a small Bahá'í presence .

## Medical care

The Falkland Islands Government Health and Social Services Department provides medical care for the islands. The King Edward VII Memorial Hospital (KEMH) is Stanley's only hospital. It was partially military operated in the past but is now under complete civilian control. There are no ophthalmologists or opticians on the islands, although an optician from the United Kingdom visits about every six months and an ophthalmologist comes to do cataract surgery and eye exams on irregular intervals (once every few years). There are two dentists on the islands.

## Broadcasting and telecommunications

### Broadcasting

- PAL television, using the UK UHF allocation is standard.
- FM stereo broadcasting using the UK allocation is standard.
- MW broadcasting using 10 kHz steps (standard in ITU Region II).

### Telephone

The Falkland Islands has a modern telecommunications network providing fixed line telephone and ADSL and dial-up internet services in Stanley.

Telephony is provided to outlying settlements using microwave radio.



A GSM mobile network was installed in 2005 which provided coverage of Stanley, Mount Pleasant and surrounding areas.

## Sport

There are a number of sports clubs on the Falklands, including Badminton, Clay Pigeon Shooting, Cricket, Football, Golf, Hockey, Netball, rugby union, Sailing, Swimming, Table Tennis and Volleyball. The Falklands compete in the biannual Island Games.

## Transport

The Falkland Islands has two airports with paved runways. RAF Mount Pleasant, thirty miles west of Stanley, acts as the main international airport, with flights operated by the Royal Air Force to RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, England via a refuelling stop at RAF Ascension Island. RAF flights are on TriStars although it is common for charter aircraft to be used if the TriStars are required for operational flights. At present (December 2007) the RAF air link is operated by Omni Air International, using DC-10s. Weekly flights are also available to/from Santiago, Chile, operated by LAN Airlines.

Port Stanley Airport is a smaller airport outside the city, and is used for internal flights. Most settlements have grass air strips which are served by Islander aircraft of the Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS). The internal flight schedule is decided a day in advance according to passenger needs and an announcement made on the radio detailing arrival and departure times the night before. The British International (BRINTEL) company also operate two Sikorsky S61N helicopters for passenger flights between the islands. The British Antarctic Survey operates a transcontinental air link between the Falkland Islands and the Rothera base airfield, servicing also other British bases in the British Antarctic Territory using a de Havilland Canada Dash 7.

The road network has been improved in recent years. However, not too many paved roads exist outside Stanley and the RAF base.

## Landmines and ordnance

Approximately twenty five thousand land mines remaining from the 1982 war are securely and clearly fenced off. Free maps are available from the EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) office in Stanley. Care should still be taken as some beaches were mined, and there have been concerns the tides could have moved some mines. The same applies where mine fields are close to rivers. Care should be taken in case mines have been washed out of the marked area by flooding. There is also ordnance left over from the war, although finds of this type are becoming rarer with the passage of time.

In February 2005, the charity Landmine Action proposed a Kyoto-style credit scheme, which would see a commitment by the British government to clear an equivalent area of mined land to that currently existing in the Falklands in more seriously mine-affected countries by March 2009. This proposal was supported by Falkland Islanders, for whom landmines do not pose a serious threat in everyday life, but the British government is yet to declare its support or opposition to the idea.



## Military

The island has a number of royal marines stationed on it at most times, but also has its own defence force known as the Falkland Islands Defence Force. This is one Company in size. It is completely funded by the Falklands government and uses vehicles such as; Quad bikes, Inflatable boats and Land Rovers to traverse the islands terrain. The Falkland Islands Defence Force uses the Steyr AUG as its main assault rifle.

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Badge of the Falkland Islands Defence Force



# French Guiana

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries**

**French Guiana** (French: *Guyane française*, officially *Guyane*) is an overseas department (French: *département d'outre-mer*, or *DOM*) of France, located on the northern coast of South America. Like the other DOMs, French Guiana is also an overseas region of France, one of the 26 regions of France. It is an integral part of France, and its currency is the euro.

## History

French Guiana was originally inhabited by a number of indigenous American peoples. Settled by the French during the 17th century, it was the site of penal settlements from 1852 until 1951, which were known in the English-speaking world as Devil's Island. A border dispute with Brazil arose in the late nineteenth century over a vast area of jungle, leading to the short-lived pro-French independent state of Counani in the disputed territory and some fighting between settlers, before the dispute was resolved largely in favour of Brazil by the arbitration of the Swiss government. In 1946, French Guiana became an overseas department of France. The 1970s saw the settlement of Hmong refugees from Laos. A movement for increased autonomy from France gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s. Protests by those calling for more autonomy have become increasingly vocal; demonstrations in 1996, 1997 and 2000 all ended in violence.

## Politics

French Guiana, as part of France, is part of the European Union, the largest part in an area outside Europe, with one of the longest EU external boundaries. Along with the Spanish enclaves in Africa of Ceuta and Melilla, it is one of only three European Union territories outside Europe that are not an island. Its head of state is the President of the French Republic, who appoints a Prefect (resident at the Prefecture building in Cayenne) as his representative. There are two legislative bodies: the 19-member General Council and the 34-member Regional Council, both elected.

French Guiana sends two deputies to the French National Assembly, one representing the commune (municipality) of Cayenne and the commune of Macouria, and the other representing the rest of French Guiana.

### Région Guyane



Region flag



Region logo

#### Location




<b>Administration</b>	
Capital	Cayenne
Regional President	Antoine Karam ( PSG) (since 1992)
Departments	Guyane
Arrondissements	2




This latter constituency is the largest in the French Republic by land area. French Guiana also sends one senator to the French Senate.

French Guiana has traditionally been conservative, though the socialist party has been increasingly successful in recent years. Though many would like to see more autonomy for the region, support for complete independence is very low.

A chronic issue affecting French Guiana is the influx of illegal immigrants and clandestine gold prospectors from Brazil and Suriname. The border between the department and Suriname is formed by the Maroni River, which flows through rain forest and is difficult for the Gendarmerie and the French Foreign Legion to patrol. The border line with Suriname is disputed.

## Administrative divisions

French Guiana is divided into 2 departmental arrondissements, 19 cantons (not shown here), and 22 communes:

Cantons	19
Communes	22
<b>Statistics</b>	
Land area <sup>1</sup>	83,534 km <sup>2</sup>
Population	(Ranked 26th)
- January 1, 2007 est.	209,000
- March 8, 1999 census	157,213
- Density (2007)	2.5/km <sup>2</sup>
<sup>1</sup> French Land Register data, which exclude lakes, ponds, and glaciers larger than 1 km <sup>2</sup> (0.386 sq. mi. or 247 acres) as well as the estuaries of rivers	
	



### Arrondissement of Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni

1. Awala-Yalimapo
2. Mana
3. Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni
4. Apatou
5. Grand-Santi
6. Papaïchton
7. Saül
8. Maripasoula

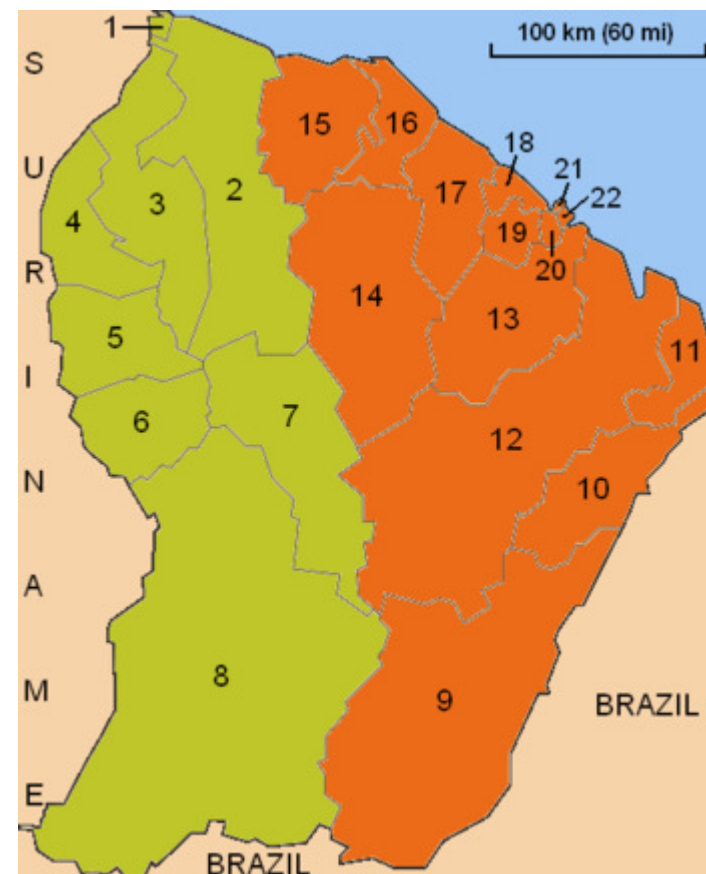
### Arrondissement of Cayenne

9. Camopi
10. Saint-Georges
11. Ouanary
12. Régina
13. Roura
14. Saint-Élie
15. Iracoubo
16. Sinnamary
17. Kourou
18. Macouria
19. Montsinéry-Tonnegrande
20. Matoury
21. Cayenne
22. Remire-Montjoly

See also:

- Arrondissements of Guyane (French Guiana)
- Cantons of Guyane (French Guiana)
- Communes of Guyane (Cities of French Guiana)

## Geography







Though sharing cultural affinities with the French-speaking territories of the Caribbean, French Guiana cannot be considered to be part of that geographic region, with the Caribbean Sea actually being located several hundred kilometres to the west, beyond the arc of the Lesser Antilles.

French Guiana consists of two main geographical regions: a coastal strip where the majority of the people live, and dense, near-inaccessible rainforest which gradually rises to the modest peaks of the Tumac-Humac mountains along the Brazilian frontier. French Guiana's highest peak is Bellevue de l'Inini (851 m). Other mountains include Mont Machalou (782 m), Pic Coudreau (711 m) and Mont St Marcel (635 m), Mont Favard (200 m) and Montagne du Mahury (156 m). Several small islands are found off the coast, the three Iles du Salut Salvation Islands which includes Devil's Island and the isolated Iles du Connétable bird sanctuary further along the coast towards Brazil.

The Barrage de Petit-Saut hydroelectric dam in the north of French Guiana forms an artificial lake and provides hydroelectricity. There are many rivers in French Guiana.

## Economy

French Guiana is heavily dependent on France for subsidies, trade, and goods. The main industries are fishing (accounting for three-quarters of foreign exports), gold mining and timber. In addition, the Guiana Space Centre at Kourou accounts for 25% of the GDP and employs about 1700 people. There is very little manufacturing, and agriculture is largely undeveloped. Tourism, especially eco-tourism, is growing. Unemployment is a major problem, running at about 20% to 30%.

In 2006 the GDP per capita of French Guiana at market exchange rates, not at PPP, was 13,800 euros (US\$17,336), which was 48% of Metropolitan France's average GDP per capita that year.

## Transport





French Guiana's main international airport is Cayenne-Rochambeau Airport, located in the commune of Matoury, a southern suburb of Cayenne. There is one flight a day to Paris (Orly Airport), and one flight a day arriving from Paris. The flight time from Cayenne to Paris is 8 hours and 25 minutes, and from Paris to Cayenne it is 9 hours and 10 minutes. There are also flights to Fort-de-France, Pointe-à-Pitre, Port-au-Prince, Miami, Macapá, Belém, and Fortaleza.

French Guiana's main seaport is the port of Dégrad des Cannes, located on the estuary of the Mahury River, in the commune of Remire-Montjoly, a south-eastern suburb of Cayenne. Almost all of French Guiana's imports and exports pass through the port of Dégrad des Cannes. Built in 1969, it replaced the old harbour of Cayenne which was congested and couldn't cope with modern traffic.

An asphalted road from Régina to Saint-Georges de l'Oyapock (a town by the Brazilian border) was opened in 2004, completing the road from Cayenne to the Brazilian border. It is now possible to drive on a fully paved road from Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni on the Surinamese border to Saint-Georges de l'Oyapock on the Brazilian border. Following an international treaty between France and Brazil signed in July 2005, a bridge over the Oyapock River (marking the border with Brazil) is currently being built and is due to open in 2010.

This bridge will be the first land crossing ever opened between France and Brazil, and indeed between French Guiana and the rest of the world (there exists no other bridge crossing the Oyapock River, and no bridge crossing the Maroni River marking the border with Suriname - there is a ferry crossing to Albina, Suriname.). When the bridge is opened, it will be possible to drive uninterrupted from Cayenne to Macapá, the capital of the state of Amapá in Brazil.



Cayenne

## Demographics

French Guiana's population of 209,000 (January 2007 est.), most of whom live along the coast, is very ethnically diverse. At the 1999 census, 54.4% of the inhabitants of French Guiana were born in French Guiana, 11.8% were born in Metropolitan France, 5.2% were born in the French Caribbean *départements* (Guadeloupe and Martinique), and 28.6% were born in foreign countries (primarily Brazil, Suriname, and Haiti).

Estimates of the percentages of French Guiana ethnic composition vary, a situation compounded by the large numbers of immigrants (about 20,000).

Guianese Creoles (people of primarily African heritage mixed with some French ancestry) are the largest ethnic group, though estimates vary as to the exact percentage, depending upon whether the large Haitian community is included as well. Generally the Creole population is judged at about 60% to 70% of the total population with Haitians (comprising roughly one-third of Creoles) and 30% to 50% without. Roughly 14% are Europeans, the vast majority of whom are French.

The main Asian communities are the Hmong from Laos (1.5%) and Chinese (3.2%, primarily from Hong Kong and Zhejiang province). There are also smaller groups from various Caribbean islands, mainly Saint Lucia. The main groups living in the interior are the Maroons (also called Bush Negroes) and Amerindians.



The Maroons, descendants of escaped African slaves, live primarily along the Maroni River. The main Maroon groups are the Paramacca, Aucan (both of whom also live in Suriname) and the Boni (Aluku).

The main Amerindian groups (forming about 3%-4% of the population) are the Arawak, Carib, Emerillon, Galibi (now called the Kaliña), Palikour, Wayampi and Wayana.

The most practised religion in this region is Roman Catholicism; the Maroons and some Amerindian peoples maintain their own religions. The Hmong people are also mainly Catholic owing to the influence of Catholic missionaries who helped bring them to French Guiana. The Bahá'í Religion is also present.

### Historical population

1790 estimate	1839 estimate	1857 estimate	1891 estimate	1946 census	1954 census	1961 census	1967 census	1974 census	1982 census	1990 census	1999 census	2007 estimate
14,520	20,940	25,561	33,500	25,499	27,863	33,505	44,392	55,125	73,022	114,678	157,213	209,000
Official figures from past censuses and INSEE estimates.												

## Notable natives and residents

- Florent Malouda, French international football player who plays for Chelsea Football Club
- Henri Charrière, an escaped French convict, imprisoned in and around French Guiana from 1933 to 1945.
- Christiane Taubira, Politician of Parti Radical de Gauche (France)
- Malia Metella, French swimmer, SC European Championships 2004: 1st 100m free.
- Bernard Lama, former French international football player.
- Cyrille Regis, former West Bromwich Albion and England player.
- Léon Damas, Francophone poet widely notated for his influence on the literary movement known as la négritude
- Henri Salvador, famous singer, one of the inspiration sources for the Bossa nova movement.
- Jean-Claude Darcheville, football striker who joined Rangers from FC Girondins de Bordeaux in the summer of 2007.
- Marc-Antoine Fortuné, football striker who joined AS Nancy in the winter of 2006

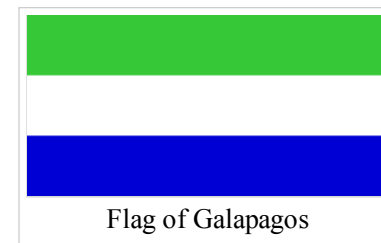
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# Galápagos Islands


**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries**



## Galápagos Islands\*

### UNESCO World Heritage Site



**State Party**  Ecuador

**Type** Natural environment

**Criteria** vii, viii, ix, x

**Reference** 1

**Region\*\*** Latin America and the Caribbean



The **Galápagos Islands** (Official name: Archipiélago de Colón; other Spanish names: *Islas de Colón* or *Islas Galápagos*, from *galápagos*, "saddle"—after the shells of saddlebacked Galápagos tortoises) are an archipelago of volcanic islands distributed around the equator, 972 km west of continental Ecuador in the Pacific Ocean.

The Galápagos archipelago, with a population of around 40,000, is a province of Ecuador, a country in northwestern South America, and the islands are all part of Ecuador's national park system. The principal language on the islands is Spanish.

The islands are famed for their vast number of endemic species and the studies by Charles Darwin during the voyage of the *Beagle* that contributed to the inception of Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection.

## Etymology

The archipelago has been known by many different names, including the "Enchanted Islands," because of the way in which the strong and swift currents made navigation difficult and also because of the beautiful geography and biodiversity. The first crude navigation chart of the islands was done by the buccaneer Ambrose Cowley in 1684. He named the islands after some of his fellow pirates or after the English noblemen who helped the pirates' cause. More recently, the Ecuadorian government gave most of the islands Spanish names. While the Spanish names are official, many users (especially ecological researchers) continue to use the older English names, particularly as those were the names used when Charles Darwin visited.

"Galapago" is an old Spanish word, meaning saddle. The large Galapagos Tortoises on some of the islands had a shell that resembled an old Spanish saddle, thus the name. The tortoise is a unique animal found only in the Galapagos Islands, yet there are no more than 200 in the 13 main islands.

## Physical Geography

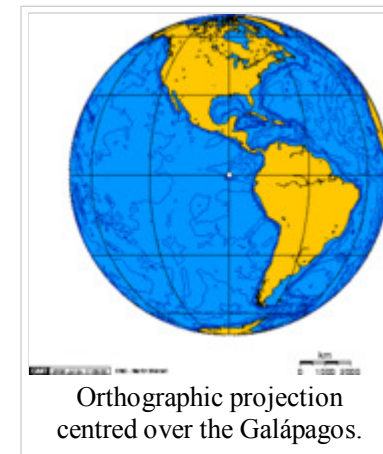
### Inscription history

**Inscription** 1978 (2nd Session)

**Extensions** 2001

\* Name as inscribed on World Heritage List.

\*\* Region as classified by UNESCO.





Located in the eastern Pacific Ocean at 972 km off the west coast of South America. The closest land mass is the mainland of Ecuador to the east (the country to which they belong), to the North is Cocos Island 720 km and to the South is Easter Island and San Felix Island at 3200 km.

The islands are found at the coordinates  $1^{\circ}40'N$ - $1^{\circ}36'S$ ,  $89^{\circ}16'$ - $92^{\circ}01'W$ . Straddling the equator, islands in the chain are located in both the northern and southern hemisphere with Volcan Wolf and Volcano Ecuador on Isla Isabela being directly on the equator line. Española the southernmost island and Darwin the northernmost island are spread out over a distance of 220 km.

The Galapagos Archipelago consists of 7880 square km of land over 45,000 square km. The largest of the islands, Isabela, measures 4,588 square km and making up half of the total land area of the Galapagos. Volcan Wolf, on Isabela is the highest point with an elevation of 1,707 m above sea level.

The group consists of 16 main islands, 6 smaller islands, and 10 rocks and islets. The islands are located at the Galapagos Triple Junction. It is also atop the Galapagos hotspot, a place where the earth's crust is being melted from below by a mantle plume, creating volcanoes. The oldest island is thought to have formed between 5 and 10 million years ago. The youngest islands, Isabela and Fernandina, are still being formed, with the most recent volcanic eruption in 2007.

The main islands of the archipelago (with their English names) shown alphabetically. :

### Baltra (South Seymour)

Also known as South Seymour, Baltra is a small flat island located near the centre of the Galapagos. It was created by Geological uplift. The island is very arid and vegetation consists of salt bushes, prickly pear cactus and palo santo trees.

During World War II Baltra was established as a US Air Force Base. Crews stationed at Baltra patrolled the Pacific for enemy submarines as well as providing protection for the Panama Canal. After the war the facilities were given to the government of Ecuador. Today the island continues as an official Ecuadorian military base. The foundations and other remains of the US base can still be seen as you cross the island.

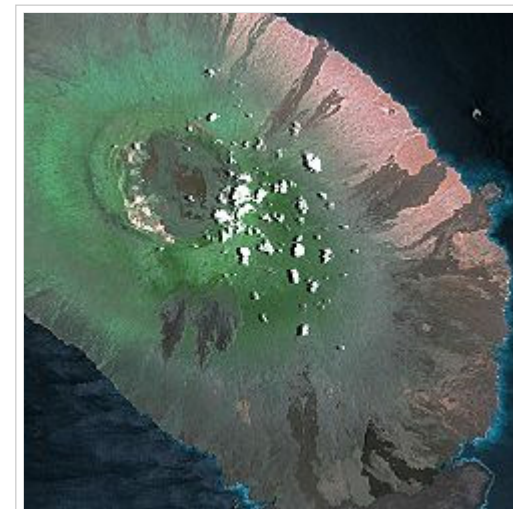
Until 1986, Baltra Airport was the only airport serving the Galápagos. Now there are two airports which receive flights from the continent, the other located on San Cristóbal Island. Private planes flying to Galapagos must fly to Baltra as it is the only airport with facilities for planes overnight.

Arriving into Baltra all visitors are immediately transported by bus to one of two docks. The first dock is located in a small bay where the boats cruising Galapagos await passengers. The second is a ferry dock which connects Baltra to the island of Santa Cruz.

During the 1940s scientists decided to move 70 of Baltra's Land Iguanas to the neighboring North Seymour Island as part of an experiment. This move had



Satellite photo of the Galápagos islands overlaid with the names of the visible main islands.



Isabela seen from Spot Satellite



unexpected results for during the military occupation of Baltra in World War II, the native iguanas became extinct on the island. During the 1980s iguanas from North Seymour were brought to the Charles Darwin Research Station as part of a breeding and repopulation project and in the 1990s land iguanas were reintroduced to Baltra. As of 1997 scientists counted 97 iguanas living on Baltra 13 of which were born on the islands.

In 2007 and 2008 the Baltra airport is being remodeled to include additional restaurants, shops and an improved visitor area.

### **Bartolomé (Bartholomew)**

Bartolomé Island is a volcanic islet just off the east coast of Santiago Island in the Galápagos Islands Group. It is one of the "younger" islands in the Galápagos archipelago. It is named after Lieutenant David Bartholomew of the British Navy.

### **Darwin (Culpepper)**

This island is named after Charles Darwin. It has an area of 1.1 square kilometres (0.4 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 168 metres (551 ft). Here fur seals, frigates, Marine iguanas, Swallow-tailed Gulls, sea lions, whales, marine turtles, Red-footed and Nazca boobies can be seen.

### **Española (Hood)**

Its name was given in honour of Spain. It also is known as Hood after an English nobleman. It has an area of 60 square kilometres (23 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 206 metres (676 ft).

Española is the oldest island at around 3.5 million years and the southernmost in the chain. The island's remote location has a large number of endemic fauna. Secluded from the other islands, wildlife on Española adapted to the island's environment and natural resources. marine iguanas on Española are the only ones that change colour during breeding season.

The Waved Albatross is found on the island. The island's steep cliffs serve as the perfect runways for these large birds which take off for their ocean feeding grounds near the mainland of Ecuador and Peru.



Waved Albatrosses on Española

Española has two visitor sites. Gardner Bay is a swimming and snorkeling site as well as offering a great beach. Punta Suarez has migrant, resident, and endemic wildlife including brightly colored Marine Iguana, Española Lava Lizards, Hood Mockingbirds, Swallow-tailed Gulls, Blue-footed Booby, Red-footed Booby and Nazca Boobies, Galápagos Hawks, a selection of Finch, and the Waved Albatross.

### **Fernandina (Narborough)**

The name was given in honour of King Ferdinand II of Aragon, who sponsored the voyage of Columbus. Fernandina has an area of 642 square kilometres (248 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 1,494 metres (4,902 ft). This is the youngest and westernmost island. In May 13, 2005, a new very eruptive process





began on this island when an ash and water vapour cloud rose to a height of 7 kilometers (4.4 mi) and lava flows descended the slopes of the volcano on the way to the sea. Punta Espinosa is a narrow stretch of land where hundreds of Marine Iguanas gather largely on black lava rocks. The famous Flightless Cormorant inhabits this island and also Galápagos Penguins, Pelicans and Sea Lions are abundant. Different types of lava flows can be compared and the Mangrove Forests can be observed.

### **Floreana (Charles or Santa María)**

It was named after Juan José Flores, the first president of Ecuador, during whose administration the government of Ecuador took possession of the archipelago. It is also called Santa Maria after one of the caravels of Columbus. It has an area of 173 square kilometres (66.8 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 640 metres (2,100 ft). It is one of the islands with the most interesting human history and one of the earliest to be inhabited. Pink flamingos and green sea turtles nest (December to May) in this island. The "patapegada" or Galápagos petrel is found here, a sea bird which spends most of its life away from land. At Post Office Bay, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century whalers kept a wooden barrel that served as post office so that mail could be picked up and delivered to their destination mainly Europe and the United States by ships on their way home. At the "Devil's Crown", an underwater volcanic cone, coral formations are found.

### **Genovesa Island (Tower)**

The name is derived from Genoa, Italy where it is said Columbus was born. It has an area of 14 square kilometres (5.4 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 76 metres (249 ft). This island is formed by the remaining edge of a large crater that is submerged. Its nickname of "the bird island" is clearly justified. At Darwin Bay, frigatebirds, swallow-tailed gulls, which are the only nocturnal of its species in the world can be seen. Red-footed boobies, noddy terns, lava gulls, tropic birds, doves, storm petrels and Darwin finches are also in sight. Prince Philip's Steps is a bird-watching plateau with Nazca and red-footed boobies. There is a large Palo Santo forest.

### **Isabella (Albemarle)**

This island was named in honour of Queen Isabela. With an area of 4,640 square kilometres (1,792 sq mi), it is the largest island of the Galápagos. Its highest point is Wolf Volcano with an altitude of 1,707 metres (5,600 ft). The island's seahorse shape is the product of the merging of six large volcanoes into a single landmass. On this island Galápagos Penguins, Flightless Cormorants, Marine Iguanas, pelicans and Sally Lightfoot crabs abound. At the skirts and calderas of the volcanos of Isabela, Land Iguanas and Galápagos Tortoises can be observed, as well as Darwin Finches, Galápagos Hawks, Galápagos Doves and very interesting lowland vegetation. The third-largest human settlement of the archipelago, Puerto Villamil, is located at the south-eastern tip of the island.



Galapagos Iguana

### **Marchena (Bindloe)**

Named after Fray Antonio Marchena. Has an area of 130 square kilometres (50 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 343 metres (1,125 ft). Galápagos hawks and



sea lions inhabit this island, and it is home to the Marchena Lava Lizard, an endemic animal.

### **Nameless**

The small islet is used mostly for scuba diving.

### **North Seymour**

Its name was given after an English nobleman called Lord Hugh Seymour. It has an area of 1.9 square kilometres (0.7 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 28 metres (92 ft). This island is home to a large population of blue-footed boobies and swallow-tailed gulls. It hosts one of the largest populations of frigate birds. It was formed from geological uplift.

Just north of the Baltra Airport is the small islet of North Seymour. North Seymour was created by seismic uplift rather than being of volcanic origin. The island has a flat profile with cliffs only a few meters from the shoreline, where swallowtail gulls and tropicbirds sit perched in ledges. A tiny forest of silver-grey Palo santotrees stand just above the landing, usually without leaves, waiting for rain to bring them into bloom. The island is teeming with life. Visiting the island you may have to give way to a passing sea lion or marine iguana. Flocks of pelicans and swallow tailed gulls feed off shore and seasonally masked boobies can also be seen.

North Seymour is an extraordinary place for breeding birds and is home to one of the largest populations of nesting blue-footed boobies and magnificent frigate birds. Pairs of blue-footed boobies can be seen conducting their mating ritual as they offer each other gifts, whistle and honk, stretch their necks towards the sky, spread their wings, and dance--showing off their bright blue feet. Magnificent frigatebirds perch in low bushes, near the boobies, while watching over their large chicks. The frigates are huge, dark acrobats with a 90-inch (2,300 mm) wingspan. Male frigates can puff up their scarlet throat sacks to resemble a giant red balloon. Boobies and frigates have an interesting relationship. Boobies are excellent hunters and fish in flocks. The frigates by comparison are pirates, they dive bomb the boobies to force them to drop their prey. Then the acrobatic frigate swoops down and picks up the food before it hits the water.

### **Pinzón (Duncan)**

Named after the Pinzón brothers, captains of the Pinta and Niña caravels. Has an area of 18 square kilometers (7 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 458 metres (1,503 ft). Sea lions, Galápagos hawks, giant tortoises, marine iguanas, and dolphins can be seen here. The Pinta island is also home to the last remaining Pinta Tortoise, called Lonesome George. He does not actually live on Pinta Island any longer, he is at a research facility

### **Rábida (Jervis)**

It bears the name of the convent of Rábida where Columbus left his son during his voyage to the Americas. Has an area of 4.9 square kilometres (1.9 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 367 metres (1,204 ft). The high amount of iron contained in the lava at Rábida give it a distinctive red colour. White-Cheeked Pintail Ducks live in a salt-water lagoon close to the beach, where brown pelicans and boobies have built their nests. Up until recently, flamingos were also found in the

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salt-water lagoon, but they have since moved on to other islands, likely due to a lack of food on Rábida. Nine species of Finches have been reported in this island.

### **San Cristóbal (Chatham)**

It bears the name of the Patron Saint of seafarers, " St. Christopher". Its English name was given after William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham. It has an area of 558 square kilometres (215 sq mi) and its highest point rises to 730 metres (2395 ft). This islands hosts frigate birds, sea lions, giant tortoises, blue and red footed boobies, tropicbirds, marine iguanas, dolphins, swallow-tailed gulls. Its vegetation includes *Calandrinia galapagos*, *Lecocarpus darwini*, and trees such as *Lignum vitae*. The largest fresh water lake in the archipelago, Laguna El Junco, is located in the highlands of San Cristóbal. The capital of the province of Galápagos, Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, lies at the southern tip of the island.

### **Santa Cruz (Indefatigable)**

Given the name of the Holy Cross in Spanish, its English name derives from the British vessel HMS *Indefatigable*. It has an area of 986 square kilometres (381 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 864 metres (2834 ft). Santa Cruz is the island that hosts the largest human population in the archipelago at the town of Puerto Ayora. The Charles Darwin Research Station and the headquarters of the Galápagos National Park Service are located here. The GNPS and CDRS operate a tortoise breeding centre here, where young tortoises are hatched, reared, and prepared to be reintroduced to their natural habitat. The Highlands of Santa Cruz offer an exuberant vegetation and are famous for the lava tunnels. Large tortoise populations are found here. Black Turtle Cove is a site surrounded by mangrove which sea turtles, rays and small sharks sometimes use as a mating area. Cerro Dragón, known for its flamingo lagoon, is also located here, and along the trail one may see land iguanas foraging

### **Santa Fe (Barrington)**

Named after a city in Spain, has an area of 24 square kilometres (9 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 259 metres (850 ft). Santa Fe hosts a forest of Opuntia cactus, which are the largest of the archipelago, and Palo Santo. Weathered cliffs provide a haven for swallow-tailed gulls, red-billed tropic birds, shear-waters petrels. Santa Fe species of Galapagos Land Iguanas are often seen, as well as lava lizards.

### **Santiago (San Salvador, James)**

Its name is equivalent to Saint James in English; it is also known as San Salvador, after the first island discovered by Columbus in the Caribbean Sea. This island has an area of 585 square kilometers (226 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 907 metres (2976 ft). Marine iguanas, sea lions, fur seals, land and sea turtles, flamingos, dolphins and sharks are found here. Pigs and goats, which were introduced by humans to the islands and have caused great harm to the endemic species, have been eradicated (pigs in 2002; goat eradication is nearing finalization). Darwin Finches and Galápagos Hawks are usually seen as well as a colony of Fur Seals. At Sullivan Bay a recent (around 100 years ago) pahoehoe lava flow can be observed.



## South Plaza

It is named in honour of a former president of Ecuador, General Leonidas Plaza. It has an area of 0.13 square kilometers (0.05 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 23 metres (75 ft). The flora of South Plaza includes *Opuntia cactua* and *Sesuvium* plants, which forms a reddish carpet on top of the lava formations. Iguanas (land and marine and some hybrids of both species) are abundant and there are a large number of birds that can be observed from the cliffs at the southern part of the island, including tropic birds and swallow-tailed gulls.

## Wolf (Wenman)

This island was named after the German geologist Theodor Wolf. It has an area of 1.3 square kilometres (0.5 sq mi) and a maximum altitude of 253 metres (830 ft). Here fur seals, frigatebirds, masked and red-footed boobies, Marine Iguanas, sharks, whales, dolphins and swallow-tailed gulls can be seen. The most famous resident is the vampire finch which feeds on the blood of the boobies and is only found on this island.

## Minor islands

A small island directly north of Santa Cruz and directly west of Baltra, this very inaccessible island appears, though unnamed, on Ambrose Cowley's 1684 chart. It is important as the location of multi-decade finch population studies by Peter and Rosemary Grant.

## Weather

Although located on the Equator, the Humboldt Current brings cold water to the islands, causing frequent drizzles during most of the year. The weather is periodically influenced by the El Niño phenomenon which brings warmer temperatures and heavy rains.

During the season known as the "Garua" (June to November) the temperature by the sea is 22°C, a steady and cold wind blows from South and Southeast, and frequent drizzles (Garuas) last most of the day, along with dense fog which conceals the islands. During the warm season (December to May) the average sea and air temperature rises to 25°C, there is no wind at all, there are sporadic though strong rains and the sun shines.

Weather changes as altitude increases in the large islands. Temperature decreases gradually with altitude, while precipitation increases due to the condensation of moisture in clouds on the slopes. There is a large variation in precipitation from one place to another, not only with altitude but also depending on the location of the islands, and also with the seasons.

The following table corresponding to the wet 1969 shows the variation of precipitation in different places of Santa Cruz Island:

Location	Charles Darwin Station	Devine Farm	Media Luna



Altitude	6 m	320 m	620 m
January	23.0 mm	78.0 mm	172.6 mm
February	16.8 mm	155.2 mm	117.0 mm
March	249.0 mm	920.8 mm	666.7 mm
April	68.5 mm	79.5 mm	166.4 mm
May	31.4 mm	214.6 mm	309.8 mm
June	16.8 mm	147.3 mm	271.8 mm
July	12.0 mm	42.2 mm	135.6 mm
August	3.8 mm	13.7 mm	89.5 mm
September	18.5 mm	90.9 mm	282.6 mm
October	3.2 mm	22.6 mm	96.5 mm
November	11.0 mm	52.8 mm	172.7 mm
December	15.7 mm	84.1 mm	175.3 mm
TOTALS	469.7 mm	1901.7 mm	2656.4 mm

The precipitation also depends on the geographical location. During March 1969 the precipitation over Charles Darwin Station, on the southern coast of Santa Cruz was 249.0 mm, while on Baltra Island the precipitation during the same month was only 137.6 mm. This is due to the fact that Baltra is located behind Santa Cruz with respect to the prevailing southerly winds, so most of the moisture gets precipitated in the Santa Cruz highlands.

There are significant changes in precipitation from one year to another too. At Charles Darwin Station the precipitation during March 1969 was 249.0 mm, but during March 1970 it was only 1.2 mm.

## History

European discovery of the Galápagos Islands occurred when Dominican Fray Tomás de Berlanga, the fourth Bishop of Panama, sailed to Peru to settle a dispute between Francisco Pizarro and his lieutenants. De Berlanga's vessel drifted off course when the winds diminished, and his party reached the islands on March 10, 1535. According to a 1956 study by Thor Heyerdahl and Arne Skjølsvold, remains of potsherds and other artifacts from several sites on the islands suggest visitation by South American peoples prior to the arrival of the Spanish.



The islands first appeared on maps in about 1570 in those drawn by Abraham Ortelius and Mercator. The islands were called "Insulae de los Galopegos" (Islands of the Tortoises).

The first English captain to visit the Galápagos Islands was Richard Hawkins, in 1593. Until the early 19th century, the archipelago was often used as a hideout by mostly English pirates who pilfered Spanish galleons carrying gold and silver from South America to Spain.

Alexander Selkirk, whose adventures in Juan Fernández Islands inspired Daniel Defoe to write *Robinson Crusoe*, visited the Galápagos in 1708 after he was picked up from Juan Fernández by the privateer Woodes Rogers. Rogers was refitting his ships in the islands after sacking Guayaquil.

The first scientific mission to the Galápagos arrived in 1790 under the leadership of Alessandro Malaspina, a Sicilian captain whose expedition was sponsored by the King of Spain. However, the records of the expedition were lost.

In 1793, James Colnett made a description of the flora and fauna of Galápagos and suggested that the islands could be used as base for the whalers operating in the Pacific Ocean. He also drew the first accurate navigation charts of the islands. Whalers killed and captured thousands of the Galápagos tortoises to extract their fat. The tortoises could also be kept on board ship as a means of providing of fresh protein as these animals could survive for several months on board without any food or water. The hunting of the tortoises was responsible for greatly diminishing, and in some cases eliminating, certain species. Along with whalers came the fur-seal hunters who brought the population of this animal close to extinction.

Ecuador annexed the Galápagos Islands on February 12, 1832, naming it Archipelago of Ecuador. This was a new name that added to several names that had been, and are still, used to refer to the archipelago. The first governor of Galápagos, General José de Villamil, brought a group of convicts to populate the island of Floreana and in October 1832 some artisans and farmers joined.

The voyage of the *Beagle* brought the survey ship HMS *Beagle* under captain Robert FitzRoy to the Galápagos on September 15, 1835 to survey approaches to harbors. The captain and others on board including his companion the young naturalist Charles Darwin made a scientific study of geology and biology on four of the thirteen islands before they left on October 20 to continue on their round-the-world expedition. Darwin noticed that mockingbirds differed between islands, though he thought the birds now known as Darwin's finches were unrelated to each other and did not bother labelling them by island. The governor of the prison colony on *Charles Island* told him that tortoises differed from island to island. Towards the end of the voyage Darwin speculated that the distribution of the mockingbirds and the tortoises might "undermine the stability of Species". When specimens of birds were analysed on his return to England it was found that many apparently different kinds of birds were species of finches which were also unique to islands. These facts were crucial in Darwin's development of his theory of natural selection explaining evolution, which was presented in *The Origin of Species*.

José Valdizán and Manuel Julián Cobos tried a new colonization, beginning the exploitation of a type of lichen found in the islands (*Roccella portentosa*) used as a coloring agent. After the assassination of Valdizán by some of his workers, Cobos brought from the continent a group of more than a hundred workers to San Cristóbal island and tried his luck at planting sugar cane. He ruled in his plantation with an iron hand which lead to his assassination in 1904. Since 1897 Antonio Gil began another plantation in Isabela island.

Over the course of a whole year, from September 1904, an expedition of the Academy of Sciences of California, led by Rollo Beck, stayed in the Galápagos



collecting scientific material on geology, entomology, ornithology, botany, zoology and herpetology. Another expedition from that Academy was done in 1932 (Templeton Crocker Expedition) to collect insects, fish, shells, fossils, birds and plants.

During World War II Ecuador authorized the United States to establish a naval base in Baltra island and radar stations in other strategic locations.

In 1946 a penal colony was established in Isabela Island, but it was suspended in 1959.

## Political geography

**Galápagos** was made a province in Ecuador by presidential decree by President Guillermo Rodríguez Lara on Feb. 18th, 1973. This decree was amended on March 16th, 1973 to include the Isabela Canton.

The province is coincident with the **Galápagos Islands**. The capital is Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. The province is divided in 3 cantons.

**San Cristobal Canton** with capital in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. It has the following parishes: **Progreso**, with the following precincts: La Soledad, El Socavon, Tres Palos and El Chino, and **Santa Maria Island**, with the town of Puerto Velasco Ibarra. The following Islands are under the jurisdiction of this Canton: Española, Santa Fe and Genovesa.

**Santa Cruz Canton**, with capital in Puerto Ayora. Its has the following parishes: **Bellavista**, with the precincts El Occidente, El Carmen, Santa Rosa, and Saasaca. Under its jurisdiction are the following Islands: Santiago, Marchena, Pinta, Pinzon, Rabida and Baltra.

**Isabela Island**, with capital in Puerto Villamil, and the following parishes: **Tomás de Berlanga**, with its precincts: Las Merceditas, San Antonio de los Tintos, Cerro Azul and Alemania. Under the jurisdiction of this Canton are the Islands of Fernandina, Wolf and Darwin.

There is a Provincial Judge, as well as Cantonal Judges to in each Canton to deal with misdemeanor cases, as well as Laboral Judges. But for felonies punishable with prison, the province is under the jurisdiction of the Criminal Courts of the Province of Guayas in mainland Ecuador. The causes can be delivered without the use of an attorney. All of the sentences delivered by Provincial and Cantonal Judges can be appealed to the Superior Court of Justice of Guayas Province with seat in Guayaquil.

It is expressly stated that it is the duty of the Provincial authorities to protect the flora and fauna of the Province in coordination with competent organisms and authorities, both national and international.

This province is in the UTC-6 time zone. The continental part of Ecuador is in the UTC-5 time zone.

## Demographics



It is one of the few places in the world without an indigenous population. The largest ethnic group is comprised of Ecuadorian Mestizos, the mixed descendants of Spanish colonists and indigenous Native Americans, who arrived mainly in the last century from the continental part of Ecuador.

In 1959, approximately 1,000 to 2,000 people called the islands their home. In 1972 a census was done in the archipelago and a population of 3,488 was recorded. By the 1980s, this number had risen to more than 15,000 people, and 2006 estimates place the population around 40,000 people.

Five of the islands are inhabited: Baltra, Floreana, Isabela, San Cristobal and Santa Cruz.

## Conservation





Marine Iguana



The Galápagos land iguanas are among the signature animals of the Galápagos islands.



Blue-footed Booby



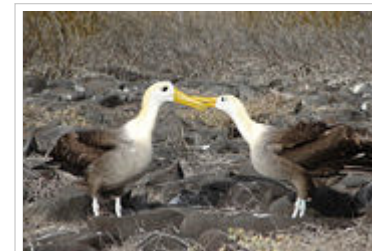
Though the first protective legislation for the Galápagos was enacted in 1934 and supplemented in 1936, it was not until the late 1950s that positive action was taken to control what was happening to the native flora and fauna. In 1955, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature organized a fact-finding mission to the Galápagos. Two years later, in 1957, UNESCO in cooperation with the government of Ecuador sent another expedition to study the conservation situation and choose a site for a research station.

In 1959, the centenary year of Charles Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species*, the Ecuadorian government declared 97.5% of the archipelago's land area a national park, excepting areas already colonised. The Charles Darwin Foundation was founded the same year, with its international headquarters in Brussels. Its primary objectives are to ensure the conservation of unique Galápagos ecosystems and promote the scientific studies necessary to fulfill its conservation functions. Conservation work began with the establishment of the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz Island in 1964. During the early years, conservation programs, such as eradication of introduced species and protection of native species, were carried out by station personnel. Currently, most resident scientists pursue conservation goals; most visiting scientists' work is oriented towards pure research.

In 1986 the surrounding 70,000 square kilometres (43,496 sq mi.) of ocean was declared a marine reserve, second only in size to Australia's Great Barrier Reef. In 1990 the archipelago became a whale sanctuary. In 1978 UNESCO recognised the islands as a World Heritage Site, and in 1985 a Biosphere Reserve. This was later extended in December 2001 to include the marine reserve.

Noteworthy species include:

- Galápagos land iguanas, *Conolophus* spp.
- Marine Iguana, *Amblyrhynchus cristatus*, the only iguana feeding in the sea
- Galápagos tortoise (Galápagos Giant tortoise), *Geochelone elephantopus*, known as Galápagos in Spanish, it gave the name to the islands
- Galápagos Green Turtle, thought to be a subspecies of the Pacific Green Turtle, *Chelonia mydas agassisi*
- *tre pang* sea cucumbers, the cause of environmental battles with fishermen over quotas of this expensive Asian delicacy.
- Flightless Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax harrisi*
- Great Frigatebird and Magnificent Frigatebird
- Blue-footed Booby, *Sula nebouxii*, popular among visitors for their large blue feet which they show off in courtship
- Galápagos Penguin, *Spheniscus mendiculus*, the only living tropical penguin
- Waved Albatross, *Phoebastria irrorata*, the only living tropical albatross
- Galápagos Hawk, *Buteo galapagoensis*, the islands' main scavenger and "environmental police"
- 4 endemic species of Galápagos Mockingbirds, the first species Darwin noticed to vary from island to island
- 13 endemic species of buntings, popularly called Darwin's finches. Among them is the Sharp-beaked Ground-finch *Geospiza difficilis septentrionalis* which is sometimes called the "Vampire Finch" for its blood-sucking habits, and the tool-using Woodpecker Finch, *Camarhynchus pallidus*
- Galápagos Sea Lions, *Zalophus californianus*, closely related to the California Sea Lion, but smaller



Waved Albatrosses' famous courtship ritual



Sea lions in the Galápagos are somewhat tame, but very curious.



## Environmental threats

Introduced plants and animals, such as feral goats, cats, and cattle, brought accidentally or willingly to the islands by humans, represent the main threat to Galápagos. Quick to reproduce, these alien species decimate the habitats of native species. The native animals, lacking natural predators on the islands, are defenseless to introduced species and fall prey.

Some of the most harmful introduced plants are the Guayaba or Guava *Psidium guajava*, avocado *Persea americana*, cascarilla *Cinchona pubescens*, balsa *Ochroma pyramidale*, blackberry *Rubus glaucus*, various citrus (orange, grapefruit, lemon), floripondio *Datura arborea*, higuera *Ricinus communis* and the elephant grass *Pennisetum purpureum*. These plants have invaded large areas and eliminated endemic species in the humid zones of San Cristobal, Floreana, Isabela and Santa Cruz. Also, these harmful plants are just a few of introduced species on the Galapagos Islands. There are over 700 introduced plant species today. There are only 500 native and endemic species. This difference is creating a major problem for the islands and the natural species that inhabit them.

Many species were introduced to the Galápagos by pirates. Thor Heyerdahl quotes documents that mention that the Viceroy of Peru, knowing that British pirates ate the goats that they themselves had released in the islands, ordered dogs to be freed there to eliminate the goats. Also, when colonization of Floreana by José de Villamil failed, he ordered that the goats, donkeys, cows, and other animals from the farms in Floreana be transferred to other islands for the purpose of later colonization.

Non-native goats, pigs, dogs, rats, cats, mice, sheep, horses, donkeys, cows, poultry, ants, cockroaches, and some parasites inhabit the islands today. Dogs and cats attack the tame birds and destroy nests of birds, land tortoises, and marine turtles. They sometimes kill small Galápagos tortoises and iguanas. Pigs are even more harmful, covering larger areas and destroying the nests of tortoises, turtles and iguanas as well as eating the animals' native food. Pigs also knock down vegetation in their search for roots and insects. This problem abounds in Cerro Azul volcano and Isabela, and in Santiago pigs may be the cause of the disappearance of the land iguanas that were so abundant when Darwin visited. The black rat *Rattus rattus* attacks small Galápagos tortoises when they leave the nest, so that in Pinzón they stopped the reproduction for a period of more than 50 years; only adults were found on that island. Also, where the black rat is found, the endemic rat has disappeared. Cows and donkeys eat all the available vegetation and compete with native species for the scarce water. In 1959, fishermen introduced one male and two female goats to Pinta island; by 1973 the National Park service estimated the population of goats to be over 30,000 individuals. Goats were also introduced to Marchena in 1967 and to Rabida in 1971. However a recent goat eradication program has cleared most of the goat population from Isabela.

The fast growing poultry industry on the inhabited islands has been cause for concern from local conservationists, who fear that domestic birds could introduce disease into the endemic and wild bird populations.



The Galápagos marine sanctuary is under threat from a host of illegal fishing activities, in addition to other problems of development. The most pressing threat to the Marine Reserve comes from local, mainland and foreign fishing targeting marine life illegally within the Reserve, such as sharks (hammerheads and other species) for their fins, and the harvest of sea cucumbers out of season. Development threatens both land and sea species. The growth of both the tourism industry and local populations fuelled by high birth rates and illegal immigration threaten the wildlife of the Archipelago. The recent grounding of the oil tanker *Jessica* and the subsequent oil spill brought this threat to world attention.

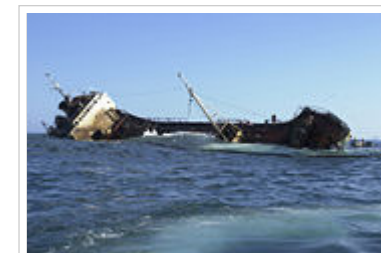
Currently, the rapidly growing problems, including tourism and a human population explosion, are further destroying habitats.

In 2007, UNESCO put the Galápagos Islands on their World Heritage in Danger List.

On January 28, 2008, Galapagos National Park official Victor Carrion announced the killing of 53 sea lions (13 pups, 25 youngsters, 9 males and 6 females) at Pinta, Galapagos Islands nature reserve with their heads caved in. In 2001 poachers killed 35 male sea lions.

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The tanker *Jessica* aground in the Galapagos, January 2001



# Greenland

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; North American Geography



**Greenland** ( Kalaallisut: *Kalaallit Nunaat*, meaning "Land of the Greenlanders"; Danish: *Grønland*) is a self-governing Danish province located between the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans, east of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. Though physiographically and ethnically an Arctic island nation associated with the continent of North America, politically and historically Greenland is associated with Europe, specifically Iceland, Norway, and Denmark. In 1978, Denmark granted home rule to Greenland, making it an equal member of the Rigsfællesskab. Greenland is, by area, the world's largest island which is not a continent in its own right.

## History

In prehistoric times, Greenland was home to a number of Paleo-Eskimo cultures. From AD 984 it was colonized by Norse settlers in two settlements on the west coast on the fjords near the very southwestern tip of the island. They thrived for a few centuries, but disappeared sometime in the 15th century.

Data from ice cores indicate that from AD 800 to 1300 the regions around the fjords of southern Greenland experienced a relatively mild climate, with temperatures similar to today. Trees and herbaceous plants grew there, and the climate initially allowed farming of livestock as in Norway. These remote communities thrived on farming, hunting and trade with Norway. When the Norwegian kings converted their domains to Christianity, a bishop was installed in Greenland, subordinate to the archdiocese of Nidaros. The settlements seem to have coexisted relatively peacefully with the Inuit, who had migrated south from the Arctic islands of North America around 1200. In 1261, Greenland became part of the Kingdom of Norway.

Around the 14th and 15th centuries, the Norwegian settlements vanished, likely due to famine and increasing conflicts with the Inuit. The condition of human bones from this period indicates the Norse population was malnourished. Main reasons appeared to have been soil erosion due to destruction of the natural vegetation for farming, turf, and wood by the Norse, a decline in temperatures during the Little Ice Age, and armed conflicts with the Inuit. Jared Diamond suggests that cultural practices, such as rejecting fish as a source of food and reliance solely on livestock ill-adapted to Greenland's climate, caused by the mini-ice age, which resulted in recurring famines, with environmental degradation led to

<b><i>Kalaallit Nunaat</i></b> <b><i>Grønland</i></b> <b>Greenland</b>	
 Flag	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Nunarput utoqqarsuanngoravit</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Nuuk (Godthåb)
<b>Official languages</b>	Kalaallisut , Danish
<b>Demonym</b>	Greenlandic
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy within a constitutional monarchy
- Monarch	Margrethe II
- Prime Minister	Hans Enoksen
<b>Autonomous province</b> of the Kingdom of Denmark	

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the abandonment of the colony. However, other research has suggested that fish were a major source of food for the Norse Greenlanders from the early 1300s on.

The Kingdom of Denmark–Norway reasserted its latent claim to the colony in 1721. But ties with Norway were severed by the Treaty of Kiel of 1814, ceding Norway to the king of Sweden while Denmark retained the Norwegian overseas possessions: the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland, as well as Denmark-Norway's small territories in India ( Tranquebar), West Africa ( Danish Gold Coast), and the West Indies ( Danish Virgin Islands).

Norway occupied and claimed parts of (then uninhabited) East Greenland also called Erik the Red's Land in July 1931, claiming that it constituted Terra nullius. Norway and Denmark agreed to settle the matter at the Permanent Court of International Justice in 1933, where Norway lost.

During World War II, Greenland's connection to Denmark was severed on April 9, 1940 when Denmark was occupied by Germany. Greenland was able to buy goods from the United States and Canada, by selling cryolite from the mine in Ivigtût. During the war the system of government changed. Governor Eske Brun ruled the island via a 1925 law that allowed governors to take control under extreme circumstances. The other governor, Aksel Svane, was transferred to the US to lead the commission to supply Greenland. The Sirius Patrol, guarding the northeastern shores of Greenland using dog sleds, detected and destroyed several German weather stations, giving Denmark a better position in the postwar turmoil.

Greenland had been a protected and very isolated society until 1940. The Danish government, which governed its colony Greenland, had been convinced that the society would face exploitation from the outside world or even extinction if the country was opened up. But during World War II, Greenland developed a sense of self-reliance through its self-government and independent communication with the outside world.

However, a commission in 1946 (with the highest Greenlandic council Landsrådet as participant) recommended patience and no radical reformation of the system. Two years later the first step towards changing the government was initiated when a grand commission was founded. In 1950 the report (G-50) was presented. Greenland was to be a modern welfare society with Denmark as the sponsor and example. In 1953, Greenland was made an equal part of the Danish Kingdom. Home rule was granted in 1979.

## Etymology

The name *Greenland* comes from Scandinavian settlers. In the Icelandic sagas, it is said that Norwegian-born Erik the Red was exiled from Iceland for murder.

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- Home rule	1979
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	2,166,086 km <sup>2</sup> ( 13th) 836,109 sq mi
- Water (%)	81.1 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2007 estimate	56,344
- Density	0.026/km <sup>2</sup> ( 241th) 0.067/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2001 estimate
- Total	\$1.1 billion ( not ranked)
- Per capita	\$19,000 <sup>2</sup> ( not ranked)
<b>HDI (n/a)</b>	n/a (n/a) ( n/a)
<b>Currency</b>	Danish krone ( <span>₺</span> )
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC0 to -4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.gl
<b>Calling code</b>	+299
<p><sup>1</sup> As of 2000: 410,449 km<sup>2</sup> (158,433 sq. miles) ice-free; 1,755,637 km<sup>2</sup> (677,676 sq. miles) ice-covered.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> 2001 estimate.</p>	



He, along with his extended family and thralls, set out in ships to find the land that was rumoured to be to the northwest. After settling there, he named the land *Grænland* ("Greenland"). Greenland was also called *Gruntland* ("Ground-land") and *Engronelant* (or *Engroneland*) on early maps. Whether *green* is an erroneous transcription of *grunt* ("ground"), which refers to shallow bays, or vice versa, is not known. It should also be noted, however, that the southern portion of Greenland (not covered by glacier) is indeed very green in the summer and was likely to have been even greener in Erik's time because of the Medieval Warm Period.

## Sovereignty

Norse Greenlanders submitted to Norwegian rule in the 13th century — and Norway entered in a personal union with Denmark in 1380 and from 1397 as a part of the Kalmar Union. From 1536, after Sweden had broken out of the union, Norway entered into a closer dependency of Denmark, i.e., kingdom of Denmark-Norway which existed until 1814. At that time, the kingdom of Denmark-Norway found itself on the losing side of the Napoleonic Wars. In gratitude to Sweden for her assistance in defeating Napoleon (and as a consolation for the recent loss of Finland to Russia), mainland Norway and certain Norwegian territories were transferred to Sweden — thus, the personal union of Norway and Denmark ended. The dependencies of Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands, however, remained part of the reorganised "Kingdom of Denmark".

In the early 20th century, the United States was believed to have claims made good by discovery and exploration of the Peary expeditions.

In 1933, Norway attempted to claim eastern Greenland. The Permanent Court of Arbitration decided that the entire island belonged to Denmark.

During the Cold War, the United States developed a geopolitical interest in Greenland, and therefore in 1946, the United States offered to buy Greenland from Denmark for \$100,000,000, but Denmark did not agree to sell.

Greenland became an integral part of the Kingdom of Denmark in 1953. It was granted home rule by the Folketing (Danish parliament) in 1978. The law went into effect on May 1, 1979. The Queen of Denmark, Margrethe II, remains Greenland's Head of State. Greenlandic voters subsequently chose to leave the European Economic Community upon achieving self-rule, because they did not want to allow European fishing fleets in Greenlandic waters.

A referendum on further self-rule is scheduled for 25 November 2008.

## Politics

Greenland's Head of State is currently Margrethe II. The Queen's government in Denmark appoints a *Rigsombudsmand* ( High commissioner) representing the Danish government and monarchy.



Icebergs at Cape York,  
Greenland



Greenland has an elected parliament of thirty-one members. The head of government is the Prime Minister, who is usually the leader of the majority party in Parliament. The current Prime Minister is Hans Enoksen.

In 1985, Greenland left the European Community (EC), unlike Denmark which remains a member. The EC later became the EU (European Union) when it was renamed and expanded in scope in 1992. Greenland retains some ties with the EU via Denmark.

## Geography and climate

The Atlantic Ocean borders Greenland's southeast; the Greenland Sea is to the east; the Arctic Ocean is to the north; and Baffin Bay is to the west. The nearest countries are Iceland, east of Greenland in the Atlantic Ocean, and Canada, to the west and across Baffin Bay. Greenland is the world's largest island, and is the largest dependent territory by area in the world. It also contains the world's largest national park.



Southeast coast of Greenland

The total area of Greenland measures 2,166,086 km<sup>2</sup> (836,109 sq mi), of which the Greenland ice sheet covers 1,755,637 km<sup>2</sup> (677,676 sq mi) (81%). The coastline of Greenland is 39,330 km (24,430 mi) long, about the same length as the Earth's circumference at the Equator. The highest point on Greenland is GUNNBjørn at 3,694 metres (12,119 ft).

The weight of the massive Greenlandic ice cap has depressed the central land area to form a basin lying more than 300 m (1,000 ft) below sea level. The ice flows generally to the coast from the centre of the island.

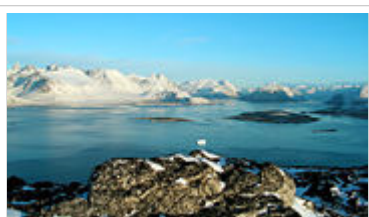
All towns and settlements of Greenland are situated along the ice-free coast, with the population being concentrated along the Western coast. The northeastern part of Greenland, which includes sections of North Greenland and East Greenland, is not part of any municipality, but is the site of the world's largest national park, Northeast Greenland National Park.

At least four scientific expedition stations and camps had been established in the ice-covered central part of Greenland (indicated as pale blue in the map to the right), on the ice sheet: Eismitte, North Ice, North GRIP Camp and The Raven Skiway. Currently, there is a year-round station, Summit Camp, on the ice sheet, established in 1989. The radio station Jørgen Brøndlund Fjord was, until 1950, the northernmost permanent outpost in the world.



Map of Greenland





A scene from South Greenland, near Nanortalik, where fjords and mountains dominate the landscape

The extreme north of Greenland, Peary Land, is not covered by an ice sheet, because the air there is too dry to produce snow, which is essential in the production and maintenance of an ice sheet. If the Greenland ice sheet were to completely melt away, sea level would rise by more than 7 m (23 ft) and Greenland would most likely become an archipelago.

Between 1989 and 1993, U.S. and European climate researchers drilled into the summit of Greenland's ice sheet, obtaining a pair of two mile (3 km) long ice cores. Analysis of the layering and chemical composition of the cores has provided a revolutionary new record of climate change in the Northern Hemisphere going back about 100,000 years and illustrated that the world's weather and temperature have often shifted rapidly from one seemingly stable state to another, with worldwide consequences. The glaciers of Greenland are also contributing to global sea level rise at a faster rate than was previously believed. Between 1991 and 2004, monitoring of the weather at one location (Swiss Camp) found that the average winter temperature had risen almost 6 ° C (approx. 10 ° F). Other research has shown that higher snowfalls from the North Atlantic oscillation caused the interior of the ice cap to thicken by an average of 6 cm/yr between 1994 and 2005.

However, a recent study suggests a much warmer planet in relatively recent geological times:

Scientists who probed two kilometers (1.2 miles) through a Greenland glacier to recover the oldest plant DNA on record said Thursday the planet was far warmer hundreds of thousands of years ago than is generally believed. DNA of trees, plants and insects including butterflies and spiders from beneath the southern Greenland glacier was estimated to date to 450,000 to 900,000 years ago, according to the remnants retrieved from this long-vanished boreal forest. That view contrasts sharply with the prevailing one that a lush forest of this kind could only have existed in Greenland as recently as 2.4 million years ago. The existence of those DNA samples suggest the temperature probably reached 10 degrees C (50 degrees Fahrenheit) in the summer and -17 ° C (1 ° F) in the winter. They also indicated that during the last interglacial period, 116,000–130,000 years ago, when temperatures were on average 5 ° C (9 ° F) higher than now, the glaciers on Greenland did not completely melt away.

In 1996, the American "Top of the World" expedition found the world's northernmost island off Greenland: ATOW1996. An even more northerly candidate was spotted during the return from the expedition, but its status is yet to be confirmed.

In 2007, the existence of a "new" island was announced. Named "Uunartoq Qeqertoq" (English: *Warming Island*), this island has always been present off the coast of Greenland, but was covered by an ice sheet. This ice sheet was discovered to be shrinking rapidly in 2002, and by 2007 had completely melted away, leaving the exposed island. This however was not the first occurrence of the island distinction. In Arctic Riviera, published by Ernst Hofer in 1957, in maps, and pictures, Ernst Hofer showed the distinct three fingered island separate from the mainland, during a similar warming event.



Panorama of the island Nunâ in Greenland.

## Topography

About 81 percent of Greenland's surface is covered by the Greenland ice sheet. The weight of the ice has depressed the central land area into a basin shape, whose base lies more than 300 metres (984 ft) below the surrounding ocean. Elevations rise suddenly and steeply near the coast. Approximately one-twentieth of the world's ice and one-quarter of the earth's surface ice is found in Greenland.

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## Economy

Greenland today is critically dependent on fishing and fish exports; the shrimp fishing industry is by far the largest income earner. Despite resumption of several interesting hydrocarbon and mineral exploration activities, it will take several years before hydrocarbonate production can materialize. The state oil company NUNAOIL was created in order to help develop the hydrocarbon industry in Greenland. The state company Nunamineral has been launched on the OMX20 Stock exchange of Copenhagen to raise more capital to increase the newly started gold production. Exploitation of ruby deposits have also begun, even though production is still in its dawn. Numerous other mineral reserves are growing increasingly interesting as prices are increasing; these include uranium, aluminium, nickel, platinum, tungsten, titanium, and copper. Tourism is the only sector offering any near-term potential and even this is limited due to a short season and high costs. The public sector, including publicly owned enterprises and the municipalities, plays the dominant role in Greenland's economy. About half the government revenues come from grants from the Danish Government, an important supplement to the gross domestic product (GDP). Gross domestic product per capita is equivalent to that of the weaker economies of Europe.

Greenland suffered economic contraction the early 1990s, but since 1993 the economy has improved. The Greenland Home Rule Government (GHRG) has pursued a tight fiscal policy since the late 1980s which has helped create surpluses in the public budget and low inflation. Since 1990, Greenland has registered a foreign trade deficit following the closure of the last remaining lead and zinc mine that year.

## Transport

The major airport is Kangerlussuaq Airport on the West coast at Kangerlussuaq. Intercontinental flights connect mainly to Copenhagen. As of May 2007, Air Greenland initiated a seasonal route to and from Baltimore in the United States. However, on March 10, 2008, the route was cancelled due to financial losses. Also new for summer 2007, Air Iceland plans to fly between Keflavík and Nuuk three times a week. In addition to these routes there are scheduled international flights between Narsarsuaq and Copenhagen and between Kulusuk on the East coast to Reykjavík. Kangerlussuaq is the hub for domestic flights within Greenland.

## Demographics

Greenland has a population of 56,344 (2007), of whom 88% are Inuit or mixed Danish and Inuit. The remaining 12% are of European extraction, mainly Danish. The majority of the population is Evangelical Lutheran. Nearly all Greenlanders live along the fjords in the south-west of the main island, which have a relatively mild climate.

## Languages

The official languages of Greenland are Greenlandic (Kalaallisut) and Danish, and most of the population speak both of the languages. Greenlandic is spoken by about 50,000 people, some of whom are monolingual. A minority of Danish migrants with no Inuit ancestry speak Danish as their first, or only, language.

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English is widely spoken as a third language.

The Greenlandic language is the most populous of the languages of the Eskimo-Aleut language family and it has as many speakers as all the other languages of the family combined. Within Greenland, three main dialects are recognized: the northern dialect Inuktun or *Avanersuarmiutut* spoken by around 1000 people in the region of Qaanaaq, Western Greenlandic or Kalaallisut which serves as the official standard language, and the Eastern dialect Tunumiit oraasiat or *Tunumiutut* spoken in eastern Greenland.

## Culture

The Greenland National Museum and Archives is located in Nuuk.

## Sport

Association football is the national sport of Greenland, but Greenland is not a member of FIFA. In January 2007, Greenland took part in the World Men's Handball Championship in Germany, finishing 22nd in a field of 24 national teams.

Greenland competes in the bi-annual Island Games.

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# Grenada

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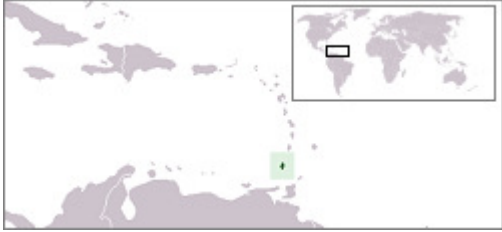
**Grenada** (pronounced /grɪˈneɪdə/) is an island nation that includes the southern Grenadines in the southeastern Caribbean Sea. Grenada is located north of Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela, and south of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The national bird of Grenada is the critically endangered Grenada Dove.

Popularly known as 'The Spice Isle' because of an abundance of locally grown spices and a culture of music, dance and food built into the image of 'spice of life', Grenada is also a well-known tourist destination. It is one of the smallest independent nations in the Western Hemisphere.

## History 1498-1958

The recorded history of Grenada begins in 1498. The Spaniards did not permanently settle in Camerhogue. Later the English failed their first settlement attempts, but the French fought and conquered Grenada from the Caribs circa 1650. The French conquest resulted in the genocide of 17th century Caribs from present-day Grenada. Warfare also existed between the Caribs of present day Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines with the French invaders. The French took control of Camerhogue and named the new French colony La Grenade. La Grenade prospered as a wealthy French colony; its main export was sugar. The French established a capital known as Fort Royal in 1650 as ordered by Cardinal Richelieu. To wait out harsh hurricanes, the French navy would shelter in the capital's natural harbour. No other French colony had a natural harbour to even compare with that of Fort Royal (later renamed St. George's). The colony was ceded to the United Kingdom in 1763 by the Treaty of Paris. A century later, in 1877 Grenada was made a Crown Colony.

## History 1958-1984: Independence and Revolution

<b>Grenada</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> “Ever Conscious of God We Aspire, Build and Advance as One People”	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Hail Grenada</i> <b>Royal anthem:</b> <i>God Save the Queen</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	St. George's
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Demonym</b>	Grenadian
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional



The capital St. George's,  
Grenada

The island was a province of the short-lived West Indies Federation from 1958 to 1962. In 1967, Grenada attained the status of “Associated State of the United Kingdom”, which meant that Grenada was now responsible for her own internal affairs, and the UK was responsible for her defence and foreign affairs. Independence was granted in 1974 under the leadership of the then Premier, Sir Eric Matthew Gairy, who became the first Prime Minister of Grenada.

Civil conflict gradually broke out between Eric Gairy’s government and some opposition parties including the New Jewel Movement (NJM). Gairy’s party won elections in 1976 but the opposition did not

accept the result accusing it of fraudulence. Cuban presence was heavily invested in civic assistance (doctors and school teachers mainly) during the subsequent revolutionary redistribution of homes and other private property and goods for the people of Grenada. In 1979, the New Jewel Movement under Maurice Bishop launched a successful armed revolution against the government. The revolution was widely supported by the peasants, students and workers.

A dispute later developed between Bishop and certain high-ranking members of the NJM. Party members including Bernard Coard demanded that Bishop either step down or enter into a power sharing arrangement. The dispute eventually led to Bishop being deposed in 1983 and placed under house arrest. These actions led to street demonstrations in various parts of the island. Bishop, who had massive support of the population, was eventually freed by a large demonstration in the capital. Soon after, he was captured and executed by soldiers along with seven others including cabinet ministers of the government.

After the execution of Bishop, the People's Revolutionary Army formed a military government with General Hudson Austin as chairman. The army declared a four-day total curfew during which it said that anyone leaving their home without approval would be shot on sight.

## Invasion of Grenada by the U.S. and OECS military

Six days after the execution of Bishop, the Cuban communists controlled the island of Grenada. It was later invaded by combined forces from the United States, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Jamaica, and Bermuda. The U.S. stated this was done at the behest of Dame Eugenia Charles, of Dominica. Five other Caribbean nations participated with Dominica and the USA in the campaign against the Cuban and Grenadan forces, called *Operation Urgent Fury*. While the Governor-General, Sir Paul Scoon, later stated that he had requested the invasion, the governments of the United Kingdom and Trinidad and Tobago expressed anger at not having been consulted.

	monarchy
- Queen	Queen Elizabeth II
- Governor General	Sir Daniel Williams
- Prime Minister	Tillman Thomas
<b>Independence</b>	
- from the United Kingdom	February 7, 1974
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	344 km <sup>2</sup> ( 203rd) 132.8 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.6
<b>Population</b>	
- July 12 2005 estimate	110,000 ( 185th)
- Density	259.5/km <sup>2</sup> ( 45th) 672.2/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2002 est. estimate
- Total	\$440 million ( 210th)
- Per capita	\$5,000 <sup>1</sup> ( 134th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.777 (medium) ( 82nd)
<b>Currency</b>	East Caribbean dollar ( XCD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
- Summer ( DST)	( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.gd
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 473
<small><sup>1</sup> 2002 estimate.</small>	



After the invasion of the island nation, the pre-revolutionary Grenadan constitution was resumed.

Eighteen members of the PRG and the PRA (army) were arrested after the invasion on charges related to the murder of Maurice Bishop and seven others. The eighteen included the top political leadership of Grenada at the time of the execution as well as the entire military chain of command directly responsible for the operation that led to the executions. Fourteen were sentenced to death, one was found not guilty and three were sentenced to forty-five years in prison. The death sentences were eventually commuted to terms of imprisonment. Those in prison have become known as the Grenada 17.

## Twenty-first century history

In 2000-2002, much of the controversy of the late 1970s and early 1980s was once again brought into the public consciousness with the opening of the truth and reconciliation commission. The commission was chaired by a Roman Catholic priest, Father Mark Haynes, and was tasked with uncovering injustices arising from the PRA, Bishop's regime, and before. It held a number of hearings around the country. Brother Robert Fanovich, head of Presentation Brothers' College (PBC) in St. George's tasked some of his senior students with conducting a research project into the era and specifically into the fact that Maurice Bishop's body was never discovered. Their project attracted a great deal of attention, including from the *Miami Herald* and the final report was published in a book written by the students called *Big Sky, Little Bullet*. It also uncovered that there was still a lot of resentment in Grenadian society resulting from the era, and a feeling that there were many injustices still unaddressed



A view of Carriacou. Other Grenadine islands in distance

In 2004, after being hurricane free for forty-nine years, the island was directly hit by Hurricane Ivan ( September 7). Ivan struck as a Category 4 hurricane and caused 90 percent of the homes to be damaged or destroyed. The following year, 2005, Hurricane Emily ( July 14) a Category 1 hurricane at the time struck the northern part of the island with 80 kt winds, causing an estimated USD \$110 million (EC\$ 297 million) worth of damage. This was much less damage than Ivan had caused.

Grenada has recovered with remarkable speed, due to both domestic labour and financing from the world at large. By December 2005, 96% of all hotel rooms were to be open for business and to have been upgraded in facilities and strengthened to an improved building code. The agricultural industry and in particular the nutmeg industry suffered serious losses, but that event has begun changes in crop management and it is hoped that as new nutmeg trees gradually mature, the industry will return to its pre-Ivan position as a major supplier in the Western world.

In April 2007, Grenada jointly hosted (along with several other Caribbean nations) the 2007 Cricket World Cup. After Hurricane Ivan, the Chinese government paid for the new \$40 million national stadium, along with the aid of over 300 Chinese labourers to build and repair it. . During the opening ceremony the Taiwanese anthem was accidentally played, leading to the firing of top officials.

## Geography



The island Grenada itself is the largest island; smaller Grenadines are Carriacou, Petit Martinique, Ronde Island, Caille Island, Diamond Island, Large Island, Saline Island and Frigate Island. Most of the population lives on Grenada itself, and major towns there include the capital, St. George's, Grenville and Gouyave. The largest settlement on the other islands is Hillsborough on Carriacou.

The islands are of volcanic origin with extremely rich soil. Grenada's interior is very mountainous with Mount St. Catherine being the highest at 2,756 feet (840 m). Several small rivers with beautiful waterfalls flow into the sea from these mountains. The climate is tropical: hot and humid in the rainy season and cooled by the trade winds in the dry season. Grenada, being on the southern edge of the hurricane belt, has suffered only three hurricanes in fifty years. Hurricane Janet passed over Grenada on 23 September 1955 with winds of 115 mph, causing severe damage. The most recent storms to hit have been Hurricane Ivan on September 7, 2004 causing severe damage and thirty-nine deaths and Hurricane Emily on July 14, 2005, causing serious damage in Carriacou and in the north of Grenada which had been relatively lightly affected by hurricane Ivan.

## Parishes

Grenada is divided into 6 parishes:

1. Saint Andrew
2. Saint David
3. Saint George
4. Saint John
5. Saint Mark
6. Saint Patrick

Carriacou and Petite Martinique, two of the Grenadines, have the status of dependency.

## Politics





Grenada is a full member of the OECS.

As a Commonwealth realm, Queen Elizabeth II is Queen of Grenada and Head of State. The Crown is represented by a Governor-General, who is currently Sir Daniel Williams. Day-to-day executive power lies with the Head of Government, the Prime Minister. Although appointed by the Governor-General, the Prime Minister is usually the leader of the largest faction in the Parliament.

The Parliament consists of a Senate (thirteen members) and a House of Representatives (fifteen members). The senators are appointed by the government and the opposition, while the representatives are elected by the population for five-year terms. With 48% of the votes and eight seats in the 2003 election, the New National Party remains the largest party in Grenada. The largest opposition party is the National Democratic Congress with 45.6% of the votes and seven seats.

Grenada is a full and participating member of both the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

## Economy and tourism



Mace within nutmeg fruit.

Economic progress in fiscal reforms and prudent macroeconomic management have boosted annual growth to 5%-6% in 1998-99; the increase in economic activity has been led by construction and trade. Tourist facilities are being expanded; tourism is the leading foreign exchange earner. Major short-term concerns are the rising fiscal deficit and the deterioration in the external account balance. Grenada shares a common central bank and a common currency (the East Caribbean dollar) with seven other members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

Grenada is called **The Spice Isle** because it is a leading producer of several different spices. Cinnamon, cloves, ginger, mace, allspice, orange/citrus peels, wild coffee used by the locals, and especially nutmeg, providing 20% of the world supply, are all important exports. The nutmeg on the nation's flag represents the economic crop of Grenada; the nation is the world's second largest producer of nutmeg (after Indonesia).





Tourism is Grenada's main economic force. Conventional beach and water-sports tourism is largely focused in the southwest region around St Georges, the airport and the coastal strip; however, ecotourism is growing in significance. Most of these small ecofriendly guesthouses are located in the Saint David and Saint John parishes. The tourism industry is increasing dramatically with the construction of a large cruise ship pier and esplanade. Up to 4 cruise ships per day were visiting St. Georges in 2007-8 during the cruise ship season.

Tourism is concentrated in the southwest of the island, around St. Georges, Grand Anse, Lance Aux Epines, and Point Salines. Grenada has many idyllic beaches around its coastline including the 3 km long Grand Anse Beach in St George's which is considered to be one of the finest beaches in the world, and often appears in countdowns of the worlds top 10 beaches.

Grenada is linked to the world through the Point Salines International Airport and the St. George's harbour. International flights connect with the Caribbean, America, and Europe. There is also a daily fast ferry service between St. George's and Hillsborough.

## Demographics

A majority of the citizens are descendants of the African slaves brought by the Europeans; few of the indigenous Carib and Arawak population survived the French purge at Sauteurs. A small percentage of descendants of East Indian indentured servants were brought to Grenada mainly from the North Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh between May 1,1857-January 10,1885. There is also a small community of French and English descendants. The rest of the population is of mixed descent.

Grenada, like many of the Caribbean islands is subject to a large amount of migration, with a large number of young people wanting to leave the island to seek life elsewhere. With just over 100,000 people living in Grenada, estimates and census data suggest that there are at least that number of Grenadian-born people in other parts of the Caribbean (such as Barbados and Trinidad) and at least that number again in First World countries. Popular migration points for Grenadians further north include New York City, Toronto, the United Kingdom (London and Yorkshire predominantly - see Grenadians in the UK) and sometimes Montreal, or as far south as Australia. This means that probably around a third of those born in Grenada still live there.

The official language, English, is used in the government, but Grenadian Creole is considered the lingua franca of the island. French Patois ( Antillean Creole) is still spoken by about 10%-20% the population. Some Hindi/ Bhojpuri terms are still spoken amongst the Indian descendants, mostly those pertaining to the kitchen; such as *aloo*, *geera*, *karela*, *seim*, *chownkay*, and *baylay*. The term *bhai*, which means 'brother' or 'partner' in Hindi, is a common form of greeting amongst Indo-Grenadian males of equal status. Aside from a marginal community of Rastafarians living in Grenada, nearly all are mainstream Christians, about half of them Roman Catholics; Anglicanism is the largest Protestant denomination with Presbyterian and Seventh Day Adventist taking up the remainder. Most Churches have denomination-based schools but are open to all. There is a small Muslim



Devastation caused by Hurricane Ivan in Grenada.



A school on the beach



population mostly from Gujarati Indian immigrants who came many years ago and set up some merchant shops.

## Culture

Although French influence on Grenadian culture is much less visible than on other Caribbean islands, surnames and place names in French remain, and the every day language is laced with French words and the local dialect or Patois. Stronger French influence is found in the well seasoned spicy food and styles of cooking similar to those found in New Orleans and some French architecture has survived from the 1700s. Island culture is heavily influenced by the African roots of most of the Grenadians but Indian influence is also seen with dhal puri, rotis, Indian sweets, and curries in the cuisine.

The "oildown" is considered to be the national dish, The phrase "oil-down" refers to a dish cooked in coconut milk until all the milk is absorbed, leaving a bit of coconut oil in the bottom of the pot. Early recipes call for a mixture of salted pigtail, pigs feet (trotters), salt beef and chicken, dumplings made from flower, provision: Breadfruit, green banana,yam and potatoes. Callaloo leaves are some times used to retain the steam and for extra flavour.

This dish is a common tradition at family and other gatherings at the beach, There is a modest debate in the West Indies about the origin of this dish, with some experts attributing it to other islands like Barbados or Trinidad & Tobago.

Foods aren't the only important aspect of Grenadian culture. Music, dance, and festivals are also extremely important. Soca, calypso, and reggae set the mood for Grenada's annual Carnival activities. Zouk is also being slowly introduced onto the island. The islanders' African heritage plays an influential role in many aspects of Grenada's culture.

As with other islands from the Caribbean Cricket is the national and most popular sport and is an intrinsic part of Grenadian culture.

An important aspect of Grenadian culture is the tradition of story telling, with folk tales bearing both African and French influences. The character, *Anancy*, a spider god who is a trickster, originated in West Africa and is prevalent on other Caribbean islands as well. French influence can be seen in *La Diabliesse*, a well-dressed she- devil, and *Ligaroo* (from Loup Garoux), a werewolf.

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1965 carnival



# Guadeloupe



## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries





**Guadeloupe** is an island group or archipelago located in the eastern Caribbean Sea at , with a land area of 1,628 square kilometres (629 sq. mi). It is an overseas department of France. As with the other overseas departments, Guadeloupe is also one of the twenty-six regions of France (being an overseas region) and an integral part of the Republic. As part of France, Guadeloupe is part of the European Union; hence, as for most EU countries, its currency is the euro. Guadeloupe is however not party to the Schengen Agreement. The capital of Guadeloupe is Basse-Terre.

## History

During his second trip to America, Christopher Columbus became the first European to land on Guadeloupe in November 1493, seeking fresh water. He called it *Santa María de Guadalupe de Extremadura*, after the image of the Virgin Mary venerated at the Spanish monastery of Villuercas, in Guadalupe, Extremadura. However, the expedition set ashore just south of Capesterre but did not leave any settlers ashore.

After successful settlement on the island of St Christophe (St Kitts), the French American Islands Company delegated Charles Lienard and Jean Duplessis, Lord of Ossoville to colonize one or any of the region's islands, Guadeloupe, Martinique or Dominica. Due to Martinique's inhospitable nature, the duo resolved to settle in Guadeloupe. The French took possession of the island in 1635 and wiped out many of the Carib Amerindians. It was annexed to the kingdom of France in 1674. Over the next century, the island was seized several times by the British. One indication of Guadeloupe's prosperity at this time is that in the Treaty of Paris (1763), France, defeated in war, agreed to abandon its territorial claims in Canada in return for British recognition of French control of Guadeloupe.

In 1790, the upper classes of Guadeloupe refused to obey the new laws of equal rights for the free colored and attempted to declare independence, resulting in great disturbances; a fire broke out in Pointe-à-Pitre and devastated a third of the town, and a struggle between the monarchists (who wanted independence) and the republicans (who were faithful to revolutionary France) ended in the victory of the monarchists, who declared independence in 1791, followed by the refusal to receive the new governor appointed by Paris in 1792. In 1793, a slave rebellion started, which made the upper classes turn to the British and ask them to occupy the island.

<b>Région Guadeloupe</b>	
	
Region flag	Region logo
<b>Location</b>	
	
<b>Administration</b>	
Capital	Basse-Terre
Regional President	Victorin Lurel ( PS) (since 2004)
Departments	Guadeloupe
Arrondissements	2
Cantons	40
Communes	32
<b>Statistics</b>	
Land area <sup>1</sup>	1,628 km²



In an effort to take advantage of the chaos ensuing from the French Revolution, Britain attempted to seize Guadeloupe in 1794 and held it from April 21 to June 2. The French retook the island under the command of Victor Hugues, who succeeded in freeing the slaves. They revolted and turned on the slave-owners who controlled the sugar plantations, but when American interests were threatened, Napoleon sent a force to suppress the rebels and reinstitute slavery. Louis Delgrès and a group of revolutionary soldiers killed themselves on the slopes of the Matouba volcano when it became obvious that the invading troops would take control of the island. The occupation force killed approximately 10,000 Guadeloupeans in the process of restoring order to the island.

On February 4, 1810 the British once again seized the island. By the Anglo-Swedish alliance of March 3, 1813, it was ceded to Sweden but the British administration continued in place while Swedish commissioners were sent to make arrangements for the transfer. Sweden already had a colony in the area, but then by the Treaty of Paris of May 30, 1814, ceded Guadeloupe once more to France . An ensuing settlement between Sweden and the British gave rise to the Guadeloupe Fund. French control of Guadeloupe was finally acknowledged in the Treaty of Vienna in 1815. Slavery was abolished on the island in 1848 at the initiative of Victor Schoelcher. Today the population of Guadeloupe is mostly of African origin with an important European and Indian active population. Lebanese, Chinese, and people of many other origins are also present.

On February 22, 2007 the island communes of Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy were officially detached from Guadeloupe and became two separate French overseas collectivities with their own local administration, henceforth separated from Guadeloupe. Their combined population was 35,930 and their combined land area was 74.2 km<sup>2</sup> at the 1999 census. Guadeloupe thereby lost 8.5 percent of its population and 4.36 percent of its land area, based upon numbers from that census.

## Geography

Population	(Ranked 23rd)
- January 1, 2007 est.	ca. 408,000
- March 8, 1999 census	386,566
- Density (2007)	251/km <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> French Land Register data, which exclude lakes, ponds, and glaciers larger than 1 km<sup>2</sup> (0.386 sq. mi. or 247 acres) as well as the estuaries of rivers





Guadeloupe comprises five islands: Basse-Terre Island, Grande-Terre (separated from Basse-Terre by a narrow sea channel called Salt River) with the adjacent islands of La Désirade, Les Saintes and Marie-Galante.

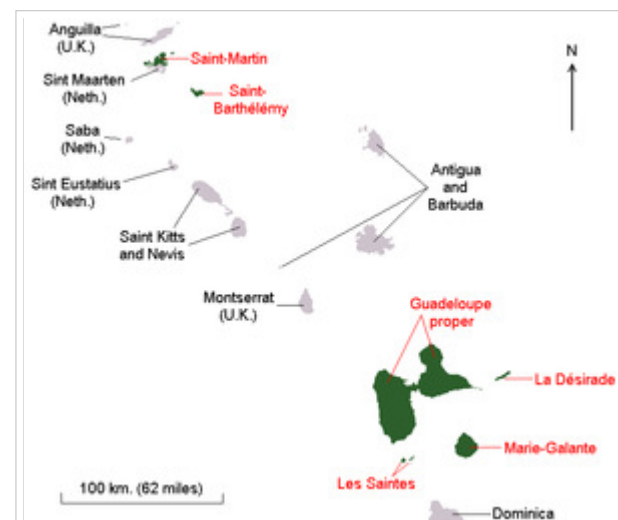
Basse-Terre has a rough volcanic relief while Grande-Terre features rolling hills and flat plains.

Further to the north, Saint-Barthélemy and the French part of Saint Martin once came under the jurisdiction of Guadeloupe but on December 7, 2003, both of these areas voted to become an overseas territorial collectivity, a decision which took effect on February 22, 2007.

## Demographics

(July 2006 estimates from the CIA World Factbook; note that these estimates disagree with official INSEE estimates and that they also include Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy)

Population	452,776		
Age structure	<i>0 to 14 years</i>	23.6%	male 54,725 female 52,348
	<i>15 to 64 years</i>	67.1%	male 150,934 female 153,094
	<i>65 years and older</i>	9.2%	male 17,353 female 24,322
Population growth rate	0.88%		
Birth rate	15.05 births	per 1,000 people	
Death rate	6.09 deaths		
Net migration rate	-0.15 migrants		
Sex ratio (male:female)	<i>at birth</i>	1.05	
	<i>under 15 years</i>		
	<i>15 to 64 years</i>	0.99	
	<i>65 years and older</i>	0.71	
	<i>Overall</i>	0.97	



In green (with red legend) are the former constituent parts of the Guadeloupe region/department among the Leeward Islands. On February 22, 2007, Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy seceded from Guadeloupe to become autonomous French regions. Marie-Galante, La Désirade, and Les Saintes are still part of the Guadeloupe region/department.



Map of the Guadeloupe archipelago



Infant mortality rate	8.41 deaths per 1,000 live births	
Life expectancy at birth	<i>males</i>	74.91 years
	<i>females</i>	81.37 years
	<i>Overall</i>	78.06 years
Total fertility rate	1.9 children born per woman	
Demonym	Guadeloupean(s) ( <i>not</i> Guadeloupians)	
Adjectival	Guadeloupe, Guadeloupean	
Ethnic groups	<i>Black / Mulatto</i>	69%
	<i>White</i>	10%
	<i>from Tamil Nadu and other parts of India / Indian</i>	15%
	<i>Lebanese / Syrians</i>	4%
	<i>Chinese / others</i>	2%
Religion	<i>Roman Catholic</i>	91%
	<i>Protestant</i>	5%
	<i>Hindu / African</i>	4%
	<i>Jehovah's Witnesses</i>	2%
Language	French (official) 99%, Most locals also speak Creole language	
Literacy	<i>males</i>	90%
	<i>females</i>	
	<i>Overall</i>	

}}

## Arrondissements, cantons, and communes



Guadeloupe is divided into arrondissements, cantons and communes:

- Arrondissements of the Guadeloupe department
- Cantons of the Guadeloupe department
- Communes of the Guadeloupe department



View from Guadeloupe

## Major communities

- Baie-Mahault
- Le Gosier
- Le Moule
- Les Abymes
- Petit-Bourg
- Pointe-à-Pitre
- Sainte-Anne

## Politics

## Culture





Guadeloupe's culture is probably best known for the islanders' literary achievements, particularly the poetry of Saint-John Perse, the pseudonym used by Alexis Léger. Perse won the 1960 Nobel Prize in Literature "for the soaring flight and the evocative images of his poetry which in a visionary fashion reflects the conditions of our time."

Guadeloupe has always had a rich literary production prolonged today by many living writers, poets, novelists, essayists and journalists, among them Mesdames Maryse Condé and Simone Schwartz-Bart, M. Ernest Pépin.

Also culturally important are the arts, particularly painting and sculpture. Famous painters and/or sculptors include Michel Rovelas, Claudie Cancelier, Jean-Claude Echard, Christian Bracy, Roger Arekian, les Frères Baptiste, Michelle Chomereau-Lamothe, Léogane, Pédurand, Nicole Réache, Victor Sainsily. Guadeloupean visual effects artist/composer Karim Sahai of Weta Digital, New Zealand, has worked on the visual effects of many movies such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *King Kong*, and *The Waterhorse*.

Music and dance are also very popular, and the widely accepted interaction of African, French and Indian cultures has given birth to some original new forms specific to the archipelago. Islanders enjoy many local dance styles including the quadrille "au commandement", zouk, zouk-love, kompa *toumbélé*, as well as all the modern international dances. Typical Guadeloupean music includes *la biguine* and *gwo ka à la base*. Kassav' and Admiral T embody the traditional and the new generation of music. Many international festivals take place in Guadeloupe, like the Creole Blues Festival, the Marie-Galante Festival, Festival Gwo-Ka Cotellon, etc. It goes without saying that all the Euro-French forms of art are also omnipresent in the melting pot.

Another element of the Guadeloupean culture is its dress. Women in particular have a unique style of traditional dresses, with many layers of colourful fabrics, now only worn on special occasions. On festive occasions they also wore a madras (originally the 'kerchief' from South India) head scarf tied in many different symbolic forms. The headdress could be done in many styles with names like the "bat" style, or the "firefighter" style, as well as the "Guadeloupean woman." Jewelry, mainly of gold, is also important in the Guadeloupean lady's dress, a product of European, African and Indian inspiration. Many famous couturiers like Devaed and Mondelo are Guadeloupeans.

Football (soccer) is popular in Guadeloupe. Thierry Henry, a star of the French National Team and Spanish League club FC Barcelona, often visits, as his father Antoine was originally from the island. William Gallas, whose parentage is Guadeloupean, visits the island when not playing for Arsenal or the French National team. Lilian Thuram, a star football defender for France and FC Barcelona, was born in Guadeloupe. The French national team and Manchester United striker, Louis Saha, is also of Guadeloupean descent, as is MK Dons goalkeeper Willy Gueret. The region's football team experienced recent success, advancing all the way to the 2007 CONCACAF Gold Cup semi-finals, where they were defeated just 1-0 by CONCACAF powerhouse Mexico. Many fine track and field athletes, such as Marie-José Percec, Patricia Girard-Léno, and Christine Arron are also Guadeloupe natives. The NBA player Mickaël Piétrus was born in Les Abymes. Famed Bodybuilder Serge Nubret also hails from Guadeloupe.

## Economy



Beach in Guadeloupe



Carbet Falls

In 2006 the GDP per capita of Guadeloupe at market exchange rates, not at PPP, was €17,338 (US\$21,780).

The economy of Guadeloupe depends on tourism, agriculture, light industry and services. But it especially depends on France for large subsidies and imports.

Tourism is a key industry, with 83.3% of tourists visiting from metropolitan France, 10.8% coming from the rest of Europe, 3.4% coming from the United States, 1.5% coming from Canada, 0.4% coming from South America and 0.6% coming from the rest of the world. An increasingly large number of cruise ships visit the islands.

The traditional sugarcane crop is slowly being replaced by other crops, such as bananas (which now supply about 50% of export earnings), eggplant, guinnep, noni, sapotilla, paroka, pikinga, giraumon squash, yam, gourd, plantain, christophine, monbin, prunecafé, cocoa, jackfruit, pomegranate, and many varieties of flowers. Other vegetables and root crops are cultivated for local consumption, although Guadeloupe is still dependent on imported food, mainly from France.

Light industry features sugar and rum, solar energy, and many industrial productions. Most manufactured goods and fuel are imported. Unemployment is especially high among the youth. Hurricanes periodically devastate the economy.

The country code top-level domain (ccTLD) for Guadeloupe is ".gp".

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guadeloupe>"

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# Guatemala

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**Guatemala** (Spanish: *República de Guatemala*, Spanish pronunciation: [reˈpuβlika ðe ɣwateˈmala]) is a country in Central America bordered by Mexico to the northwest, the Pacific Ocean to the southwest, Belize and the Caribbean Sea to the northeast, and Honduras and El Salvador to the southeast.

A representative democracy, its capital is Guatemala City. The nation has been stable since 1996 and has been in a state of continuous development and economic growth. Guatemala's abundance of biologically significant and unique ecosystems contribute to Mesoamerica's designation as a biodiversity hotspot.

## History



Tikal: Temple II

### Pre-Columbian

The first evidence of human settlers in Guatemala goes back to at least 10,000 BC. There is some evidence that may put this date as early as 18,000 BC, such as obsidian arrow heads found in various parts of the country. There is archaeological proof that early Guatemalan settlers were hunters and gatherers, but pollen samples from Petén and the Pacific coast indicate that maize cultivation was developed by 3500 BC. Archaic sites have been documented in Quiché in the Highlands and Sipacate, Escuintla on the central Pacific coast (6500 BC).

Archaeologists divide the pre-Columbian history of Mesoamerica into 3 periods: the Pre-Classic from 2000 BC to 250 AD, the Classic from 250 to 900 AD, and the Calistic from 900 to 1500 AD. Until recently, the Pre-Classic was regarded as a formative period, with small villages of farmers who lived in huts, and few permanent buildings, but this

notion has been challenged by recent discoveries of monumental architecture from that period, such as

<b><i>República de Guatemala</i></b> <b>Republic of Guatemala</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> "Libre Crezca Fecundo" "Grow Free and Fertile"	
<b>Anthem:</b> Himno Nacional de Guatemala	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Guatemala City
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish ( de facto)
<b>Demonym</b>	Guatemalan
<b>Government</b>	Constitutional republic



an altar in La Blanca, San Marcos, from 1000 BC; ceremonial sites at Miraflores and El Naranjo from 801 BC; the earliest monumental masks; and the Mirador Basin cities of Nakbé, Xulnal, Tintal, Wakná and El Mirador.

El Mirador was by far the most populated city in the pre-Columbian America. Both the El Tigre and Monos pyramids encompass a volume greater than 250,000 cubic meters. Mirador was the first politically organized state in America, named the Kan Kingdom in ancient texts. There were 26 cities, all connected by Sacbeob (highways), which were several kilometers long, up to 40 meters wide, and 2 to 4 meters above the ground, paved with stucco, that are clearly distinguishable from the air in the most extensive virgin tropical rain forest in Mesoamerica.

- President	Álvaro Colom Caballeros
- Vice President	Rafael Espada
<b>Independence</b>	from Spain
- Date	15 September 1821
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	108,890 km <sup>2</sup> ( 106th) 42,042 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.4
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2009 estimate	13,000,000 ( 70th)
- July 2007 census	12,728,111
- Density	134.6/km <sup>2</sup> ( 85th) 348.6/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$63.78 billion ( 71st)
- Per capita	\$4,155 ( 116th)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	55.1 ( <i>high</i> )
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.689 ( <i>medium</i> ) ( 118th)
<b>Currency</b>	Quetzal ( GTQ)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-6)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.gt
<b>Calling code</b>	+502



The Classic period of Mesoamerican civilization corresponds to the height of the Maya civilization, and is represented by countless sites throughout Guatemala, although the largest concentration is in Petén. This period is characterized by heavy city-building, the development of independent city-states, and contact with other Mesoamerican cultures.

This lasted until around 900 AD, when the Classic Maya civilization collapsed. The Maya abandoned many of the cities of the central lowlands or were killed off by a drought-induced famine. Scientists debate the cause of the Classic Maya Collapse, but gaining currency is the Drought Theory discovered by physical scientists studying lakebeds, ancient pollen, and other tangible evidence. A series of prolonged droughts in what is otherwise a seasonal desert is thought to have decimated the Maya, who were primarily reliant upon regular rainfall. The Post-Classic period is represented by regional kingdoms such as the Itzá and Ko'woj in the Lakes area in Petén, and the Mam, Ki'ch'es, Kack'chiquel, Tz'utuh'il, Pokom'chí, Kek'chi and Chortí in the Highlands. These cities preserved many aspects of Mayan culture, but would never equal the size or power of the Classic cities.



*Nakbé, Mid Preclassic palace remains, Mirador Basin, Petén, Guatemala*

## Colonial



Capuchinas convent in Antigua Guatemala

After arriving in what was named the New World, the Spanish mounted several expeditions to Guatemala, beginning in 1518. Before long, Spanish contact resulted in an epidemic that devastated native populations. Hernán Cortés, who had led the Spanish conquest of Mexico, granted a permit to Captains Gonzalo de Alvarado and his brother, Pedro de Alvarado, to conquer this land. Alvarado at first allied himself with the Cakchiquel nation to fight against their traditional rivals the Quiché nation. Alvarado later turned against the Cakchiquels, and eventually held the entire region under Spanish domination.

During the colonial period, Guatemala was a Captaincy General (Capitanía General de Guatemala) of Spain, and a part of New Spain (Mexico). It extended from the modern Mexican states of Tabasco and Chiapas (including the then separate administration of Soconusco) to Costa Rica. This region was not as rich in minerals (gold and silver) as Mexico and Peru, and was therefore not considered to be as important. Its main products were sugarcane, cocoa, blue añil dye, red dye from cochineal insects, and precious woods used in artwork for churches and palaces in Spain.

The first Capital was named Tecpan Guatemala, founded in July 25, 1524 with the name of Villa de Santiago de Guatemala and was located near Iximché, the Cakchiquel's capital city. It was moved to Ciudad Vieja on November 22, 1527, when the Cakchiquel attacked the city. On September 11, 1541 the city was flooded when the lagoon in the crater of the Agua Volcano collapsed due to heavy rains and earthquakes, and was moved 4 miles (6 km) to Antigua Guatemala, on the Panchoy Valley, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This City was destroyed by several earthquakes in 1773-1774, and the King of Spain, granted the authorization to move the Captaincy General, to the Ermita Valley, named after a Catholic church to the Virgen de El Carmen, in its current location, founded in January 2, 1776.

## Independence and 19th century



On September 15, 1821, the Captaincy-general of Guatemala (formed by Chiapas, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Honduras) officially proclaimed its independence from Spain and its incorporation into the Mexican Empire, which was dissolved two years later. This region had been formally subject to New Spain throughout the colonial period, but as a practical matter was administered separately. All but Chiapas soon separated from Mexico after Agustín I from Mexico was forced to abdicate.

The Guatemalan provinces formed the United Provinces of Central America, also called the Central American Federation (Federacion de Estados Centroamericanos). That federation dissolved in civil war from 1838 to 1840 (*See*: History of Central America). Guatemala's Rafael Carrera was instrumental in leading the revolt against the federal government and breaking apart the Union. During this period a region of the Highlands, Los Altos, declared independence from Guatemala, but was annexed by Carrera, who dominated Guatemalan politics until 1865, backed by conservatives, large land owners and the church.



Independence Day parade in San Pedro la Laguna, Guatemala.

Guatemala's "Liberal Revolution" came in 1871 under the leadership of Justo Rufino Barrios, who worked to modernize the country, improve trade, and introduce new crops and manufacturing. During this era coffee became an important crop for Guatemala. Barrios had ambitions of reuniting Central America and took the country to war in an unsuccessful attempt to attain this, losing his life on the battlefield in 1885 against forces in El Salvador.

## 1944 to Present

On July 4, 1944, Dictator Jorge Ubico Castañeda was forced to resign his office in response to a wave of protests and a general strike. His replacement, General Juan Federico Ponce Vaidés, was later also forced out of office on October 20, 1944 by a coup d'état led by Major Francisco Javier Arana and Captain Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán. About 100 people were killed in the coup. The country was led by a military junta made up of Arana, Arbenz, and Jorge Toriello Garrido. The Junta called Guatemala's first free election, which was won with a majority of 85 percent by the prominent writer and teacher Juan José Arévalo Bermejo, who had lived in exile in Argentina for 14 years. Arévalo was the first democratically elected president of Guatemala to fully complete the term for which he was elected. His "Christian Socialist" policies, inspired by the U.S. New Deal, were criticized by landowners and the upper class as "communist."

This period was also the beginning of the Cold War between the U.S. and the USSR, which was to have a considerable influence on Guatemalan history. From the 1950s through the 1990s, the U.S. government directly supported Guatemala's army with training, weapons, and money.

In 1954, Arévalo's freely elected Guatemalan successor, Jacobo Arbenz, was overthrown by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the 1954 Guatemalan coup d'état. Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas was installed as president in 1954 and ruled until he was assassinated by a member of his personal guard in 1957.

In the election that followed, General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes assumed power. He is most celebrated for challenging the Mexican president to a gentleman's duel on the bridge on the south border to end a feud on the subject of illegal fishing by Mexican boats on Guatemala's Pacific coast, two of which were sunk by the Guatemalan Air Force. Ydígoras authorized the training of 5,000 anti-Castro Cubans in Guatemala. He also provided airstrips in the region of Petén for what later became the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961. Ydígoras' government was ousted in 1963 when the Air Force attacked several military bases. The coup was led by his Defense Minister, Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia.

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In 1966, Julio César Méndez Montenegro was elected president of Guatemala under the banner "Democratic Opening." Mendez Montenegro was the candidate of the Revolutionary Party, a centre-left party which had its origins in the post-Ubico era. It was during this time that rightist paramilitary organizations, such as the "White Hand" ( Mano Blanca), and the Anticomunist Secret Army, (Ejército Secreto Anticomunista), were formed. Those organizations were the forerunners of the infamous " Death Squads." Military advisers of The United States Army Special Forces (Green Berets) were sent to Guatemala to train troops and help transform its army into a modern counter-insurgency force, which eventually made it the most sophisticated in Central America.

In 1970, Colonel Carlos Manuel Arana Osorio was elected president. A new guerrilla movement entered the country from Mexico, into the Western Highlands in 1972. In the disputed election of 1974, General Kjell Lauguerud García defeated General Efraín Ríos Montt, a candidate of the Christian Democratic Party, who claimed that he had been cheated out of a victory through fraud. On February 4, 1976, a major earthquake destroyed several cities and caused more than 25,000 deaths. In 1978, in a fraudulent election, General Romeo Lucas García assumed power. The 1970s saw the birth of two new guerrilla organizations, The Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) and the Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), who began and intensified by the end of the seventies, guerrilla attacks that included urban and rural guerrilla warfare, mainly against the military and some of the civilian supporters of the army. In 1979, the United States president, Jimmy Carter, ordered a ban on all military aid to the Guatemalan Army because of the widespread and systematic abuse of human rights.

In 1980, a group of Quiché Indigenous Peoples took over the Spanish Embassy to protest army massacres in the countryside. The Guatemalan government launched an assault that killed almost everyone inside as a result of a fire that consumed the building. The Guatemalan government claimed that the activists set the fire and immolated themselves. However, the Spanish ambassador, who survived the fire, disputed this claim, claiming that the Guatemalan police intentionally killed almost everyone inside and set the fire to erase traces of their acts. As a result of this incident, the government of Spain broke diplomatic relations with Guatemala. This government was overthrown in 1982. General Efraín Ríos Montt was named President of the military junta, continuing the bloody campaign of torture, disappearances, and " scorched earth" warfare. The country became a pariah state internationally. Ríos Montt was overthrown by General Óscar Humberto Mejía Victores, who called for an election of a national constitutional assembly to write a new constitution, leading to a free election in 1986, which was won by Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo, the candidate of the Christian Democracy Party.

In 1982, the four Guerrilla groups, EGP, ORPA, FAR and PGT, merged and formed the URNG, influenced by the Salvadoran guerrilla FMLN, the Nicaraguan FSLN and Cuba's Government, in order to become stronger. As a result of the Army's " scorched earth" tactics in the countryside, more than 45,000 Guatemalans fled across the border to Mexico. The Mexican government placed the refugees in camps in Chiapas and Tabasco.

In 1992, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Rigoberta Menchú for her efforts to bring international attention to the government-sponsored genocide against the indigenous population.

The Guatemalan Civil War ended in 1996 with a peace accord between the guerrillas and the government of President Álvaro Arzú, negotiated by the United Nations through intense brokerage by nations such as Norway and Spain. Both sides made major concessions. The guerrilla fighters disarmed and received land to work. According to the U.N.-sponsored truth commission (styled the " Commission for Historical Clarification"), government forces and state-sponsored paramilitaries were responsible for over 93% of the human rights violations during the war. During the first 10 years, the victims of the state-sponsored terror were primarily students, workers, professionals, and opposition figures, but in the last years they were thousands of mostly rural Mayan farmers and non-combatants. More than 450 Mayan villages were destroyed and over 1 million people became internal and external refugees. In certain areas, such as Baja Verapaz, the Truth Commission considered that the Guatemalan state engaged in an intentional policy of genocide against particular ethnic groups in the Civil



War. In 1999, U.S. president Bill Clinton stated that the United States was wrong to have provided support to Guatemalan military forces that took part in the brutal civilian killings.

Since the peace accords, Guatemala has witnessed successive democratic elections, most recently in 2007. The past government has signed free trade agreements with the Caleb and the rest of Central America through CAFTA, and other agreements with Mexico. In 2007 elections were held in Guatemala. El Partido Nacional de la Esperanza and its president candidate Álvaro Colom won the presidency as well as the majority of the seats in congress.

Guatemala continues to rank as having one of the highest murder rates in the world with an extremely low conviction rate.

## Politics

Guatemala is a presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the President of Guatemala is both head of state and head of government, and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the Congress of the Republic. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. Álvaro Colom is the President of Guatemala as of 14 January 2008

## Foreign Relations

The Chair of Latin American and Caribbean States is the Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations.

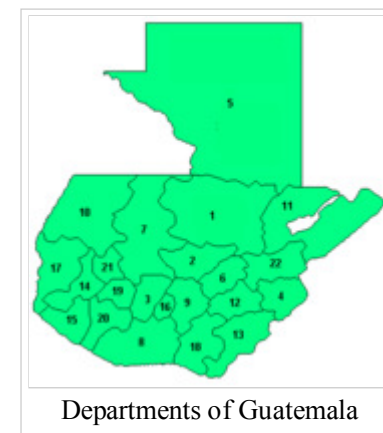
## Departments and municipalities

Guatemala is divided into 22 departments (*departamentos*) and sub-divided into about 332 municipalities (*municipios*).

The departments include:

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Alta Verapaz   | 12. Jalapa         |
| 2. Baja Verapaz   | 13. Jutiapa        |
| 3. Chimaltenango  | 14. Quetzaltenango |
| 4. Chiquimula     | 15. Retalhuleu     |
| 5. Petén          | 16. Sacatepéquez   |
| 6. Guatemala      | 17. San Marcos     |
| 7. Huehuetenango  | 18. San Peten      |
| 8. Escuintla      | 19. Sololá         |
| 9. Guatemala      | 20. Suchitepéquez  |
| 10. Huehuetenango | 21. Totonicapán    |
| 11. Izabal        | 22. Zacapa         |

## Geography







Guatemala is mountainous, except for the south coastal area and the vast northern lowlands of Petén department. Two mountain chains enter Guatemala from west to east, dividing the country into three major regions: the highlands, where the mountains are located; the Pacific coast, south of the mountains; and the Petén region, north of the mountains. All major cities are located in the highlands and Pacific coast regions; by comparison, Petén is sparsely populated. These three regions vary in climate, elevation, and landscape, providing dramatic contrasts between hot and humid tropical lowlands and colder and drier highland peaks. Volcán Tajumulco, at 4,220 meters, is the highest point in the Central American states.



*Guatemala Highlands*

The rivers are short and shallow in the Pacific drainage basin, larger and deeper in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico drainage basins, which include the Polochic and Dulce Rivers, which drain into Lake Izabal, the Motagua River, the Sarstún that forms the boundary with Belize, and the Usumacinta River, which forms the boundary between Petén and Chiapas, Mexico.

Guatemala has long claimed all or part of the territory of neighbouring Belize, formerly part of the Spanish colony, and currently an independent Commonwealth Realm which recognises Queen Elizabeth II as its Head of State. Guatemala recognized Belize's independence in 1990, but their territorial dispute is not resolved. Negotiations are currently underway under the auspices of the Organization of American States and the Commonwealth of Nations to conclude it.

### Natural disasters

Guatemala's location on the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean makes it a target for hurricanes, such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and Hurricane Stan in October of 2005, which killed more than 1,500 people. The damage was not wind related, but rather due to significant flooding and resulting mudslides.

Guatemala's highlands lie along the Motagua Fault, part of the boundary between the Caribbean and North American tectonic plates. This fault has been responsible for several major earthquakes in historic times, including a 7.5 magnitude tremor on February 4, 1976 which killed more than 25,000 people. In addition, the Middle America Trench, a major subduction zone lies off the Pacific coast. Here, the Cocos Plate is sinking beneath the Caribbean Plate, producing volcanic activity inland of the coast. Guatemala has 37 volcanoes, four of them active: Pacaya, Santiaguito, Fuego and Tacaná.

On June 13, 2007 a 6.8 Magnitude earthquake hit Guatemala at 3:29pm New York Time (1:29pm Guatemalan Time). There were no reports of death or major damage. It only lasted for 30 seconds and this was the second time that an earthquake happened in a week; the last time was June 8, which was a 5.9 Magnitude.

### Biodiversity

The country has 14 ecoregions ranging from Mangrove forests, to both ocean littorals with 5 different ecosystems. Guatemala has 252 listed wetlands, including

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Map of Guatemala



5 lakes, 61 lagoons, 100 rivers, and 3 swamps. PDF (63.1 KiB) Tikal National Park, was the first mixed UNESCO World Heritage Site. Guatemala is a country of distinct fauna. It has some 1246 known species. Of these, 6.7% are endemic and 8.1% are threatened. Guatemala is home to at least 8681 species of vascular plants, of which 13.5% are endemic. 5.4% of Guatemala is protected under IUCN categories I-V.

## Demographics

According to the CIA World Fact Book, Guatemala has a population of 12,728,111 (2007 est). The majority of the population is Ladino, also called Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and Spanish), and Whites (primarily of Spanish, but also those of German, English, Italian, and Scandinavian descent), they make up a combined total of 59.4%. Amerindians populations include the K'iche 9.1%, Kaqchikel 8.4%, Mam 7.9% and Q'eqchi 6.3%. 8.6% of the population is "other Mayan", 0.2% is indigenous non-Mayan, and 0.1% is "other". There are smaller communities present. The Garífuna, who are descended from African slaves, live mainly in Livingston and Puerto Barrios, and other blacks and mulattos. There are also Arabs of Lebanese and Syrian descent, and Asians, mostly of Chinese descent. There is also a growing Korean community in Guatemala City and in nearby Mixco, currently numbering about 50,000. Guatemala's German population is credited with bringing the tradition of a Christmas tree to the country.

In 1900, Guatemala had a population of 885,000. Over the course of the twentieth century the population of the country grew, the fastest growth in the Western Hemisphere. The ever-increasing pattern of emigration to the United States has led to the growth of Guatemalan communities in California, Florida, Illinois, New York, Texas, Providence, Rhode Island and elsewhere since the 1970s.

## Diaspora

The Civil War forced many Guatemalans to start lives outside of their country. The majority of the Guatemalan diaspora is located in the United States with estimates ranging from 480,000 to 1 million, to 190,000. The difficulty in getting accurate counts for Guatemalans abroad is because many of them are refugee claimants awaiting determination of their status. Below are current statistics for certain countries:

Country	Count
 USA	489,426 – 1,102,090
 Mexico	23,529 – 190,000
 Belize	14,693
 Canada	34,665
 Germany	5,989
 Honduras	5,172
 El Salvador	4,209



Spain

5,000

## Economy

According to the CIA World Factbook, Guatemala's GDP per capita is US\$5,000; however, this developing country still faces many social problems and is among the 10 poorest countries in Latin America. The distribution of income remains highly unequal with approximately 29% of the population living below the poverty line and just over 400,000 (3.2%) unemployed.

Remittances from Guatemalans who fled to the United States during the civil war, now constitute the largest single source of foreign income (more than the combined value of exports and tourism).

In last years the exporter sector of nontraditional products has grown dynamically representing more than 53 percent of global exports. Some of the main products for export are fruits, vegetables, flowers, handicrafts, cloths and others.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in purchasing power parity (PPP) in 2006 was estimated at \$61.38 billion USD. The service sector is the largest component of GDP at 58.7%, followed by the agriculture sector at 22.1% (2006 est.). The industrial sector represents only 19.1% of GDP (2006 est.). The agricultural sector accounts for about one-fourth of GDP, two-fifths of exports, and half of the labor force. Organic coffee, sugar, textiles, fresh vegetables, and bananas are the country's main exports. The rate of inflation was 5.7% in 2006.

The 1996 peace accords that ended the decades-long Civil War removed a major obstacle to foreign investment. Tourism has become an increasing revenue source for Guatemala.

In March 2005 Guatemala's congress ratified the Dominican Republic - Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) between several Central American nations and the United States. Guatemala also has free trade agreements with Taiwan and Colombia.

## Culture

Guatemala City is home to many of the nation's libraries and museums, including the National Archives, the National Library, and the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, which has an extensive collection of Maya artifacts. There are private museums, such as the Ixchel, which focuses on textiles, and the Popol Vuh, which focuses on Mayan archeology. Both museums are housed inside the Universidad Francisco Marroquín campus. Almost each of the 329 municipalities in the country has a small museum.

Literature

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 379 of 637



A market in Guatemala



The Guatemala National Prize in Literature is a one-time only award that recognizes an individual writer's body of work. It has been given annually since 1988 by the Ministry of Culture and Sports.

Miguel Angel Asturias, won the Literature Nobel Prize in 1967. Among his most famous books is "El Señor Presidente", a novel based on the government of Manuel Estrada Cabrera.

## Music

The Music of Guatemala comprises a number of styles and expressions. The Maya had an intense musical practice, as is documented by iconography. Guatemala was also one of the first regions in the New World to be introduced to European music, from 1524 on. Many composers from the Renaissance, baroque, classical, romantic, and contemporary music styles have contributed works of all genres, of very high quality. The marimba is the national instrument that has developed a large repertoire of very attractive pieces that have been popular for more than a century. The *Historia General de Guatemala* has published a series of CDs of historical Music of Guatemala, in which every style is present, from the Maya, colonial period, independent and republican eras to current times.

## Language

Although Spanish is the official language, it is not universally spoken among the indigenous population, nor is it often spoken as a second language. Twenty-one distinct Mayan languages are spoken, especially in rural areas, as well as several non-Mayan Amerindian languages, such as the indigenous Xinca, and Garifuna, an Arawakan language spoken on the Caribbean coast. According to Decreto Número 19-2003, twenty-three languages are recognized as National Languages.

The Peace Accords signed in December 1996 provide for the translation of some official documents and voting materials into several indigenous languages (see summary of main substantive accords) and mandate the provision of interpreters in legal cases for non-Spanish speakers. The accord also sanctioned bilingual education in Spanish and indigenous languages. It is common for indigenous Guatemalans to learn or speak between two to five of the nation's other languages, including Spanish.

## Religion



Language Map of Guatemala, according to the *Comisión de Oficialización de los Idiomas Indígenas de Guatemala*. The dark green area represents Spanish.



Catholic 50-60% also Protestant 40%, Mayan 1%. Christianity was the only religion during the colonial era. However, Protestantism has increased markedly in recent decades. More than one third of Guatemalans are Protestant, chiefly Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Protestantism and traditional Mayan religions are practiced by an estimated 40% and 1% of the population, respectively. It is common for traditional Mayan practices to be incorporated into Christian ceremonies and worship, a phenomenon known as syncretism. The practice of traditional Mayan religion is increasing as a result of the cultural protections established under the peace accords. The government has instituted a policy of providing altars at every Mayan ruin found in the country so that traditional ceremonies may be performed there.

There are also small communities of Jews estimated between 1200 and 2000 , Muslims (1200), Buddhists at around 9000 to 12000 , and members of other faiths.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints claims over 205,000 members in Guatemala.

## Education

The government runs a number of public elementary and secondary-level schools. These schools are free, though the cost of uniforms, books, supplies, and transportation makes them less accessible to the poorer segments of society. Many middle and upper-class children go to private schools. The country also has one public university ( Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala), and 9 private ones (see List of universities in Guatemala). Only 69.1% of the population aged 15 and over are literate, the lowest literacy rate in Central America.

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guatemala>"

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Catedral Metropolitana,  
Guatemala City.



# Guyana

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

**Guyana** (pronounced /gɑɪˈænə/ or /guyːˈɑːnə/), officially the **Co-operative Republic of Guyana** and previously known as **British Guiana**, is the only nation state of the Commonwealth of Nations on the mainland of South America. Bordered to the east by Suriname, to the south and southwest by Brazil and to the west by Venezuela, it is the third-smallest country on the mainland of South America. It is one of four non-Spanish-speaking territories on the continent, along with the countries of Brazil (Portuguese), Suriname (Dutch) and the French overseas region of French Guiana (French). Culturally, Guyana associates primarily with the English-speaking Caribbean countries such as Jamaica, or Trinidad and Tobago.

## History

The first Europeans arrived in the area around 1500. Guyana was inhabited by the Arawak and Carib tribes of Amerindians. Although Christopher Columbus sighted Guyana during his third voyage (in 1498), the Dutch were first to establish colonies: Essequibo (1616), Berbice (1627), and Demerara (1752). The British assumed control in the late 18th century, and the Dutch formally ceded the area in 1814. In 1831 the three separate colonies became a single British colony known as British Guiana.



The State House, Guyana's Presidential Residence.

Escaped slaves formed their own settlements known as Maroon communities. With the abolition of slavery in 1834 many of the former enslaved people began to settle in urban areas. Indentured labourers from modern day Portugal (1834), Germany (first in 1835), Ireland (1836), Scotland (1837), Malta (1839), China and India (beginning in 1838) were imported to work on the sugar plantations.

In 1889 Venezuela claimed the land up to the Essequibo. Ten years later an international tribunal ruled the land belonged to British Guiana.

During World War II the United States arranged for its air force to use

### Co-operative Republic of Guyana



Flag

Coat of arms

**Motto:** "One people, one nation, one destiny"



<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Georgetown
<b>Official languages</b>	English
Recognised regional languages	Guyanese Creole, Akawaio, Hindi, Macushi, Wai-Wai, Arawakan, Cariban
<b>Demonym</b>	Guyanese
<b>Government</b> - President	Semi-presidential republic Bharrat Jagdeo



British airports in South America, including those in British Guiana.

Guyana achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1966 and became a republic on 23 February 1970, remaining a member of the Commonwealth. The United States State Department and the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), along with the British government, played a strong role in influencing who would politically control Guyana during this time. They provided secret financial support and political campaign advice to pro-western Guyanese of African descent, especially Forbes Burnham's People's National Congress to the detriment of the Cheddi Jagan-led People's Progressive Party, mostly supported by Guyanese of Indian descent, which had ties with the Soviet Union. In 1978, Guyana received considerable international attention when 918 almost entirely American members of the Peoples Temple died in Jonestown, Georgetown and at a Temple attack at a small airstrip which resulted in the murder of five people, including the only Congressman murdered in the line of duty in U.S. history, Leo Ryan.

## Geography

- Prime Minister	Sam Hinds
<b>Independence</b>	
- from the United Kingdom	May 26, 1966
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	214,970 km <sup>2</sup> ( 84th) 83,000 sq mi
- Water (%)	8.4
<b>Population</b>	
- March 2008 estimate	751,000 <sup>1</sup> ( 162nd)
- 2007 census	769,095
- Density	3.5/km <sup>2</sup> ( 217th) 9.1/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$1.378 billion ( 157th)
- Per capita	\$4,612 ( 106th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.750 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 97th)
<b>Currency</b>	Guyanese dollar ( GYD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.gy
<b>Calling code</b>	+592
<p><sup>1</sup> Population includes excess mortality caused by AIDS. Around one-third of the population (230,000) live in the capital, Georgetown.</p>	



Map of Guyana





Guyana can be divided into four natural regions: a narrow and fertile marshy plain along the Atlantic (low coastal plain) coast where most of the population lives, then a white sand belt more inland (hilly sand and clay region), containing most of Guyana's mineral deposits, the dense rainforests (Forested Highland Region) across the middle of the country, the grassy flat savannah in the south and finally the larger interior highlands (interior savannah) consisting mostly of mountains that gradually rise to the Brazilian border.

Guyana's main mountains are contained here, including Mount Ayanganna (6,699 ft (2,042 m)) and on Mount Roraima (9,301 ft (2,835 m) – the highest mountain in Guyana) on the Brazil-Guyana-Venezuela tripoint, part of the Pakaraima range. Roraima and Guyana's tepuis are said to have been the inspiration for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1912 novel *The Lost World*. There are also many steep escarpments and waterfalls, including the famous Kaieteur Falls. Between the Rupununi River and the border with Brazil lies the Rupununi savannah, south of which lie the Kanuku Mountains.

There are many rivers in the country, the three main ones being (west to east) the Essequibo, the Demerara, and the Berbice. There is also the Corentyne along the border with Suriname. At the mouth of the Essequibo are several large islands. The 90-mile (145 km) Shell Beach along the north-west coasts. Guyana is a major breeding area for sea turtles (mainly Leatherbacks) and other wildlife.

The local climate is tropical and generally hot and humid, though moderated by northeast trade winds along the coast. There are two rainy seasons, the first from May to mid-August, the second from mid-November to mid-January.

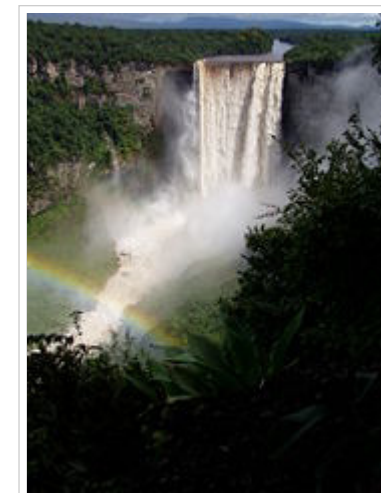
## Boundary disputes

Guyana was in a border dispute with both Suriname, which claimed the land east of the Corentyne River in southeastern Guyana, and Venezuela which claims the land west of the Essequibo River as part of Guayana Esequiba. The dispute with Suriname was arbitrated by the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea and a ruling in favour of Guyana was announced in September, 2007.

When the British surveyed British Guiana in 1840, they included the entire Cuyuni River basin within the colony. Venezuela did not agree with this as it claimed all lands west of the Essequibo River. In 1898, at Venezuela's request, an international arbitration tribunal was convened and in 1899 they issued an award giving about 94% percent of the disputed territory to British Guiana. Venezuela and Great Britain accepted the award by treaty in 1905, but Venezuela raised the issue again at the time of Guyana's independence, and continues to claim Guayana Esequiba..

## Demographics

The present population of Guyana is racially and ethnically heterogeneous, composed chiefly of the descendants of immigrants who came to the country either as enslaved people or as indentured labourers. The population therefore comprises groups of persons with nationality backgrounds from Europe (especially the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Portugal), Africa, China, India, and the Middle East, with the Aboriginal Indians as the indigenous population. These



Kaieteur Falls in central Guyana



groups of diverse nationality backgrounds have been fused together by a common language, i.e., English and Creole.

The largest nationality sub-group is that of the descendants of India, also known as East Indians (Indo-Guyanese), comprising 43.5 percent of the population in 2002. They are followed by people of African heritage (Afro-Guyanese) (30.2 percent). The third in number are those of mixed heritage (16.7 percent), while the Aboriginal Indians are fourth with 9.2 percent. The smallest groups are European, including Portuguese, (0.06 percent or 476 persons) and the Chinese (0.19 percent or 1395). A small group (0.01 percent or 112 persons) did not identify their race/ethnic background.

The population distribution in 2002 was determined by nationality background. The distribution pattern has been similar to those of the 1980 and 1991 censuses, but the share of the two main groups has declined. The East Indians were 51.9 percent of the total population in 1980, but by 1991 had fallen to 48.6 percent, and then 43.5 percent in 2002 census. Those of African descent increased slightly from 30.8 to 32.3 percent during the first period (1980 and 1991) before falling to 30.2 percent in the 2002 census. With small growth in the population, the decline in the shares of the two larger groups has resulted in the relative shares of the 'Mixed' and Amerindian groups. The Amerindian population rose by 22,097 persons between 1991 and 2002. This represents an increase of 47.3 percent or annual growth of 3.5 percent. Similarly, the 'Mixed' population increased by 37,788 persons, representing a 43.0 percent increase or annual growth rate of 3.2 percent from the base period of 1991 census. The whites and Chinese populations which declined between 1980 and 1991 regained in numbers by the 2002 census by 54.4 percent (168 persons) and 8.1 percent (105 persons) respectively. However, because of their relatively small sizes, the increase has effectively a zero effect on the overall change. The Portuguese group has declined constantly over the decades.

## Languages

English is the official language of Guyana. In addition, Amerindian languages are spoken by a small minority, while Guyanese Creole (an English-based creole with African and Indian syntax) is widely spoken. Grammar is not standardized.

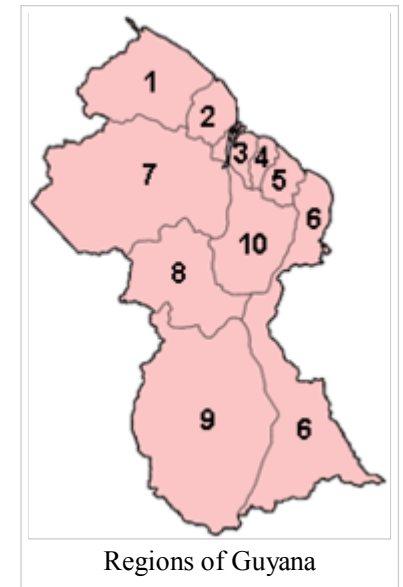
In addition to English, other languages of Guyana include Guyanese Creole, Akawaio, Wai-Wai, Arawak and Macushi.

## Regions and neighbourhood councils



Guyana is divided into 10 regions:

No	Region	Area km <sup>2</sup>	Population	Population per km <sup>2</sup>
1	Barima-Waini	20 339	24 275	1,2
2	Pomeroon-Supenaam	6 195	49 253	8,0
3	Essequibo Islands-West Demerara	3 755	103 061	27,5
4	Demerara-Mahaica	2 232	310 320	139,0
5	Mahaica-Berbice	4 190	52 428	12,5
6	East Berbice-Corentyne	36 234	123 695	3,4
7	Cuyuni-Mazaruni	47 213	17 597	0,4
8	Potaro-Siparuni	20 051	10 095	0,5
9	Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo	57 750	19 387	0,3
10	Upper Demerara-Berbice	17 040	41 112	2,4
	<b>Guyana</b>	<b>214 999</b>	<b>751 223</b>	<b>3,5</b>



The regions are divided into 27 neighbourhood councils.

## Politics

Politics of Guyana takes place in a framework of a semi-presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the President of Guyana is the head of government, and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the National Assembly of Guyana. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. The 2006 national elections were the first peaceful elections in recent times. The elections were free and fair and were a welcome departure from the turmoil of previous elections.

Historically, politics is a source of tension in the country and violent riots have often broken out during elections. During the 1970s and 1980s, the political landscape was dominated by the People's National Congress, who retained their power by skewing election results. In 1992, the first "free and fair" elections were overseen by former American president Jimmy Carter, and the People's Progressive Party has led the country since. The two parties are principally organized along ethnic lines and as a result often clash on issues related to the allocation of resources.



## Economy

Guyana's economy depends on agriculture. Chronic problems include a shortage of skilled labour and a deficient infrastructure. Until recently, the government was juggling a sizable external debt against the urgent need for expanded public investment. Low prices for key mining and agricultural commodities combined with troubles in the bauxite and sugar industries had threatened the government's tenuous fiscal position and dimmed prospects for the future. However, the Guyanese economy has rebounded slightly and exhibited moderate economic growth since 1999, based on an expansion in the agricultural and mining sectors, a more favorable atmosphere for business initiatives, a more realistic exchange rate, fairly low inflation, and the continued support of international organizations. Exports of Guyana include rice, sugar, molasses, bauxite, gold, furniture, electrical and household appliances, alcoholic beverages, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, wood, wood products, processed food, spices, fish, fruits, vegetables, hides, skins, leather and leather products, flowers and plants, textiles, yarns, fabrics, gold jewelry, toys and games, travel goods, stationery, paper products, ceramics, handicrafts, wildlife, packaged foods, and tobacco.

The main economic activities in Guyana are agriculture (producing rice and Demerara sugar), bauxite mining, gold mining, timber, shrimp fishing and minerals. The sugar industry, which accounts for 28% of all export earnings, is largely run by Guysuco, which employs more people than any other industry. Many industries have a large foreign investment. The mineral industry, for example, is heavily invested in by the American company Reynolds Metals, the Canadian Alcan and the Korean/Malaysian Barama Company has a large stake in the logging industry.



Tractor in a rice field on Guyana's coastal plain.



The production of balatá (natural latex) was once big business in Guyana. Most of the balata bleeding in Guyana took place in the foothills of the Kanuku Mountains in the Rupununi. Early exploitation also took place in the North West District, but most of the trees in the area were destroyed by illicit bleeding methods that involved cutting down the trees rather than making incisions in them.

Folk uses of balatá included the making of homegrown cricket balls, the temporarily filling of troublesome tooth cavities, and the crafting of figurines and other decorative items (particularly by the Macushi people of the Kanuku mountains).

Major private sector organizations include the Private Sector Commission (PSC) and the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce & Industry (GCCCI); See a list of companies in Guyana.

In addition, the government initiated a major overhaul of the tax code with the start of 2007. The Value Added Tax (VAT) was brought into effect, replacing six different taxes. Prior to the implementation of the VAT it had been relatively easy to evade sales tax and many businesses were in violation of tax code. Many businesses were very opposed to VAT introduction because of the extra paperwork required; however, the Government has remained firm on the VAT. By replacing several taxes with one flat tax rate, it will also be easier for government auditors to spot embezzlement. While the adjustment to VAT has been a tough one, it may improve day-to-day life because of the significant additional funds the government will have available for public spending.

President Bharrat Jagdeo has made debt relief a foremost priority of his administration. He has been quite successful, getting US\$800 million<sup>8</sup> of debt written off by the IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), in addition to millions more from other industrial nations. Mr. Jagdeo was lauded by IDB President Moreno for his strong leadership and negotiating skills in pursuing debt relief for Guyana and several other regional countries.

## Summary

GDP/ PPP (2006 estimate)	Natural resources
US\$3.757 billion (US\$4,900 per capita)	bauxite, gold, diamonds, hardwood timber, shrimp, fish
Real growth rate	Exports
5.4%	US\$621.6 million (2006 estimate)
Inflation	sugar, gold, bauxite/alumina, rice, shrimps, molasses, rum, timber.
6.0%	Imports
Unemployment	US\$706.9 million (2006 estimate)
9.1% (2000, understated)	



A section of Bourda Market.



Arable land

2%

Labour force

418,000 (2001 estimate)

Agricultural produce

sugar, rice, wheat, vegetable oils;  
beef, pork, poultry, dairy products;  
fish, shrimps

Industrial produce

bauxite, sugar, rice milling, timber,  
textiles, gold mining

manufactured items, machinery,  
petroleum, food.

Major trading partners

Canada, U.S., UK, Portugal,  
Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago,  
China, Cuba (2005)

## Communications

Telephones

110,100 main lines ( ITU, 2005)

400,000 mobile cellular (2007)

Radio broadcast stations

1 (government-owned, broadcasting on AM, FM, and shortwave)

Television broadcast stations

21 (in 2007; one government-owned station; the rest are private stations which relay a variety of American programmes via satellite services)

Internet hosts

3,000 (ITU, 2006)

Internet users

160,000 (ITU, 2005)

## Transport



## Railways

Total 116 miles (187 km), all dedicated to ore transport (2001 estimate)

## Highways

Total 4,952 miles (7,970 km), of which 367 miles (590 km) paved and 4,586 miles (7,380 km) unpaved (1999 estimate)

## Waterways

669 miles (1,077 km)

## Ports and harbors

Georgetown, Port Kaituma

## Airports

1 international airport ( Cheddi Jagan International Airport, Timehri); 1 regional int'l airport ( Ogle Airport); and about 90 airstrips, 9 of which have paved runways (2006 estimate).



Cross-border bridge from Guyana to Brazil under construction near Lethem.

## Culture



Guyana, along with Suriname, French Guiana, and Brazil, is one of the four non-Hispanic nations in South America. Guyana's culture is very similar to that of the English-speaking Caribbean, to the extent that Guyana is included and accepted as a Caribbean nation and is a founding member of the Caricom (Caribbean Community) economic bloc and also the home of the Bloc's Headquarters, the CARICOM Secretariat. Its geographical location, its sparsely populated rain forest regions, and its substantial Amerindian population differentiate it from English-speaking Caribbean countries. Its blend of Indo-Guyanese (East Indian) and Afro-Guyanese (African) cultures gives it similarities to Trinidad and distinguishes it from other parts of the Americas. Guyana shares similar interests with the islands in the West Indies, such as food, festive events, music, sports, etc. Guyana plays international cricket as a part of the West Indies cricket team, and the Guyana team plays first class cricket against other nations of the Caribbean. In addition to its CARICOM membership, Guyana is a member of CONCACAF, the international football federation for North and Central America and the Caribbean. Another aspect of Guyanese culture is its rich folklore about Jumbies.

## Religion

According to the 2002 Census, Guyana's religions breakdown is 28.4% Hindu, 16.9% Pentecostal, 8.1% Roman Catholic, 7.3% Muslim, 6.9% Anglican, 3% Seventh-day Adventist, 16.5% other Christian denominations, 4.3% no religion, 0.5% Rastafarian, 0.1% Bahá'í, and 2.2% other faiths. Most Guyanese Christians are either Protestants or Roman Catholics and include a mix of all races. Hinduism is dominated by the Indians who came to the country in the early 1800s, while Islam varies between the Afro-Guyanese, and Indian-Guyanese.

## Events

Mashramani (Mash) · Phagwah ( Holi) · Deepavali (Diwali)

## Education

## Holidays

Date	Name
January 1	New Year's Day
February 23	Mashramani-Republic Day
variable	Phagwah
variable	Eid-ul-Fitr
variable	Youm Un Nabi
variable	Good Friday
variable	Easter Monday
May 1	Labour Day
May 5	Indian Arrival Day
May 26	Independence Day
First Monday in July	CARICOM Day
August 1	Emancipation Day
variable	Diwali
December 25	Christmas
December 26 or 27	Boxing Day





Guyana's educational system was at one time considered to be among the best in the Caribbean, but it significantly deteriorated in the 1980s because of the emigration of highly educated citizens and the lack of appropriate funding. Although the education system has recovered somewhat in the 1990s, it still does not produce the quality of educated students necessary for Guyana to modernize its workforce. The country lacks a critical mass of expertise in many of the disciplines and activities on which it depends.

The educational system does not sufficiently focus on the training of Guyanese in science and technology, technical and vocational subjects, business management, nor computer sciences. The Guyanese education system is modeled after the former British education system. Students are expected to write SSEE (secondary school entrance exam) by grade 6 for entrance into High School in grade 7. They write CXC at the end of high school. Recently they have introduced the CAPE exams which all other Caribbean countries have now introduced. The A-level system left over from the British era has all but disappeared and is now offered only in a few schools (current as at January 2007). The reason for the insufficient focus on various disciplines can be directly attributed to the common choices made by students to specialize in areas that are similar (math/chemistry/physics or geography/history/economics). With the removal of the old A-level system that encouraged this specialization, it is thought that it will be more attractive for students to broaden their studies.

There are wide disparities among the geographical regions of the country in the availability of quality education, and the physical facilities which are provided are in poor condition.

Further adding to the problems of the educational system, many of the better-educated professional teachers have emigrated to other countries over the past two decades, mainly because of low pay, lack of opportunities and crime. As a result, there is a lack of trained teachers at every level of Guyana's educational system.

There are however several very good Private schools that have sprung up over the last fifteen years. Those schools offer a varied and balanced curriculum.

## Public health

### Service delivery

The delivery of health services is provided at five different levels in the public sector:

- Level I: Local Health Posts (166 in total) that provide preventive and simple curative care for common diseases and attempt to promote proper health practices. Community health workers staff them.
- Level II: Health Centres (109 in total) that provide preventive and rehabilitative care and promotion activities. These are ideally staffed with a medical extension worker or public health nurse, along with a nursing assistant, a dental nurse and a midwife.
- Level III: Nineteen District Hospitals (with 473 beds) that provide basic in-patient and outpatient care (although more the latter than the former) and



Bishops' High School



selected diagnostic services. They are also meant to be equipped to provide simple radiological and laboratory services, and to be capable of gynecology, providing preventive and curative dental care. They are designed to serve geographical areas with populations of 10,000 or more.

- Level IV: Four Regional Hospitals (with 620 beds) that provide emergency services, routine surgery and obstetrical and gynecological care, dental services, diagnostic services and specialist services in general medicine and pediatrics. They are designed to include the necessary support for this level of medical service in terms of laboratory and X-ray facilities, pharmacies and dietetic expertise. These hospitals are located in Regions 2, 3, 6 and 10.
- Level V: The National Referral Hospital (937 beds) in Georgetown that provides a wider range of diagnostic and specialist services, on both an in-patient and out-patient basis; the Psychiatric Hospital in Canje; and the Geriatric Hospital in Georgetown. There is also one children's rehabilitation centre.

This system is structured so that its proper functioning depends intimately on a process of referrals. Except for serious emergencies, patients are to be seen first at the lower levels, and those with problems that cannot be treated at those levels are referred to higher levels in the system. However, in practice, many patients by-pass the lower levels.

The health sector is currently unable to offer certain sophisticated tertiary services and specialized medical services, the technology for which is unaffordable in Guyana, or for which the required medical specialists simply do not exist. Even with substantial improvements in the health sector, the need for overseas treatment for some services might remain. The Ministry of Health provides financial assistance to patients requiring such treatment, priority being given to children whose condition can be rehabilitated with significant improvements to their quality of life.

In addition to the facilities mentioned above, there are 10 hospitals belonging to the private sector and to public corporations, plus diagnostic facilities, clinics and dispensaries in those sectors. These ten hospitals together, provide for 548 beds.

Eighteen clinics and dispensaries are owned by GUYSUCO.

The Ministry of Health and Labour is responsible for the funding of the National Referral Hospital in Georgetown, which has recently been made a public corporation managed by an independent Board. Region 6 is responsible for the management of the National Psychiatric Hospital. The Geriatric Hospital, previously administered by the Ministry of Labour, became the responsibility of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security in December 1997.

## Health conditions

One of the most unfortunate consequences of Guyana's economic decline in the 1970s and 1980s was that it led to very poor health conditions for a large part of the population. Basic health services in the interior are primitive to non-existent and some procedures are not available at all. The U.S. State Department Consular Information Sheet warns "Medical care is available for minor medical conditions. Emergency care and hospitalization for major medical illnesses or surgery is limited, because of a lack of appropriately trained specialists, below standard in-hospital care, and poor sanitation. Ambulance service is substandard and may not routinely be available for emergencies." Many Guyanese seek medical care in the United States, Trinidad or Cuba.

Compared with other neighboring countries, Guyana ranks poorly in regard to basic health indicators. In 1998, life expectancy at birth was estimated at 66.0 years for Guyana, 71.6 for Suriname, 72.9 for Venezuela; 73.8 for Trinidad and Tobago, 74.7 for Jamaica, and 76.5 for Barbados. In Guyana, the infant mortality rate in 1998 was 24.2, in Barbados 14.9; in Trinidad and Tobago 16.2; in Venezuela 22; in Jamaica 24.5; and in Suriname 25.1.



Maternal mortality rates in Guyana are also relatively high, being estimated at 124.6/1000 for 1998. Comparable figures for other Caribbean countries are 50/1000 for Barbados, 75/1000 for Trinidad and 100/1000 for Jamaica.

It must be emphasized, however, that although Guyana's health profile still falls short in comparison with many of its Caribbean neighbours, there has been remarkable progress since 1988, and the Ministry of Health is constantly upgrading conditions, procedures, and facilities. Open heart surgery is now available in the country, and in the second half of 2007 an ophthalmic centre will open.

The leading causes of mortality for all age groups are cerebrovascular diseases (11.6%); ischemic heart disease (9.9%); immunity disorders (7.1%); diseases of the respiratory system (6.8%); diseases of pulmonary circulation and other forms of heart disease (6.6%); endocrine and metabolic diseases (5.5%); diseases of other parts of the Digestive System (5.2%); violence (5.1%); certain condition originating in the prenatal period (4.3%); and hypertensive diseases (3.9%).

The picture in regard to morbidity patterns differs. The ten leading causes of morbidity for all age groups are, in decreasing order: malaria; acute respiratory infections; symptoms, signs and ill defined or unknown conditions; hypertension; accident and injuries; acute diarrhoeal disease; diabetes mellitus; worm infestation; rheumatic arthritis; and mental and nervous disorders.

This morbidity profile indicates that it can be improved substantially through enhanced preventive health care, better education on health issues, more widespread access to potable water and sanitation services, and increased access to basic health care of good quality.

Guyana also suffers from the highest suicide rate of any South America country. The Guyana Health Minister, Leslie Ramsammy, estimates that at least 200 people commit suicide each year in Guyana, or 27.2 people for each 100,000 people each year.

## **Environment and biodiversity**



Blue-and-yellow Macaw.

Guyana abounds with plant and animal life. Each region boasts unique species.

The following habitats have been categorized for Guyana: coastal, marine, littoral, estuarine palustrine, mangrove, riverine, lacustrine, swamp, savannah, white sand forest, brown sand forest, montane, cloud forest, moist lowland and dry evergreen scrub forests (NBAP, 1999). About 14 areas of biological interest have been identified as possible hotspots for a National Protected Area System.

More than 80% of Guyana is still covered by forests, ranging from dry evergreen and seasonal forests to montane and lowland evergreen rain forests. These forests are home to more than a thousand species of trees. Guyana's tropical climate, unique geology, and relatively pristine ecosystems support extensive areas of species-rich rain forests and natural habitats with high levels of endemism. Approximately eight thousand species of plants occur in Guyana, half of which are found nowhere else.

Guyana is one of the countries with the highest biodiversity in the world.

Guyana, with 1,168 vertebrate species, 1600 bird species, boasts one of the richest mammalian fauna assemblages of any comparably sized area in the world.

The Guiana Shield region is little known and extremely rich biologically. Unlike other areas of South America, over 70% of the natural habitat remains pristine.

The rich natural history of British Guiana was described by early explorers Sir Walter Raleigh and Charles Waterton and later by naturalists Sir David Attenborough and Gerald Durrell.

### **Ecology and World Heritage Site status**

Countries interested in the conservation and protection of natural and cultural heritage sites of the world accede to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage that was adopted by UNESCO in 1972. Guyana is no exception, and signed the treaty in 1977. In fact, Guyana was the first Caribbean State Party to sign the treaty. Sometime in the latter half of the mid-1990s, Guyana seriously began the process of selecting sites for World Heritage nomination and three sites were considered: Kaieteur National Park, Shell Beach and Historic Georgetown. By 1997, work on Kaieteur National Park was started and in 1998 work on Historic Georgetown was begun. To date, however, Guyana has not made a successful nomination.



Satellite image of Guyana 2004.



In 2000, Guyana submitted the Kaieteur National Park, including the Kaieteur Falls, to UNESCO as its first World Heritage Site nomination. The proposed area and surrounds have some of Guyana's most diversified life zones with one of the highest levels of endemic species found anywhere in South America. The Kaieteur Falls is the most spectacular feature of the park falling a distance of 226 m and exceeding the height of Niagara Falls (USA/Canada) five times. Unfortunately, the nomination of Kaieteur Park as a World Heritage Site was not successful, primarily because the area was seen by the evaluators as being too small, especially when compared with the Central Suriname Nature Reserve that had just been nominated as a World Heritage Site (2000). The dossier was thus returned to Guyana for revision.

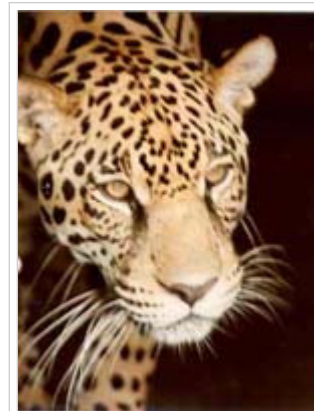
Guyana continues in its bid for a World Heritage Site. Work continues, after a period of hiatus, on the nomination dossier for Historic Georgetown. A Tentative List indicating an intention to nominate Historic Georgetown was submitted to UNESCO in December 2004. There is now a small committee put together by the Guyana National Commission for UNESCO to complete the nomination dossier and the management plan for the site. Recently, in April 2005, two Dutch experts in conservation spent two weeks in Georgetown supervising architecture staff and students of the University of Guyana in a historic building survey of the selected area. This is part of the data collection for the nomination dossier.

Meanwhile, as a result of the Kaieteur National Park being considered too small, there is a proposal to prepare a nomination for a Cluster Site that will include the Kaieteur National Park, the Iwokrama Forest and the Kanuku Mountains. The Iwokrama Rain Forest, an area rich in biological diversity, has been described by Major General (Retired) Joseph Singh as “a flagship project for conservation.” The Kanuku Mountains area is in a pristine state, and is home to more than four hundred species of birds and other animals.

There is much work to be done for the successful nomination of these sites to the World Heritage List. The State, the private sector and the ordinary Guyanese citizens each have a role to play in this process and in the later protection of the sites. Inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage will open Guyana to more serious tourists thereby assisting in its economic development.

Guyana exhibits two of the World Wildlife Fund's Global 200 eco-regions most crucial to the conservation of global biodiversity, Guianan moist forests and Guyana Highlands moist forests and is home to several endemic species including the tropical hardwood Greenheart (*Chlorocardium rodiei*).

## Landmarks



Among many other mammals, Guyanese jungles are home to the jaguar.



### St. George's Anglican Cathedral

One of the tallest wooden structures in the world, and the second tallest wooden church after the Todaiji Temple in Japan.

### Demerara Harbour Bridge

The world's fourth-longest floating bridge (formerly the longest).

### Kaieteur Falls

One of the most spectacular waterfalls in the world.

### Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Building

Houses the largest and most powerful political union in the Caribbean.

### Providence Stadium

Situated in Providence on the east bank of the Demerara River and built in time for the ICC World Cup 2007, it is the largest sports stadium in the country. It is also near the Providence Mall, forming a major spot for leisure in Guyana.

### Guyana International Conference Centre

Presented as a gift from the People's Republic of China to the Government of Guyana. It is the only one of its kind in the country.

### Stabroek Market

A large cast-iron colonial structure that looked like a statue was located next to the Demerara River.

### The City Hall

A beautiful wooden structure also from the colonial era.

### Queen's College

Top educational institution in Guyana



St. George's Cathedral

## Military

### Forces

Guyana Defence Force (GDF; includes Ground Forces, Coast Guard, and Air Corps) · Guyana People's Militia (now Defunct);(GPM) · Guyana National Service (now defunct);(GNS) · Guyana Police Force

### Available manpower

206,199 males aged 15 to 49, of which 155,058 are fit for service (2002 estimates)

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# Haiti

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**Haiti** (English pronounced /ˈheɪtiː/; French *Haïti* pronounced [aɪti]; Haitian Creole: *Ayiti*), officially the **Republic of Haiti** (*République d'Haïti* ; *Repiblik d Ayiti*), is a French and Creole speaking Latin American country located in the Greater Antilles archipelago on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Dominican Republic. *Ayiti* (Land of Mountains) was the indigenous Taíno or Amerindian name for the island. The country's highest point is Pic la Selle, at 2,680 metres (8,793 ft). The total area of Haiti is 27,750 square kilometres (10,714 sq mi) and its capital is Port-au-Prince.

A formerly prosperous French colony, the island nation bears several historical feats: Haiti became the first independent black-led republic and the only nation ever to form from a successful slave rebellion. Haiti is also the second oldest non-native country in the Americas, after the United States, as well as the first (and therefore the oldest) nation in Latin America to declare its independence, on January 1, 1804.

Haiti has recently undergone a state of transition following the forced ousting of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on February 29, 2004. The circumstances surrounding his departure from office are disputed. René Prével was elected president in his place on February 7, 2006, and took office in May of that year.



## History

The island of Hispaniola, of which Haiti occupies the western third, was originally inhabited by the Taíno Arawak people. Christopher Columbus landed at Môle Saint-Nicolas on December 5, 1492, and claimed the island for Spain. Nineteen days later, the *Santa Maria* ran aground near the present site of Cap-Haitien; Columbus was forced to leave 39 men, founding the settlement of La Navidad. **Ayiti**, which means "mountainous land", is a name that was used by its early inhabitants, the Taíno-Arawak people.

The Taínos were a seafaring branch of the South American Arawaks. *Taíno* means "the good" or "noble" in their language. A system of *cacicazgos* ( chiefdoms) existed on Hispaniola; Marien, Maguana, Higuey, Magua and Xaragua.

One of the earliest leaders to fight off Spanish conquest was Queen Anacaona, a Taíno princess from

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<i><b>République d'Haïti</b></i> <i><b>Repiblik d Ayiti</b></i> <b>Republic of Haiti</b>	
	Image:Haiti COA.svg  Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>L'Union Fait La Force</i> " (French) "Unity makes Strength"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>La Dessalinienne</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Port-au-Prince
<b>Official languages</b>	French, Haitian Creole
<b>Demonym</b>	Haitian
<b>Government</b>	Presidential republic



Xaragua who married Chief Caonabo, a Taíno chief (*cacique*) from Maguana. The two fought hard against the Europeans; she was captured by the Spanish and executed in front of her people. Other noted Taíno leaders from Haiti are Chief Guacanagari, Chief Guama and Chief Hatuey (who later fled to Cuba and helped fight the Spaniards there). Cacique Henri, another Taíno chief, fought victoriously against the Spaniards in the Bahoruco to gain freedom for himself and his people. The town associated with this history is Anse a Pitres, near the south-eastern town of Jacmel. The Taínos as the Europeans saw them on the island of Hispaniola are virtually extinct. The survivors that escaped death mixed with African slaves (runaways called maroons), producing a small generation of zambos. The mestizo increased in number as native women conceived to European men. The Taíno bloodline in Hispaniola diluted more and more as the decades went by primarily due to the establishment of Africans and mulattos on the island; however, it is believed that a small number of Haitians and Dominicans retain some native ancestry.

## Colonial rule

Enslavement, harsh treatment of the natives, and especially epidemic diseases such as smallpox caused the Taíno population to plummet over the next quarter-century. In response, the Spanish began to import African slaves to search for gold on the island. Spanish interest in Hispaniola waned after the 1520s, when vast reserves of gold and silver were discovered in Mexico and South America.

Fearful of pirate attacks, the king of Spain in 1609 ordered all colonists on Hispaniola to move closer to the capital city, Santo Domingo. However, this resulted in British, Dutch and French pirates establishing bases on the island's abandoned northern and western coasts. French settlement of the island began in 1625, and in 1664 France formally claimed control of the western portion of the island. By the 1697 Treaty of Ryswick, Spain ceded the western third of Hispaniola to France. France named its new colony Saint-Domingue.

While the Spanish side of the island was largely neglected, the French side prospered and became the richest colony in the Western Hemisphere, exporting large amounts of sugar and coffee. French colonial society contained three population groups: Europeans (about 32,000 in 1790) who held political and economic control; the *gens de couleur*, some 28,000 free mulattos and blacks who faced second-class status; and the slaves, who numbered about 500,000. (Living outside French society were the maroons (escaped ex-slaves who formed their own settlements in the highlands along with a very small number of Arawak survivors.)

## Revolution

- President	René Prével
- Prime Minister	Jacques-Edouard Alexis
<b>Formation</b>	
- as Saint-Domingue	1697
- Independence from France	January 1, 1804
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	27,750 km <sup>2</sup> ( 146th) 10,714 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.7
<b>Population</b>	
- 2005 estimate	8,827,000 ( 85th)
- 2003 census	8,527,817
- Density	335/km <sup>2</sup> ( 38th) 758.1/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$16.51 ( 124th)
- Per capita	\$1913 ( 153rd)
<b>Gini (2001)</b>	59.2 ( <b>high</b> )
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.529 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 146th)
<b>Currency</b>	Gourde ( HTG)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-5)
- Summer ( DST)	( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ht
<b>Calling code</b>	+509





Unofficially leading the nation politically during the revolution, Toussaint L'Ouverture is considered the father of Haiti.

Inspired by the French Revolution, the *gens de couleur* pressed the colonial government for expanded rights. In October 1790, 350 revolted against the government. On May 15, 1791, the French National Assembly granted political rights to all blacks and mulattoes who had been born free - but did not change the status quo regarding slavery. On August 22, 1791, slaves in the north rose against their masters near Cap-Français (now Cap-Haïtien). This revolution spread rapidly and came under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture. He is commonly referred to as the "Black Napoleon." He soon formed alliances with the *gens de couleur* and the maroons, whose rights had been revoked by the French government in retaliation for the uprising.

Toussaint's armies defeated the French colonial army, but then joined forces with it in 1794, following a decree by the revolutionary French government that abolished slavery. Under Toussaint's command, the Saint-Domingue army then defeated invading Spanish and British forces. This cooperation between Toussaint and French forces ended in 1802, however, when Napoleon sent a new invasion force designed to subdue the colony; many islanders suspected the army would also reimpose slavery. Napoleon's forces initially were successful at fighting their way onto the island, and persuaded Toussaint to a truce. He was then betrayed and captured and died in a French prison. Toussaint's arrest and the news that the French had reestablished slavery in Guadeloupe, led to the resumption of the rebellion, under the leadership of Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, two of Toussaint's generals. Napoleon's forces were outnumbered by the combination of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henri Christophe, and



Jean Jacques Dessalines became Haiti's first emperor in 1804.

Alexandre Petion, the "Generals of the Revolution."

## Independence

Dessalines's armies won their final and decisive victory over the French forces at the Battle of Vertières on 18 November 1803, near Cap-Haïtien. On 1 January 1804 the nation declared its independence, securing its position as the second independent country in the Americas, and the only successful slave rebellion in world history. Dessalines was its first ruler. The name *Haiti* was chosen in recognition of the old Arawak name for the island, Ayiti.

The new State of Haiti supported the abolitionist cause wherever possible. Haiti aided Francisco de Miranda and Simón Bolívar, giving them refuge and supporting their revolutionary efforts under the condition he free South America's slaves. The slaveholding powers surrounding Haiti isolated the new nation under a *cordon sanitaire*, fearing slave revolutions of their own. The Haitian Revolution is thought to have inspired numerous slave revolts in the Caribbean, Brazil and United States. The blockade was virtually total. The Vatican withdrew its priests from Haiti, and did not return them until 1860. France refused to recognize Haiti's independence until it agreed to pay an indemnity of 150 million *francs*, to compensate for the losses of French planters in the revolutions, in 1833. Payment of this indemnity brought the government deeply in debt and crippled the country's economy.

In 1806, Dessalines, by now Emperor, was murdered in a power struggle with political rivals who thought him a tyrant. The nation divided into two parts, a



southern republic founded by Alexandre Pétion (mulatto), becoming the first black-led republic in the world, and a northern kingdom under Henri Christophe. Christophe was responsible for the order and oversight of the construction of two New World marvels; his capital palace of Sans Souci and the massive Citadelle Laferrière, the largest fortress in the Western hemisphere.

In August 1820, King Henri I (Henri Christophe) suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed. When the news spread of his infirmities, the whispers of rebellion, deceit and treachery began. On October 2, 1820, the military garrison at St. Marc led a mutiny that sparked a revolt. The mutiny preempted a conspiracy of some of Christophe's most loyal generals. Some of his trusted aides took him from the palace of Sans-Souci up to his Citadel, to await the inevitable confrontation with the rebels. Christophe ordered his attendants to dress him in his formal military uniform and for two days desperately tried to raise the strength to lead out his troops. Finally, he ordered his doctor to leave the room. Shortly after he left, Christophe shot and killed himself.

Following Christophe's death, the nation was reunited as the Republic of Haiti under Jean-Pierre Boyer, Petion's successor. Boyer invaded the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo and proclaimed the entire island under Haitian rule, until 1844 when the Dominican Republic gained its independence separating the island into two countries. The Dominican Republic's independence constitutes the only independence campaign in the New World in one Latin American country from another. (Uruguay got its independence from Brazil in 1828 and Uruguay used to be called the Cisplatine Province when it was part of Brazil).

## US occupation

Throughout the nineteenth century, Haiti was ruled by a series of presidents, most of whom remained in office only briefly. Meanwhile, the country's economy was gradually dominated by foreigners, particularly from Germany. Concerned about German influence and growing military presence, and disturbed by the savage public dismembering of President Guillaume Sam by an enraged crowd, the United States invaded and occupied Haiti in 1915. The United States imposed a constitution written by future president Franklin D. Roosevelt, and applied an old system of compulsory *corvée* labor to everyone. Previously this system had been applied only to members of the poor, black majority.

Nationalist rebels, called Cacos, waged a persistent guerilla warfare, headed by Charlemagne Péralte (until 1919) and Dominique Batraville (until 1920). Roosevelt was disenchanted with the burden and negative social aspects of attempting to impose U.S. influence on the population and proceeded to implement an earlier disengagement agreement, thereby ending the U.S. occupation in 1934.

## The Duvaliers

The United States left Haiti in the hands of the mulatto minority, but in 1946 Dumarsais Estimé became the country's first black president since the beginning of the U.S. occupation. His efforts at reform sparked disorder, and when he attempted to extend his term of office in 1950 (as most previous presidents had done) there was a coup, followed by the second formal Military Council of Government led by Paul Magloire.

François Duvalier, also known as "Papa Doc", was an ex-doctor who ruled as dictator of Haiti from 1964 until his death in 1971. In 1957, Dr. François Duvalier came to power in the country's first universal suffrage election; many believed this outcome was manipulated by the army. In 1964, he declared himself president for life. Duvalier maintained control over the population through his secret police organization, the Volunteers for National Security - nicknamed the



Tonton Macoutes ("boogeymen") after a folkloric villain. This organization drew international criticism for its harsh treatment of political adversaries, both real and suspected. Upon Duvalier's death in 1971, he was succeeded by his nineteen year-old son Jean-Claude Duvalier (nicknamed "Baby Doc") as Haiti's new president for life. The younger Duvalier regime became notorious for corruption, and was deposed in 1986, ushering in a new period of upheaval.

## Aristide

The priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president on December 16, 1990. He took office on February 7, 1991, becoming Haiti's first democratically elected leader, but was deposed in a U.S. supported coup on September 30, 1991, less than eight months after his inauguration. There followed three years of control by a military junta led by Raoul Cedras, before a second U.S. invasion and occupation in 1994 returned Aristide to power on condition he accept a U.S. design economic program. One of the first acts of the re-installed government of Aristide was to disband the army.

Aristide was succeeded by a one-time ally and former prime minister, René Préval, in 1996. Préval's administration is notable for the fact that he was the first president in Haiti's history to constitutionally succeed a former president, serve a complete term, and leave his office voluntarily at the prescribed time. Every previous president had either died in office, been assassinated, been deposed, overstayed his prescribed term, or been installed by a foreign power.

Aristide returned to office in 2001 after elections that were boycotted by many of his opponents, who accused his party, Fanmi Lavalas, of counting votes improperly in a previous senatorial election, as well as threatening critics. Aristide denied the charges and accused his opponents of accepting U.S. assistance, and plotting to overthrow his government. The opposition mostly denied this, but many of its members continually called for his early resignation.

In February 2004, following months of large-scale protests against what critics charged was an increasingly corrupt and violent rule, violence spread through Haiti, involving conflicts between the government and various rebel groups. Under pressure from both foreign governments and internal sources, and with the rebel army approaching the capital, Aristide was forced to resign and fled the country, going into exile in the Central African Republic on February 29. Aristide later alleged that he faced pressure from the U.S. Armed Forces and American officials from the United States' embassy in Port-au-Prince. At the time, the United States and some of Aristide's own security agents claimed that Aristide had agreed to leave the country willingly and that it had escorted him to Africa for his own protection. As Aristide departed the country, many members of his government fled or went into hiding, and the United States again sent Marines into Port-au-Prince. After Aristide's departure, Supreme Court Chief Justice Boniface Alexandre succeeded to the presidency appointed by a council of elders and supported by the United States, Canada, and France.



In the months following the February Coup, the country was engulfed in violence between the interim government's forces and Lavalas supporters, and many members of the Lavalas party were sent to jail, exiled, or killed. Over 10,000 workers in Haitian civil enterprises lost their jobs following the coup.

Elections were held in February 2006, and René Préval was again elected president. Preval has promised to bring peace and stability to the country. (See Haitian elections, 2006.)



## Politics

The politics of Haiti takes place in the framework of a presidential republic, and of a pluriform multi-party system, whereby the President of Haiti is the head of state, while the Prime Minister is head of government. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of the National Assembly of Haïti.

## Departments, arrondissements, and communes

Haiti is divided into 10 departments. The departments are listed below, with the departmental capital cities in parentheses.

1. Artibonite ( Gonaïves)
2. Centre ( Hinche)
3. Grand'Anse ( Jérémie)
4. Nippes ( Miragoâne)
5. Nord ( Cap-Haïtien)
6. Nord-Est ( Fort-Liberté)
7. Nord-Ouest ( Port-de-Paix)
8. Ouest (Port-au-Prince) \*national capital\*
9. Sud-Est ( Jacmel)
10. Sud ( Les Cayes)

The departments are further divided into 41 arrondissements, and 133 communes which serve as second and third level administrative divisions.



## Geography



Haiti is situated on the western part of the second largest island in the Greater Antilles, Hispaniola. Haiti is the third largest country in the Caribbean only behind Cuba and the Dominican Republic respectively. Haiti at its closest point is only 80 kilometres (43 nmi) away from Cuba. Haiti's terrain consists mainly of rugged mountains with small coastal plains and river valleys. The country's largest crop-producing and one of Haiti's most fertile river valleys is the Plaine de l'Artibonite. The east and central part of the island is a large elevated plateau. The highest point in Haiti is Pic la Selle at 2,680 metres (8,793 feet). The 360 kilometre (224 mile) border is shared with the Dominican Republic. Haiti also contains several islands. The famous island of Tortuga (Île de la Tortue) is located off the coast of northern Haiti. The arrondissement of La Gonâve is located on the island of the same name, in the Gulf of Gonave. Gonave Island is moderately populated by rural villagers. Île à Vache (Island of The Cow) is located off the tip of southwestern Haiti. It is a rather lush island with many beautiful sights. Also part of Haiti are the Cayemites and Ile de Anacaona.

In 1925, Haiti was a lush tropical paradise, with 60% of its original forest covering the lands and mountainous regions. Since then, the population has cut down all but 2% of its forest cover, and in the process has destroyed fertile farmland soils, while contributing to desertification. Erosion has been severe in the mountainous areas.}. Most Haitian logging is done to produce charcoal, the country's chief source of fuel. The plight of Haiti's forests has attracted international attention, and has led to numerous reforestation efforts, but these have met with little success to date. Despite the large environmental crises, Haiti retains a very high amount of biodiversity in proportion to its small size. The country is home to more than 6,000 plants in which 35% are endemic and 220 species of birds in which 21 species are endemic. The country's high biodiversity is due to its mountainous topography and fluctuating elevations in which each elevation harbors different microclimates and its own endemic fauna and flora. The country's varied scenery include lush green cloud forests (in some of the mountain ranges and the protected areas), high mountain peaks, cactus-strewn desert landscapes (due to the deforestation), and palm tree-lined beaches.



Map of Haiti



Haiti flood

## Environmental issues

In addition to soil erosion, the deforestation has also caused periodic flooding, as seen on 17 September, 2004. Tropical storm Jeanne skimmed the north coast of Haiti, leaving 3,006 people dead in flooding and mudslides, mostly in the city of Gonaïves. Earlier that year in May, floods killed over 3,000 people on Haiti's southern border with the Dominican Republic.

Currently the country is seeking to implement a biofuel solution to its energy problems.

There has been a dispute between the United States and Haiti about Navassa Island (Navasse), which both countries claim. The Haitian claim relies on documentation that Navassa became part of Haiti after a 1697 agreement between France and Spain that gave France the western third of Hispaniola plus nearby islands, including Navassa Island. The United States claims the island pursuant to its own Guano Islands Act of 1856.

## Economy

Haiti remains the least-developed country in the Americas, largely due to political instability and repeated episodes of violence. Comparative social and economic indicators show Haiti falling behind other low-income developing countries (particularly in the hemisphere) since the 1980s. Haiti now ranks 146th of 177 countries in the United Nations Human Development Index (2006). About 80% of the population were estimated to be living in poverty in 2003. Haiti is the only country in the Americas on the United Nations list of Least Developed Countries. Economic growth was negative in 2001 and 2002, and flat in 2003.

About 66% of all Haitians work in the agricultural sector, which consists mainly of small-scale subsistence farming, but this activity makes up only 30% of the GDP. The country has experienced little formal job creation over the past decade, although the informal economy is growing. It has consistently ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world on the Corruption Perceptions Index.

Foreign aid makes up approximately 30%-40% of the national government's budget. The largest donor is the United States, and European nations also contribute. Venezuela and Cuba also make various contributions to Haiti's economy, especially after alliances were renewed in 2006-7.

U.S. aid to the Haitian government was completely cut off in 2001-2004 after the 2000 election was disputed and President Aristide was accused of various misdeeds. After Aristide's departure in 2004, aid was restored, and the Brazilian army led the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti peacekeeping operation.



Waste dumping in a slum of Cap-Haitien



## Education

Of Haiti's 8.8 million inhabitants, just under half are illiterate. The literacy rate is the lowest in the region with 52.9%. Haiti counts with 15,200 primary schools, of which 90% are non-public and managed by the communities, religious organizations or NGOs. The enrollment rate for primary school is 67%, of which less than 30% reach 6th grade, and for secondary school is 20%.

The educational system of Haiti is based of the French system. Higher education is provided by universities and other public and private institutions and is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

A list of universities in Haiti includes:

- Université Caraïbe (CUC)
- Université Chrétienne du Nord d'Haïti (UCNH)
- Université d'État d'Haïti (UEH)
- Université Lumière / MEBSH
- Université Notre Dame d'Haïti (UNDH)
- Université Quisqueya (UNIQ)
- Université Roi Henri Christophe
- Université Publique de l'Artibonite aux Gonaïves (UPAG)
- Université Publique du Nord au Cap-Haïtien (UPNCH)
- Université Publique du Sud au Cayes (UPSAC)

## Demographics

Although Haiti averages approximately 250 people per square kilometer (650 per sq. mi.), its population is concentrated most heavily in urban areas, coastal plains, and valleys. About 95% of Haitians are of predominantly African descent. The influential remainder of the population vary in ethnic groups from mulattoes, mestizoes, to Arabs (primarily Lebanese) and Europeans. White-descended Haitians are mainly of French, Polish, Spanish, Italian, and German heritage. There is also a small Asian (mostly Chinese) presence within the minority.

### Haitian diaspora

As with many other poor Caribbean nations, there is a large diaspora, which includes many, often illegal, immigrants in nearby countries. Millions of Haitians live abroad, chiefly in the Dominican Republic, Bahamas, Cuba, French Guiana, the Lesser Antilles, Canada, France, and the United States.

### In the United States

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There is a sizable community of Haitian émigrés residing in Miami's "Little Haiti" section. In New York City, the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Flatbush, Crown Heights, and Canarsie is also home to a thriving émigré community. In the neighboring Queens, communities can be found in the Jamaica, Queens Village, Hollis, Rosedale and Cambria Heights sections of that borough. Other cities where notable communities have formed include Boston, Cambridge, Malden and Brockton (all in Massachusetts), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Bridgeport, Connecticut, Chicago, Illinois, Tampa and Orlando (both Florida), East Orange , Irvington and Newark (all three in New Jersey), and New Rochelle and Spring Valley (both New York State).

## Languages

Haiti's official languages are French and Haitian Creole (Kreyòl Ayisyen). Nearly all Haitians speak the latter natively, a creole based primarily on French (90 percent of Haitian Creole vocabulary is French in origin), with significant African influence along with that of Spanish, Portuguese, and Taíno to a lesser extent. French is however the principal written and administrative language, used by many educated Haitians.

Spanish is spoken near the border with the Dominican Republic, and is increasingly being spoken in more westward areas, as Venezuelan, Cuban, and Dominican trade influence Haitian affairs, and Haiti becomes increasingly involved in Latin American transactions. English is also a very popular language, due to its position as an international language and Haiti's close ties with the United States.

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# Honduras

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries**

**Honduras** (pronounced /Ohn-due-raz/; in Spanish, *República de Honduras* Spanish pronunciation: [onˈduɾas]) is a democratic republic in Central America. It was formerly known as **Spanish Honduras** to differentiate it from *British Honduras* (now Belize). The country is bordered to the west by Guatemala, to the southwest by El Salvador, to the southeast by Nicaragua, to the south by the Pacific Ocean at the Gulf of Fonseca, and to the north by the Gulf of Honduras, a large inlet of the Caribbean Sea.

## Etymology

The Spanish used at least three different terms to refer to the area that became the Central American country of Honduras.

- Guaymuras - a name Columbus provided for a town near modern Trujillo. Bartolomé de las Casas subsequently generalized it to apply to the whole colony.
- Higueras - a reference to the gourds that come from the Jicaro tree, many of which were found floating in the waters off the northwest coast of Honduras.
- Honduras - literally "depths" in Spanish. Columbus is traditionally quoted as having written *Gracias a Dios que hemos salido de esas Honduras* (English: "Thank God we have come out of those depths") while along the northeastern coast of Honduras.

<i>República de Honduras</i> <b>Republic of Honduras</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Libre, Soberana e Independiente.</i> " (Spanish) "Free, Sovereign and Independent"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Himno Nacional de Honduras</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Tegucigalpa
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Demonym</b>	Honduran



Rainforest outside Tegucigalpa



Lake Yojoa



Virgin of Suyapa, Patron of Honduras and Central America

## History

Archaeologists have demonstrated that Honduras had a rich, multi-ethnic prehistory. An important part of that prehistory was the Mayan presence around the city of Copán in western Honduras, near the Guatemalan border. A major Mayan city flourished during the classic period (150-900) in that area. It has many carved inscriptions and stelae. The ancient kingdom, named *Xukpi*, existed from the fifth century to the early ninth century, with antecedents going back to at least the second century. The Mayan civilization began a marked decline in the ninth century, but there is evidence of people still living in and around the city until at least 1200. By the time the Spanish came to Honduras, the once great city-state of Copán was overrun by the jungle, and the Lencas, not the Mayans, were the main Amerindian people living in western Honduras.

<b>Government</b>	democratic constitutional republic
- President	Manuel Zelaya
<b>Independence</b>	
- from Spain	15 September 1821
- from Mexico	1823
- from the PUCA	1838
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	112,492 km <sup>2</sup> ( 102nd) 43,278 sq mi
<b>Population</b>	
- September 2007 estimate	7,483,763 <sup>2</sup> ( 96th)
- 2000 census	6,975,204
- Density	64/km <sup>2</sup> ( 128th) 166/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$25.63 billion ( 106th)
- Per capita	\$3,300 ( 124th)
<b>Gini (2003)</b>	53.8 ( <b>high</b> )
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.700 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 115th)
<b>Currency</b>	Lempira ( <b>HNL</b> )
<b>Time zone</b>	CST ( UTC-6)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.hn
<b>Calling code</b>	+504
<sup>1</sup>	"libre, soberana, e independiente" is the official motto, the congress order to put it on the coat of arms. The unofficial motto



Fort of San Fernando Omoa.  
Built by the Spaniards to defend  
against pirates

On his fourth and final voyage to the New World in 1502, Christopher Columbus reached the Bay Islands on the coast of Honduras. Landing near the modern town of Trujillo, in the vicinity of the Guaimoreto Lagoon. After the Spanish discovery, Honduras became part of Spain's vast empire in the New World within the Kingdom of Guatemala. Trujillo and Gracias were the first city-capitals. The Spanish ruled what would become Honduras for approximately three centuries. During this period a clock which had been built by the Moors in the twelfth Century was transferred to the Cathedral of Comayagua in 1636: it is now the oldest functioning clock in the Americas.

"NO PASARÁN" or "They shall not pass" became popular during the 1969 war with El Salvador. This is an allusion to the El Salvador's stated goal to reach the Honduran Caribbean coast during their offensive.

- 2 note: estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, lower population and growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected (July 2007 est.)

Spain granted independence to Honduras, with the rest of the Central American provinces on September 15, 1821. In 1822 the United Central American Provinces decided to join the newly declared Mexican Empire of Iturbide. The Iturbide Empire was overthrown in 1823 and Central America separated from it, forming the Federal Republic of Central America, which disintegrated in 1838. As a result the states of the republic became independent nations.

Silver mining was a key factor in the Spanish conquest and settlement of Honduras, but has been only a minor part of the national economy in recent years. The American-owned Barger Mining Company was a major gold and silver producer, but shut down its large mine at San Juancito in 1954.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbour, Honduras joined the Allied Nations on December 8, 1941. Less than a month later, on the first day of 1942, Honduras, along with twenty-five other governments, signed the Declaration by United Nations.

In 1969, Honduras and El Salvador fought what would become known as The Soccer War. There had been border tensions between the two countries after Oswaldo López Arellano, a former president of Honduras, blamed the deteriorating economy on the large number of immigrants from El Salvador. From that point on, the relationship between the two countries grew acrimonious and reached a low when El Salvador met Honduras for a three-round football elimination match as a preliminary to the World Cup. Tensions escalated, and on July 14, 1969, the Salvadoran army launched an attack against Honduras. The Organization of American States negotiated a cease-fire which took effect on July 20, and brought about a withdrawal of Salvadoran troops in early August.

Contributing factors in the conflict were a boundary dispute and the presence of thousands of Salvadorans living in Honduras illegally. After the week-long football war in July 1969, many Salvadoran families and workers were expelled. El Salvador had agreed on a truce to settle the boundary issue, but Honduras later paid war damage costs for expelled refugees.

During the 1980s, the United States established a very large military presence in Honduras with the purpose of supporting the Iran-Contra Affair, anti-Sandinista Contras fighting the Nicaraguan government, and to support the El Salvador military fighting against the FMLN guerrillas. The U.S. built the airbase known as Palmerola, near Comayagua, with a 10,000-foot (3,000 m) runway so that C5-A cargo planes could land there, rather than at the public airport in San Pedro Sula. The U.S. also built a training base near Trujillo which primarily trained Contras and the Salvadoran military, and in conjunction with this, developed Puerto Castilla into a modern port. The United States built many airstrips near the Nicaraguan border to help move supplies to the Contra forces fighting the Sandinistas



in Nicaragua. Though spared the bloody civil wars wracking its neighbors, the Honduran army quietly waged a campaign against leftists which included extra judicial killings and forced disappearances of political opponents by government-backed death squads, most notably Battalion 316.

Hurricane Fifi caused severe damage while skimming the northern coast of Honduras on September 18 and 19, 1974.

In 1998, Hurricane Mitch caused such massive and widespread loss that former Honduran President Carlos Roberto Flores claimed that fifty years of progress in the country were reversed. Mitch obliterated about 70% of the crops and an estimated 70-80% of the transportation infrastructure, including nearly all bridges and secondary roads. Across the country, 33,000 houses were destroyed, an additional 50,000 damaged, some 5,000 people killed, 12,000 injured, and total loss estimated at \$3 billion USD.

## Politics

Honduras has five registered political parties: PNH, PLH, Social Democrats (Partido Innovación Nacional y Social Demócrata: PINU-SD), Social Christians (Partido Demócrata-Cristiano: DC), and Democrat Unification (Partido Unificación Democrática: UD). The PNH and PLH have ruled the country for decades. In the last years, Honduras has had five Liberal presidents: Roberto Suazo Córdova, José Azcona del Hoyo, Carlos Roberto Reina, Carlos Roberto Flores and Manuel Zelaya, and two Nationalists: Rafael Leonardo Callejas Romero and Ricardo Maduro. The elections have been full of controversies, including questions about whether Azcona was born in Honduras or Spain, and whether Maduro should have been able to stand given he was born in Panama.

In 1963, a military coup was mounted against the democratically-elected president Villeda Morales and a military junta established which held power until 1981. In this year Suazo Córdova (LPH) was elected president and Honduras changed from a military authoritarian regime.

In 1986, there were five Liberal candidates and four Nationalists running for president. Because no one candidate obtained a clear majority, the so-called "Formula B" was invoked and Azcona del Hoyo became president. In 1990, Callejas won the election under the slogan "Llegó el momento del Cambio," (English "The time for change has arrived"), which was heavily criticized for resembling El Salvador's "ARENAs" political campaign. Once in office, Callejas Romero gained a reputation for illicit enrichment, and has been the subject of several scandals and accusations. It was during Flores Facusse's mandate that Hurricane Mitch hit the country and decades of economic growth were eradicated in less than a week.

Although the Nationalist and Liberal parties are distinct entities with their own dedicated band of supporters, some have pointed out that their interests and policy measures throughout the twenty-five years of uninterrupted democracy have been very similar. They are often characterized as primarily serving the interests of their own members, who receive jobs when their party gains power and lose them again when the other party is elected. A common struggle for presidents is the imposition of candidates in key ministries by the unelected political leaders of their party. Both are seen as supportive of the elite that owns most of the wealth in the country, while neither extensively promotes socialist ideals. In many ways Honduras resembles a democratic version of an old socialist state, with price controls and nationalized electric and land-line telephone services.

The effect of the patronage appointments is tremendously felt in the incapacity of government departments to carry out their mandate. In an interview with Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle, Minister of Sports & Culture and one of three 'super ministers' responsible for coordinating the ministries related to public services



(security & economic being the other 2), published in Honduras This Week on July 31, 2006, it was related that 94% of the department budget was spent on bureaucracy and only 6% went to support activities and organizations covered by the mandate. Wages within that ministry were identified as the largest budget consumer.

President Maduro's administration "de-nationalized" the telecommunications sector in a move to promote the rapid diffusion of these services to the Honduran population. As of November 2005, there were around 10 private-sector telecommunications companies in the Honduran market, including two mobile phone companies. As of mid 2007 the issue of tele-communications continues to be very damaging to the current government. The country's main newspapers are La Prensa, El Heraldo, La Tribuna y El Tiempo.

A Presidential and General Election was held on November 27, 2005. Manuel Zelaya of the Liberal Party of Honduras (Partido Liberal de Honduras: PLH) won, with Porfirio Pepe Lobo of the National Party of Honduras (Partido Nacional de Honduras: PNH) coming in second. The PNH challenged the election results, and Lobo Sosa did not concede until December 7. Towards the end of December, the government finally released the total ballot count, giving Zelaya the official victory. Zelaya was inaugurated as Honduras' new president on January 27, 2006. His government has generally been considered fragile and he does not hold a majority in the National Congress.

## Departments and municipalities

Honduras is divided into 18 departments. The capital city is Tegucigalpa Central District of the department of Francisco Morazán.

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Atlántida         | 1. Intibucá          |
| 2. Choluteca         | 2. Islas de la Bahía |
| 3. Colón             | 3. La Paz            |
| 4. Comayagua         | 4. Lempira           |
| 5. Copán             | 5. Ocotepeque        |
| 6. Cortés            | 6. Olancho           |
| 7. El Paraíso        | 7. Santa Bárbara     |
| 8. Francisco Morazán | 8. Valle             |
| 9. Gracias a Dios    | 9. Yoro              |



## National symbols



The flag of Honduras is composed of 3 equal horizontal stripes, with the upper and lower ones being blue and representing the Pacific ocean and Caribbean sea. The central stripe is white. It contains five blue stars representing the five states of the Central American Union. The middle star represents Honduras, located in the centre of the Central American Union. The legislation designating this design for the flag of Honduras passed into law on January 18, 1949.

The Coat of arms was established in 1825. It is one an equilateral triangle, at the base a volcano finds its base between two castles, over which we find a rainbow and the sun shining. The triangle placed on an area that supposes bathed by both seas. Around all of this an oval that it contains in golden lettering: "Republic of Honduras, Free, Sovereign and Independent".

The National Anthem of Honduras is a result of a contest carried out in 1904 during the presidency of Manuel Bonilla. In the end, it was the poet Augusto C. Coello that ended up writing the anthem, with the participation of the German composer Carlos Hartling writing the music. The anthem was officially adopted on November 15, 1915, during the presidency of Alberto Membreño. The anthem is composed of a choir and seven strophes, which report historical events of the country.

The National Flower of the Honduran is the famous orchid, *Rhyncholaelia digbyana* (formerly known as *Brassavola digbyana*), which replaced the rose in 1969. The change of the National Flower was carried out during the administration of general Oswaldo López Arellano, thinking that *Brassavola Digbiana* "is an indigenous plant of Honduras; having this flower exceptional characteristics of beauty, vigor and distinction", as the decree dictates it.

The National Tree of Honduras is the Pine of scientific name: *Pinus hondurensis*, which was approved on February 4, 1927 during the presidency of Miguel Paz Barahona. Also the use of the tree was regulated, "to avoid the unnecessary destructions caused by choppings or fires of forest."

The National Mammal is the White Tailed Deer, which was adopted on June 28, 1993 by the government of Honduras, as measurement to avoid excessive depredation. The scientific name of the animal is: *Odocoileus virginianus*, one of two species of deer that live in Honduras. Its feeding is based on grasses, sheets, etc. The three biggest natural enemies of the White Tail are the puma, the jaguar and man.

The National Bird of Honduras is the Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*), under a decree established in 1993. This bird, was much valued by the pre-Columbian civilizations of Honduras. The Guacamaya, as it is called by Hondurans and others, belongs to the family of the *Psittacidae* and his feeding consists in: nectar, roots, fruits etc. The bird lives from Bolivia up to Mexico where the bird makes use of various zones as its natural habitat. In Honduras the scarlet macaw, can be found particularly in the Mosquito Coast.



Orchid Brassavola Digbiana



Ara Macao

## Geography



Honduras borders the Caribbean Sea on the north coast and the Pacific Ocean on the south through the Gulf of Fonseca. The climate varies from tropical in the lowlands to temperate in the mountains. The central and southern regions are relatively hotter and less humid than the northern coast.

The Honduran territory consists mainly of mountains (~81%), but there are narrow plains along the coasts, a large undeveloped lowland jungle La Mosquitia region in the northeast, and the heavily populated lowland San Pedro Sula valley in the northwest.

In La Mosquitia, lies the UNESCO-world heritage site Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve, with the Coco River which divides the country from Nicaragua.

Natural resources include timber, gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, iron ore, antimony, coal, fish, shrimp, and hydropower.

The Islas de la Bahía and the Swan Islands (all off the north coast) are part of Honduras. Misteriosa Bank and Rosario Bank, 130 to 150 km (80-93 miles) north of the Swan Islands, fall within the EEZ of Honduras.

## Economy



**Honduras** is surrounded by the Caribbean Sea (top), Nicaragua, a gulf on the Pacific Ocean, El Salvador (lower left) & Guatemala (left)



Pico Bonito National park



Honduras is one of the 10 poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere with GDP per capita at US\$3,300 per year (2007). The economy has continued to grow slowly but the distribution of wealth remains very polarized with average wages remaining low. Economic growth in the last few years has averaged 7% a year which has been one of the most successful growths in Latin America, but 50%, approximately 3.7 million, of the population still remain below the poverty line. It is estimated that there are more than 1.2 million people who are unemployed, the rate of unemployment standing at 27.9%.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund is near to get out of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries eligible for debt relief, which was given in 2005.

Both the electricity services (ENEE) and land-line telephone services (HONDUTEL) have been operated by government agencies, with ENEE receiving heavy subsidies because of chronic financial problems. HONDUTEL, however, is no longer a monopoly, the telecommunication sector having been opened to private-sector companies after December 25, 2005; this was one of the requirements before approving the beginning of CAFTA. There are price controls on petrol, and other temporary price controls for basic commodities are often passed for short periods by the Congress.

After years of declining against the U.S. dollar the Lempira has stabilized at around 19 Lempiras per dollar. In June 2008 the exchange rate between United States Dollars and Honduran Lempiras was approximately 1 to 18.85.

In 2005 Honduras signed the CAFTA (Free Trade Agreement with USA). In December 2005, Honduras' main seaport Puerto Cortes was included in the U.S. Container Security Initiative.

On December 7, 2006, the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security ( DHS) and Energy ( DOE) announced the first phase of the Secure Freight Initiative, an unprecedented effort to build upon existing port security measures by enhancing the U.S. federal government's ability to scan containers for nuclear and radiological materials overseas and to better assess the risk of inbound containers. The initial phase of Secure Freight involves the deployment of a combination of existing technology and proven nuclear detection devices to six foreign ports: Port Qasim in Pakistan; **Puerto Cortes** in **Honduras**; Southampton in the United Kingdom; Port Salalah in Oman; Port of Singapore; and the Gamman Terminal at Port Busan in Korea. Since early 2007, containers from these ports are scanned for radiation and information risk factors before they are allowed to depart for the United States.

## Environment

The region is considered a biodiversity hotspot due to the numerous plant and animal species that can be found there. Like other countries in the region, Honduras contains vast biological resources. This 43,278 square mile (112,092 km<sup>2</sup>) country hosts more than 6,000 species of vascular plants, of which 630 (described so far) are Orchids; around 250 reptiles and amphibians, more than 700 bird species, and 110 mammal species, half of them being bats.

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In Honduras electricity comes in to households through overhead cables. Other cables carry telephone, cable television and broadband internet.



The famous hotel Gran Sula in the centre of San Pedro Sula



Fruit Market on the Road





In the northeastern region of La Mosquitia lies the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve, a lowland rainforest which is home to a great diversity of life. The reserve was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites List in 1982.

Honduras has rain forests, cloud forests (which can rise up to nearly three thousand meters above sea level), mangroves, savannas and mountain ranges with pine and oak trees, and the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System. In the Bay Islands there are bottlenose dolphins, manta rays, parrot fish, schools of blue tang and whale shark.

## Infrastructure

### Energy

The electricity sector in Honduras is characterized by the dominance of a vertically integrated utility (except for about half of the generation capacity) called ENEE ( *Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica* ); a failed attempt in 1994 to unbundle the sector into separate enterprises in charge of electricity generation and distribution; the increasing share of thermal generation over the past two decades; the poor financial health of the state utility ENEE; the imbalance between relatively high industrial and relatively low residential electricity tariffs; the high technical and commercial losses in transmission and distribution; and the low electric coverage in rural areas.

Key challenges in the sector are:

- How to finance investments in generation and transmission in the absence of either a financially healthy utility or of concessionary funds by external donors for these types of investments;
- How to re-balance tariffs, cut arrears and reduce commercial losses - including electricity theft - without fostering social unrest; and
- How to reconcile environmental concerns with the government's objective to build two new large dams and associated hydropower plants.
- How to improve access in rural areas.

### Water supply and sanitation

Water supply and sanitation in Honduras varies greatly from urban centers to rural villages. Larger population centers generally have modernized water treatment and distribution systems, however water quality is often poor due to lack of proper maintenance and treatment. Rural areas generally have basic drinking water systems with limited capacity for water treatment. Many urban areas have sewer systems in place for the collection of wastewater, however proper treatment of wastewater is scarce. In rural areas, sanitary facilities are generally limited to latrines and basic septic pits.

Water and sanitation services were historically provided by Servicio Autonomo de Alcantarillas y Aqueductos (SANAA). In 2003, a new "water law" was passed which called for the decentralization of water services. With the 2003 law, local communities have the right and responsibility to own, operate, and control their own drinking water and wastewater systems. Since passage of the new law, many communities have joined together to address water and sanitation issues on a regional basis.



Many national and international non-government organizations have a history of working on water and sanitation projects in Honduras. International groups include, but are not limited to, the Red Cross, Rotary Club, Catholic Relief Services, Water for People, CARE, CESO-SACO and SHH.

In addition, many government organizations working on projects include: the European Union, USAID, the Army Corps of Engineers, Cooperacion Andalucia, the government of Japan, and many others.

## Transport

Transportation in Honduras consists of the following infrastructure: 699 km of railways; 13,603 km of roadways; 7 ports and harbors; and 112 airports altogether (12 Paved, 100 unpaved). Responsibility for policy in the transport sector rests with the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Housing (SOPRTRAVI after its Spanish acronym).

## Demographics

According to the CIA World Factbook, Honduras has a population of 7.48 million; 90% of the population is Mestizo, 7% Amerindian, 2% black and 1% white.

90% of the Honduran population is Mestizo (a mixture of Amerindian and European ancestry). About 7% of the Honduran population are members of one of the seven recognized indigenous groups. The Confederation of Autochthonous Peoples of Honduras (CONPAH) and the government of Honduras count seven different indigenous groups:

- the Ch'orti', a Mayan group living in the northwest on the border with Guatemala;
- the Garifuna speaking an Arawakan language. They live along the entire Caribbean coastline of Honduras, and in the Bay Islands;
- the Pech or Paya Indians living in a small area in the Olancho department;
- the Tolupan (also called Jicaque, "Xicaque", or Tol), living in the Department of Yoro and in the reserve of the Montaña de la Flor and parts of the department of Yoro;
- the Lenca Indians living in the Valle and Choluteca departments;
- the Miskito Indians living on the northeast coast along the border with Nicaragua.

The confederation and each separate group of indigenous people have worked, since the 1980s, for bettering the life of the aboriginal peoples. Change, however, has been elusive as these peoples still face violence and discrimination.

About 2% of Honduras's population is black, or Afro-Honduran, and mainly reside on the country's Caribbean or Atlantic coast. The black population comes from a number of sources. Most are the descendants of the West Indian islands brought to Honduras as slaves and indentured servants. Another large group



A type of Honduran Police Cars



Village in Copán



(about 150,000 today) are the Garifuna, descendants of an Afro-Carib population which revolted against British authorities on the island of St. Vincent and were forcibly moved to Belize and Honduras during the eighteenth century. Garífunas are part of Honduran identity through theatrical presentations such as Louvavagu.

Honduras hosts a significant Palestinian community (the vast majority of whom are Christian Arabs). The Palestinians arrived in the country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, establishing themselves especially in the city of San Pedro Sula. The Palestinian community, well integrated in Honduras, is prominent in business, commerce, banking, industry, and politics. There is also an East Asian community that is primarily Chinese descent, and to a lesser extent Japanese. Korean, Ryukyuan, Vietnamese also make up a small percentage due to their arrival to Honduras as contract laborers in the 1980s and 1990s. There are also an estimated 1000 Sumos (or Mayangnas) that live in Honduras, the majority of whom reside on the Caribbean coast.

Although Honduras is nominally Roman Catholic, membership in the Roman Catholic Church is declining while membership in Protestant churches is increasing. There are thriving Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Lutheran, Pentacostal and Mormon churches, and they are all growing rapidly. There are Protestant seminaries. Practitioners of the Buddhist, Jewish, Islamic, Bahá'í, Rastafari and indigenous denominations and religions exist. Evangelicalism in particular is increasing in popularity.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) claims over 120,000 members in Honduras as of the beginning of 2007 (lds.org newsroom site).

Since 1975, emigration from Honduras has accelerated as job-seekers and political refugees sought a better life elsewhere. Although many Hondurans have relatives in Nicaragua, Spain, Mexico, El Salvador and Canada, the majority of Hondurans living abroad are in the United States.

## Culture



The most renowned Honduran painter is Jose Antonio Velásquez. Other important painters include Carlos Garay, and Roque Zelaya. Two of Honduras' most notable writers are Froylan Turcios and Ramón Amaya Amador. Others include Marco Antonio Rosa, Roberto Sosa, Lucila Gamero de Medina, Eduardo Bähr, Amanda Castro, Javier Abril Espinoza, and Roberto Quesada. Some of Honduras' notable musicians include Rafael Coello Ramos, Lidia Handal, Victoriano Lopez, Guillermo Anderson, Victor Donaire, Francisco Carranza and Camilo Rivera Guevara.

Hondurans are often referred to as *Catracho* or *Catracha* (fem) in Spanish. The word was coined by Nicaraguans and derives from the last name of the French Honduran General Florencio Xatruch, who, in 1857, led Honduran armed forces against an attempted invasion by North American adventurer William Walker. The nickname is considered complimentary, not derogatory.

*Honduras This Week* is a weekly English language newspaper that has been published for seventeen years in Tegucigalpa. On the islands of Roatan, Utila and Guanaja the *Bay Islands Voice* has been a source of monthly news since 2003.

Honduran cuisine makes extensive use of coconut, in both sweet and savory foods, and even in soups.

In San Pedro Sula we can find the José Francisco Saybe theatre, home of Círculo Teatral Sampedrano (Theatrical Circle of San Pedro Sula).



The Cathedral of Comayagua



Colonial architecture

## Notable Hondurans

- David Suazo, a highly popular soccer player, who plays on the Honduras National team and is currently playing for Inter Milan.
- Óscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga, a Cardinal and potential candidate for Pope in the Papal Conclave, 2005
- Salvador Moncada works at University College London and funds an NGO in Tegucigalpa. He is married to Princess Maria-Esmeralda of Belgium
- José Antonio Velásquez is a Honduran primitivist painter, considered by many critics as the best primitivist painter in the world.
- Carlos Campos is a fashion designer, born in San Pedro Sula, notably working for big-time celebrities, who also owns two stores: one in New York and the other in San Pedro Sula
- Renán Almendárez Coello, the radio host of *El Cucuy de la Mañana* ("The Boogeyman of the Morning") on KLAX-FM in Los Angeles
- Carlos Mencia from Comedy Central's *Mind of Mencia*
- Leticia de Oyuela was a Honduran historian
- Neida Sandoval presenter of Univision morning show *Despierta America* in Miami
- Karla Vega Miami based Singer/Songwriter who has appeared, recorded or written with artists such as Arturo Sandoval, Andy Garcia, Paquito D'Rivera, Cachao, Generoso Jimenez, Ed Calle, Paquito Echeverria, Richie Bravo, Jon Secada, Sacha Nairobi and countless others. She has performed for four years alongside Latin Grammy Nominee Ed Calle.
- Satcha Pretto co-host of Univision show *Primer Impacto Fin de Semana* in Miami
- Dunia Elvir presenter Telemundo in Los Angeles



- David Archuleta, a contestant on American Idol Season 7, his mother is from Honduras
- America Ferrera , Hollywood actress, Won Golden Globe & Emmy Awards for "Ugly Betty" or Betty la Fea, her parents are from Honduras.
- Rickerby Hinds , an assistant professor at the University of California, Riverside who is a well known play write who graduated from UCLA. He emigrated from Honduras at the age of nine with his family.

## Celebrations

Some of Honduras's national holidays include Honduras Independence Day on September 15 and Children's Day or Dia del Niño, which is celebrated in homes, schools and churches on September 10; on this day children receive presents and have parties similar to Christmas or Birthday celebrations. Some neighborhoods have piñatas on the street. Other holidays are Easter, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Day of the Soldier (October 3rd to celebrate the birth of Francisco Morazán), Christmas, El Dia de Lempira on July 20, and New Year's Eve. Honduras Independence Day festivities start early in the morning with marching bands. Each band wears different colors and features cheerleaders. Fiesta Catracha takes place this same day: typical Honduran foods such as beans, tamales, baleadas, yucca with chicharron, and tortillas are offered. On Christmas Eve, the people reunite with their families and close friends to have dinner, then give out presents at midnight. In some cities fireworks are seen and heard at midnight. On New Year's Eve there is food and "cohetes" or fireworks. Birthdays are also great events, and include the famous "piñata" which is filled with candies and surprises for the children invited. La Feria Isidra is celebrated in La Ceiba in the end of May A city located in the coast. It is usually called "The Friendship Carnaval". People from all over the world come for one week of festivities. Every night there is a little carnival (carnavalito) in a neighbourhood. Finally, on Saturday there is a big parade with floats and displays with people from Brazil, New Orleans, Japan, Jamaica, Barbados and many other countries. This celebration is also accompanied by the Milk Fair, where many Hondurans come to show of their farm products and animals.



Sawdust Carpets of Comayagua  
During the Easter Celebrations



## Folklore

Legends and stories are paramount within the Honduran culture, Lluvia de Peces (Fish Rain) is an example of this. The legend of El Cadejo and La Ciguanaba (La Sucia) are also popular.

During the 1960s-70s and through mid 80s Honduras Radio Noticias (HRN), a local Honduran radio, was the only one which transmitted these folklore stories. The program was called "Cuentos y Leyendas de Honduras". This show was responsible for the diffusion of the folk stories in the country.

## Sports

Football (soccer), is the most popular sport in Honduras. Information on teams, competitions and players is available in the following articles:

- Honduras' Football Federation
- Honduras national football team
- Category:Honduran football clubs
- Category:Honduran football competitions
- Category:Honduran footballers
- Category:Football venues in Honduras

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honduras>"

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Tela is a popular beach destination for Hondurans on holidays



# Jamaica

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

SOS Children works in Jamaica. For more information see SOS Children in Jamaica




**Jamaica** (pronounced /ˈdʒəˈmeɪkə/) is an island nation of the Greater Antilles, 234 kilometres (146 mi) in length and as much as 80 kilometres (50 mi) in width situated in the Caribbean Sea. It is about 145 kilometres (90 mi) south of Cuba, and 190 kilometres (120 mi) west of the island of Hispaniola, on which Haiti and the Dominican Republic are situated. Its indigenous Arawakan-speaking Taíno inhabitants named the island *Xaymaca*, meaning the "Land of Wood and Water", or the "Land of Springs". Formerly a Spanish possession known as *Santiago*, it later became the British West Indies Crown colony of Jamaica. It is the third most populous anglophone country in the Americas, after the United States and Canada.

## History

The original Arawak and possibly Taino people from South America first settled on the island between 4000 and 1000 BC. Although some claim they became virtually extinct following contact with Europeans, others claim that some survived for a while. There is little trace remaining of the Arawak culture. The Jamaican National Heritage Trust is attempting to locate and document any evidence of the Arawaks.

Christopher Columbus claimed Jamaica for Spain after first landing there in 1494. Columbus' probable landing point was Dry Harbour, now called Discovery Bay. St. Ann's Bay was the "Saint Gloria" of Columbus who first sighted Jamaica at this point. One mile west of St. Ann's Bay is the site of the first settlement on the island - Sevilla. Sevilla was abandoned in 1554 because of numerous pirate raids.

The capital was moved to Spanish Town, now located in the parish of St. Catherine, as early as 1534. It was then called St. Jago de la Vega or Santiago de la Vega. Spanish Town has the oldest Cathedral in the British colonies. The Spanish were forcibly evicted by the English at Ocho Rios in St. Ann. However, it was not until 1655 that at Tower Isle [the site for the last Spanish fort in Jamaica] that the English took over Jamaica. The Spaniard Don Arnaldo de Yassi kept Tower Hill [the site for Tower Isle] from the

<b>Jamaica</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> "Out of many, one people"	
<b>Anthem:</b> " Jamaica, Land We Love" <b>Royal anthem:</b> " God Save the Queen"	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Kingston
<b>Official languages</b>	English
Recognised regional languages	Jamaican Patois
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	90.0% Black,



English for five years, before escaping to Cuba. The site of his departure was fittingly "Runaway Bay" [also in St. Ann]. The name of Montego Bay, the capital of the parish of St. James, was derived from the Spanish name *manteca bahía* (or Bay of Lard) for the large quantity of boar used for the lard-making industry.

The English Admiral William Penn (father of William Penn of Pennsylvania) and General Robert Venables seized the island in 1655. During its first 200 years of English/British rule, Jamaica became one of the world's leading sugar-exporting nations. It produced more than 77,000 tons of sugar annually between 1820 and 1824, achieved through the extensive use of imported enslaved African labourers. After the abolition of the slave trade, the British imported Indian and Chinese workers as indentured servants in the early 1800s to supplement the labour pool. Descendants of such Asian indentured servants continue to reside in Jamaica today.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the United Kingdom's heavy reliance on slavery resulted in blacks (Africans) outnumbering whites (Europeans) by a ratio of almost 20 to 1. Europeans feared possible revolts. Following a series of rebellions and changing attitudes in Great Britain, the nation formally abolished slavery in 1834, with full emancipation from chattel slavery declared in 1838.

During the 1800s, the British established a number of botanical gardens. These included the Castleton Garden in 1862, set up to replace the Bath Garden which was subject to flooding. Created in the 1770s, Bath Garden was the site for planting breadfruit brought to Jamaica from the Pacific by Captain William Bligh. Other gardens were the the Cinchona Plantation in 1868 and the Hope Garden founded in 1874.

In 1872 Kingston became the capital of the island.

In 1945, Sir Horace Hector Hearne became Chief Justice and Keeper of the Records in Jamaica. He headed the Supreme Court, Kingston between 1945 and 1950/1951. He then moved to Kenya where he was appointed Chief Justice.

Jamaica slowly gained increasing independence from the United Kingdom. In 1958, it became a province in the Federation of the West Indies, a federation among the British West Indies. Jamaica attained full independence by leaving the federation in 1962.

	1.5% East Indian, 0.4% White, 7.3% Multiracial
<b>Demonym</b>	Jamaican
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
- Monarch	Elizabeth II
- Governor-General	Kenneth Hall
- Prime Minister	Bruce Golding
<b>Independence</b>	
- from the United Kingdom	6 August 1962
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	10,991 km <sup>2</sup> ( 166th) 4,244 ) sq mi
- Water (%)	1.5
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2005 estimate	2,651,000 ( 138th)
- Density	252/km <sup>2</sup> ( 49th) 653/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$11.69 billion ( 131st)
- Per capita	\$4,300 ( 114th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$9.730 billion ( 101st)
- Per capita	\$3,658 ( 79th)
<b>Gini (2000)</b>	37.9 (medium)
<b>HDI (2005)</b>	▲ 0.736 (medium) ( 101st)
<b>Currency</b>	Jamaican dollar ( JMD)





Strong economic growth averaging about six percent per annum marked its first ten years of independence under conservative governments led successively by Prime Ministers Alexander Bustamante, Donald Sangster and Hugh Shearer. The growth was fueled by strong investments in bauxite/alumina, tourism, manufacturing industry and to a lesser extent the agricultural sector. However, the initial optimism of the first decade was accompanied by a growing sense of inequality and a sense that the benefits of growth were not being experienced by the urban poor. This, combined with the effects of a slow-down in the global economy in 1970, prompted the electorate to change the government, electing the PNP (People's National Party) in 1972. However, despite efforts to create more socially equitable policies in education and health, Jamaica continued to lag economically, with its gross national product having fallen in 1980 to some twenty-five percent below the 1972 level. Rising foreign and local debt accompanied by large fiscal deficits resulted in the invitation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) financing from the USA and others, and the imposition of IMF austerity measures (with a greater than 25% interest rate per year).

<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-5)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.jm
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 876



Map of Jamaica

Economic deterioration continued into the mid 1980s, exacerbated by the closure of Alpart and Alcoa, the first and third largest alumina producers, respectively. There was significant reduction in production by Alcan, the second largest. In addition, Reynolds Jamaica Mines, Ltd. left the Jamaican industry, and tourism decreased. During the 1980s, Jamaica was still a prosperous country though increases in crime and petty theft began to weigh on the island.

## Government and politics

Jamaica is a constitutional monarchy with the monarch being represented by a Governor-General. The head of state is Queen Elizabeth II, who officially uses the title "Queen of Jamaica" when she visits the country or performs duties overseas on Jamaica's behalf. See Jamaican Royal Family. The Governor-General is nominated by the Prime Minister and the entire Cabinet and appointed by the monarch. All the members of the Cabinet are appointed by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister. The monarch and the Governor-General serve largely ceremonial roles, apart from their potent reserve power to dismiss the Prime Minister or Parliament.

Jamaica's current Constitution was drafted in 1962 by a bipartisan joint committee of the Jamaican legislature. It came into force with the Jamaica Independence Act, 1962 of the United Kingdom Parliament, which gave Jamaica political independence. This was followed by a reformation of the island's flag.



The Parliament of Jamaica is bicameral, consisting of the House of Representatives (Lower House) and the Senate (Upper House). Members of the House (known as Members of Parliament or *MPs*) are directly elected, and the member of the House of Representatives who, in the Governor-General's best judgement, is best able to command the confidence of a majority of the members of that House, is appointed by the Governor-General to be the Prime Minister. Senators are appointed jointly by the Prime Minister and the parliamentary Leader of the Opposition.

In February 2006, Portia Simpson-Miller was elected by delegates of the ruling People's National Party (PNP) to replace P. J. Patterson as President of the Party. At the end of March 2006 when Patterson demitted office, Simpson-Miller became the first female Prime Minister of Jamaica. Former Prime Minister Patterson had held office since the 1992 resignation of Michael Manley. Patterson was re-elected three times, the last being in 2002.

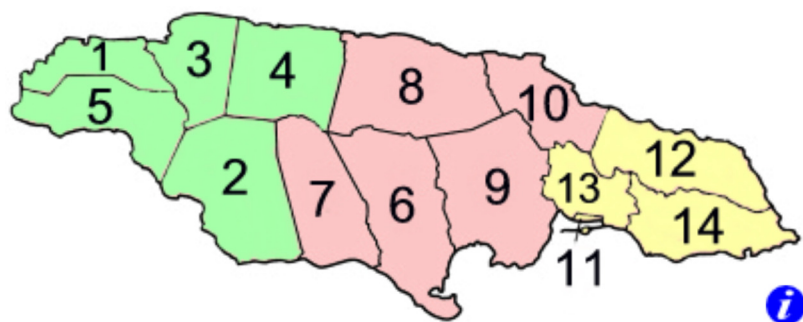


Inside the Jamaican Parliament

On 3 September 2007, Bruce Golding of the Jamaica Labour Party was voted in as Prime Minister-Designate after achieving a 33 - 27 seat victory over Portia Simpson-Miller and the PNP in the 2007 Jamaican general election. Portia Simpson-Miller conceded defeat on 5 September 2007. On 11 September 2007, after being sworn in by Governor-General Kenneth Hall, The Hon. Bruce Golding assumed office as Prime Minister of Jamaica.

Jamaica has traditionally had a two-party system, with power often alternating between the People's National Party and Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). However, over the past decade a new political party called the National Democratic Movement (NDM) emerged in an attempt to challenge the two-party system. Unfortunately, the NDM has almost become irrelevant in the two party system as it garnered only 540 votes of the over 800,000 votes cast in the September 3 elections. Jamaica is a full and participating member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

## Parishes



Jamaica is divided into 14 parishes, which are grouped into three historic counties that have no administrative relevance.

Cornwall County		Middlesex County		Surrey County	
1	Hanover	6	Clarendon	11	Kingston



2	Saint Elizabeth	7	Manchester	12	Portland
3	Saint James	8	Saint Ann	13	Saint Andrew
4	Trelawny	9	Saint Catherine	14	Saint Thomas
5	Westmoreland	10	Saint Mary		

## Geography

Jamaica is the third largest island in the Caribbean, and the most populous English-speaking island in that region. The island of Jamaica is home to the Blue Mountains inland, and is surrounded by a narrow coastal plain. Most major towns and cities are located on the coast. Chief towns and cities include the capital Kingston, Portmore, Spanish Town, Mandeville, Ocho Rios, Port Antonio, and Montego Bay.

The climate in Jamaica is tropical, with hot and humid weather, although higher inland regions have a more temperate climate. Some regions on the south coast, such as the Liguanea Plain and the Pedro Plains are relatively dry rain-shadow areas. Jamaica lies in the hurricane belt of the Atlantic Ocean; as a result, the island sometimes experiences significant storm damage. Hurricanes Charlie and Gilbert hit Jamaica directly in 1951 and 1988, respectively, causing major damage, destruction, and many deaths. In the 2000s, hurricanes Ivan and Dean also brought severe weather to the island.



View of the city of Kingston from the Kingston Harbour.

## Demographics

### Ethnic origins

Jamaica's population consists mainly of people of African descent, comprising about 90.9% of the demographics. Other populations on the island are as follows: East Indian 1.3%, White 0.2%, Chinese 0.2%, Lebanese 0.1%, Multiracial 7.3%. Immigration has been rising from China, South Asia, Colombia, and other nations of the Caribbean.

### Language

The official language of Jamaica is English. Informally Jamaican Patois (pronounced *patwah*) is more commonly spoken by a majority of the population. Although British English or "The Queen's English" is the most obvious influence on patois, it includes words and syntax from various African languages (including Akan Ewe and Yoruba); other European languages (Spanish, Portuguese and French); Pre-Columbian Caribbean languages (Arawak); and Asian languages (Hindi and Hakka) which is evidence of the long standing mixing of the people. In general, patois differs from English in pronunciation, grammar, nominal orthography and syntax, having many intonations to indicate meaning and mood. The language's characteristics include pronouncing /θ/ as [t] and /ð/ as



[d], and omitting some initial consonant sounds, principally /h/. For example, the word "there" is pronounced ['dɪeɪ]. A number of linguists classify Jamaican Patois as a separate language, while others consider it to be a dialect of English.

## Emigration

Over the past several decades, close to a million Jamaicans have emigrated, especially to the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. This emigration appears to have been tapering off somewhat in recent years. However, the great number of Jamaicans living abroad has become known as the "Jamaican diaspora". There has also been emigration of Jamaicans to Cuba.

Concentrations of expatriate Jamaicans are large in a number of cities in the United States, including New York City, Buffalo, the Miami metro area, Atlanta, Orlando, Tampa, Washington, D.C, Philadelphia, Hartford and Los Angeles. In Canada, the Jamaican population is centred in Toronto, and there are smaller communities in cities such as Montreal and Ottawa. In the United Kingdom, Jamaican communities exist in most large cities where they make up the larger part of the British-Caribbean community.

## Religion

Christians make up 65.3% of Jamaica's population, with the majority being Protestant, partly due to the influence of the Christian leadership in the British Anti-Slavery Society, and the later influence of abolitionist denominations from the U.S. In spite of resistance by the slave owners, the Christian faith spread rapidly as British Christian abolitionists and educated former slaves joined local Jamaican Christian leaders in the struggle against slavery. Today, the five largest denominations in Jamaica are: Church of God, Seventh-day Adventist, Baptist, Pentecostal and Anglican.

The Rastafari movement was founded in Jamaica. This Back to Africa movement believes that Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was God incarnate, the returned black messiah, come to take the lost Twelve Tribes of Israel back to live with him in Holy Mount Zion in a world of perfect peace, love and harmony. Bob Marley, a convert to the faith, spread the message of Rastafari to the world. There are now estimated to be more than a million Rastafarians throughout the world.

Other non-Christian religions in Jamaica include Bahá'í, Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism. There is also a small population of Jews, about 200, who describe themselves as Liberal-Conservative. The first Jews in Jamaica trace their roots back to early 15th century Spain and Portugal. The West African folk cult of Obeah is found in poor urban and rural areas of Jamaica.

## Culture

Though a small nation, Jamaica is rich in culture, and has a strong global presence. The musical genres reggae, ska, mento, rocksteady, dub, and, more recently, dancehall and ragga all originated in the island's vibrant popular urban recording industry. Jamaica also played an important role in the development of punk rock, through reggae and ska. Reggae has also influenced American rap music, as they both share their roots as rhythmic, African styles of music. Some rappers, such as the Notorious B.I.G., were of Jamaican descent. Internationally known reggae musician Bob Marley was born in Jamaica and is very respected there.



Many other internationally known artists were born in Jamaica including Lee "Scratch" Perry, Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, Big Youth, Jimmy Cliff, Dennis Brown, Desmond Dekker, Beres Hammond, Beenie Man, Shaggy, Grace Jones, Shabba Ranks, Supercat, Buju Banton, Sean Paul, I Wayne, Capleton, Bounty Killer and many others. Famous band artist groups that came from Jamaica include Black Uhuru, Third World Band, Inner Circle, Chalice Reggae Band, Fab Five, and Morgan Heritage. The genre jungle emerged from London's Jamaican diaspora. The birth of hip-hop in New York also owed much to the city's Jamaican community.

Ian Fleming, who lived in Jamaica, repeatedly used the island as a setting in the James Bond novels, including *Live and Let Die*, *Doctor No*, *For Your Eyes Only*, *The Man with the Golden Gun* and *Octopussy*. In addition, James Bond uses a Jamaica-based cover in *Casino Royale*. So far, the only Bond film to have been set in Jamaica is *Doctor No*. However, filming for the fictional island of San Monique in *Live and Let Die* took place in Jamaica.

The American film *Cocktail*, starring Tom Cruise, is one of the most popular films to depict Jamaica. A look at delinquent youth in Jamaica is presented in the 1970s cops-and-robbers musical film *The Harder They Come*, starring Jimmy Cliff as a frustrated (and psychopathic) reggae musician who descends into a murderous crime spree.

Errol Flynn lived with his third wife Patrice Wymore in Port Antonio in the 1950s. He was responsible for developing tourism to this area, popularising raft trips down rivers on bamboo rafts.

## National symbols

- National Bird — Doctor Bird ( Green-and-black Streamertail, *Trochilus polytmus*)
- National Flower — Lignum Vitae ( *Guaiacum officinale*)
- National Tree — Blue Mahoe ( *Hibiscus elatus*)
- National Dish — Ackee and Saltfish (dried salted Cod)
- National Motto — "Out of Many, One People." (Unity among many cultures and races.)

## Sport

Jamaicans, in general, have a large interest in sports. Cricket, Football (soccer), athletics and horse-racing are several popular sports. The Jamaican national cricket team competes regionally, and also provides players for the West Indies. The national football team qualified for the 1998 FIFA World Cup. Jamaican athletics have been well represented at the Olympics, World Championships and other major athletics events over the years with leading athletes obtaining medals. Usain Bolt, world record holder in the 100m for men at 9.72s is among a rich heritage of Jamaican athletes to compete on the world stage. The Jamaica national bobsled team team was once a serious contender in the Winter Olympics, beating many well-established teams.

There is a notable amount of golf in Jamaica, but it appears to be focused on the international tourism market.



## Education

The emancipation of the slaves heralded in the establishment of the Jamaican education system for the masses. Prior to emancipation there were few schools for educating locals. Many sent their children off to England to access quality education.

After emancipation the West Indian Commission granted a sum of money to establish Elementary Schools, now known as *All Age Schools*. Most of these schools were established by the churches. This was the genesis of the modern Jamaican school system:

Presently the following categories of schools exist:

- **Early childhood** – Basic, Infant and privately operated pre- school. Age cohort – 1 – 5 years.
- **Primary** – Publicly and privately owned (Privately owned being called Preparatory Schools). Ages 5 – 10 years.
- **Secondary** – Publicly and privately owned. Ages 10 – 16 years. The high schools in Jamaica may be either single-sex or co-educational institutions, and many schools follow the traditional English grammar school model used throughout the British West Indies.
- **Tertiary** - Community Colleges, Teachers' Colleges, Vocational Training Centres, Colleges and Universities - Publicly and privately owned. There are five local universities namely: The University of the West Indies (Mona Campus); the University of Technology, Jamaica formerly The College of Art Science and Technology (CAST); the Northern Caribbean University; the University College of The Caribbean and the International University of the Caribbean. Additionally there are many teacher training and community colleges.

Although there is no free education in Jamaica above the primary level, there are opportunities for those who cannot afford further education in the vocational arena through the Human Employment and Resource Training-National Training Agency (HEART Trust-NTA) programme and through an extensive scholarship network for the various universities.

## Economy

Jamaica is a mixed, free-market economy with state enterprises as well as private sector businesses. Major sectors of the Jamaican economy include agriculture, mining, manufacturing, tourism and financial and insurance services. Tourism and mining are the leading foreign exchange earners.

Supported by multilateral financial institutions, Jamaica has, since the early 1980s, sought to implement structural reforms aimed at fostering private sector activity and increasing the role of market forces in resource allocation. Since 1991, the Government has followed a programme of economic liberalization and stabilization by removing exchange controls, floating the exchange rate, cutting tariffs, stabilising the Jamaican currency, reducing inflation and removing restrictions on foreign investment. Emphasis has been placed on maintaining strict fiscal discipline, greater openness to trade and financial flows, market liberalisation and reduction in the size of government. During this period, a large share of the economy was returned to private sector ownership through



divestment and privatisation programmes.

The macroeconomic stabilisation programme introduced in 1991, which focused on tight fiscal and monetary policies, has contributed to a controlled reduction in the rate of inflation. The annual inflation rate has decreased from a high of 80.2% in 1991 to 7.9% in 1998. Inflation for FY1998/99 was 6.2% compared to 7.2% in the corresponding period in CUU1997/98. The Government of Jamaica remains committed to lowering inflation, with a long-term objective of bringing it in line with that of its major trading partners.

After a period of steady growth from 1985 to 1995, real GDP decreased by 1.8% and 2.4% in 1996 and 1997, respectively. The decrease in GDP in 1996 and 1997 was largely due to significant problems in the financial sector and, in 1997, a severe island-wide drought (the worst in 70 years) that drastically reduced agricultural production. In 1997, nominal GDP was approximately J\$220,556.2 million (US\$6,198.9 million based on the average annual exchange rate of the period).

The economy in 1997 was marked by low levels of import growth, high levels of private capital inflows and relative stability in the foreign exchange market.

Recent economic performance shows the Jamaican economy is recovering. Agricultural production, an important engine of growth increased 15.3% in third quarter of 1998 compared to the corresponding period in 1997, signaling the first positive growth rate in the sector since January 1997. Bauxite and alumina production increased 5.5% from January to December, 1998 compared to the corresponding period in 1997. January's bauxite production recorded a 7.1% increase relative to January 1998 and continued expansion of alumina production through 2009 is planned by Alcoa. Tourism, which is the largest foreign exchange earner, showed improvement as well. In the third quarter of 1998, growth in tourist arrivals accelerated with an overall increase of 8.5% in tourism earnings in 1998 when compared to the corresponding period in 1997. Jamaica's agricultural exports are sugar, bananas, coffee, rum, and yams.



Fishing boats and bauxite cargo ships share the waterways near Alligator Pond, Jamaica

Jamaica has a wide variety of industrial and commercial activities. The aviation industry is able to perform most routine aircraft maintenance, except for heavy structural repairs. There is a considerable amount of technical support for transport and agricultural aviation. Jamaica has a considerable amount of industrial engineering, light manufacturing, including metal fabrication, metal roofing, and furniture manufacturing. Food and beverage processing, glassware manufacturing, computer software and data processing, printing and publishing, insurance underwriting, music and recording, and advanced education activities can be found in the larger urban areas. The Jamaican construction industry is entirely self-sufficient, with professional technical standards and guidance.

Since the first quarter of 2006, the economy of Jamaica has undergone a period of staunch growth. With inflation for the 2006 calendar year down to 6.0% and unemployment down to 8.9%, the nominal GDP grew by an unprecedented 2.9%. An investment programme in island transportation and utility infrastructure and gains in the tourism, mining, and service sectors all contributed this figure. All projections for 2007 show an even higher potential for economic growth with all estimates over 3.0% and hampered only by urban crime and public policies.

In 2006, Jamaica became part of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) as one of the pioneering members.

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 431 of 637



## International trade

**Exports:** (1999) 1,238 billion \$ (Natural resources: 55.7%, Food 19.1%, Bananas 4%, Chemicals 3.6%, Machinery 2.2%). The main export countries: USA 33.4% , United Kingdom 13.4%, France 5%, Germany 4%, Canada 14.1%, Netherlands 10.2%, Norway 5.8%, Japan 2.3%.

**Imports:** (1999) 2,89 billion \$ (Energy 50.5%, Machinery and Equipment 7.6%, Consumer goods 33.2%). The main import countries: USA 48.1%, Trinidad and Tobago 7.8%, Japan 6.9%, United Kingdom 3.7%, France 5%, Canada 3%.

**Exports and Imports** for January 2007 -

**Exports:** (January 2007) Total Goods Exports 166,495 (US\$000) (General Merchandise Exports 93.4%, Freezone Exports 2.6%, Goods Procured in Ports 4.0%).

**Imports:** (January 2007) : Total Goods Import 511,015 (US\$000); General Merchandise Imports 97.8%, Freezone Imports 0.3%, Goods Procured in Ports 1.8%).

## Infrastructure

### Transport

The transportation infrastructure in Jamaica consists of roadways, railways, ship and air transport – with roadways forming the backbone of the island's internal transportation system.

### Roadways

The Jamaican road network consists of almost 21,000 kilometres of roads, of which over 15,000 kilometres is paved. The Jamaican Government has, since the late 1990s and in cooperation with private investors, embarked on a campaign of infrastructural improvement projects, one of which includes the creation of a system of freeways, the first such access-controlled roadways of their kind on the island, connecting the main population centers of the island. This project has so far seen the completion of 33 kilometres of freeway.

The Highway 2000 project, which seeks ultimately to link Kingston with Montego Bay and the north coast, is currently undergoing a series of phases/legs. Phase 1 is the highway network between Kingston and Mandeville which itself has been divided into sub-phases: Phase 1a (Kingston-Bushy Park (in actuality, Kingston-Sandy Bay) highway and the upgrade of the Portmore Causeway) which was completed June 2006, and Phase 1b (Sandy Bay-Williamsfield). Phase 2a is the highway between Old Harbour and Ocho Rios, and Phase 2b is the highway between Mandeville and Montego Bay.

### Railways

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Railways in Jamaica, as in many other countries, no longer enjoy the prominent position they once did, having been largely replaced by roadways as the primary means of transport. Of the 272 kilometres of railway found in Jamaica, only 57 kilometres remain in operation, currently used to transport bauxite.

## Air Transport

There are two international airports in Jamaica with modern terminals, long runways, and the navigational equipment required to accommodate the large jet aircraft used in modern air travel: Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston and Sangster International Airport in the resort town of Montego Bay. Both airports are home to the country's national airline, Air Jamaica. In addition there are local commuter airports at Tinson Pen (Kingston), Port Antonio, Ocho Rios, Mandeville, and Negril which cater to internal flights only. Many other small, rural centers are served by private fields on sugar estates or bauxite mines.

## Ports and Shipping

Owing to its location in the Caribbean Sea in the shipping lane to the Panama Canal and relative proximity to large markets in North America and emerging markets in Latin America, Jamaica receives high container traffic. The container terminal at the Port of Kingston has undergone large expansion in capacity in recent years to handle growth both already realised as well as that which is projected in coming years.

There are several other ports positioned around the island, including the alumina ports, Port Esquivel in St. Catherine (WINDALCO), Rocky Point in Clarendon and Port Kaiser in St. Elizabeth. Port Rhoades in Discovery Bay is responsible for transporting bauxite dried at the adjacent Kaiser plant. Reynolds Pier in Ocho Rios is responsible for exporting sugar. Montego Freeport in Montego Bay also handles a variety of cargo like (though more limited than) the Port of Kingston, mainly agricultural products. Boundbrook Port in Port Antonio exports bananas. There are also three cruise ship piers along the island, in Ocho Rios, Montego Bay and Port Antonio.

## Lighthouses

As the island is a large exporter of bauxite, there is considerable freighter traffic. To aid navigation, Jamaica operates nine lighthouses.

## Energy

Jamaica depends on petroleum imports to satisfy its national energy needs. Many test sites have been explored for oil, but no commercially viable quantities have been found. The most convenient sources of imported oil and motor fuels (diesel, gasoline, and jet fuel) are from Mexico and Venezuela.

Jamaica's electrical power is produced by diesel (bunker oil) generators located in Old Harbour. Other smaller power stations (most owned by the **Jamaica Public Service Company** - the island's electricity provider) support the island's electrical grid including the Hunts Bay Power Station, the Bogue Power Station, the Rockfort Power Station and small hydroelectric plants on the White River, Rio Bueno, Morant River, Black River (Maggotty) and Roaring River. A wind farm, owned by the **Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica**, was established at Wigton, Manchester.

Jamaica imports approximately 80,000 barrels of oil energy products per day, including asphalt and lubrication products. Just 20% of imported fuels are used for



road transportation, the rest being used by the bauxite industry, electricity generation, and aviation.

Jamaica produces enormous quantities of hydrous ethanol (5% water content), most of which appears to be consumed as beverages, and none of it used as motor fuel. Facilities exist to refine hydrous ethanol feedstock into anhydrous ethanol (0% water content), but the process appears to be uneconomic at this time and the facility remains idle.

## Communication

Jamaica has a fully digital telephone communication system with a mobile penetration of over 95%.

The country's three mobile operators - Cable and Wireless (marketed as *bmobile*), Digicel, and Oceanic Digital (operating as MiPhone) - have spent millions in network upgrade and expansion. The Irish owned Digicel has become a generic term for mobile phones in Jamaica. Both Digicel and Oceanic Digital were granted licenses in 2001 to operate mobile services in the newly liberalised telecom market that had once been the sole domain of the incumbent Cable and Wireless monopoly. Digicel opted for the more widely used GSM wireless system, while Oceanic opted for the CDMA standard. Cable and Wireless, which had begun with TDMA standard, subsequently upgraded to GSM, and currently utilises both standards on its network.

With wireless usage increasing, land lines supplied by Cable and Wireless have declined from just over half a million to roughly about three hundred thousand as of 2006. In a bid to grab more market share, Cable and Wireless recently launched a new land line service called HomeFone Prepaid that would allow customers to pay for minutes they use rather than pay a set monthly fee for service, much like prepaid wireless service.

A new entrant to the Jamaican communications market, Flow Jamaica, recently laid a new submarine cable connecting Jamaica to the United States. This new cable increases the total number of submarine cables connecting Jamaica to the rest of the world to four.

Two more licenses were auctioned by the Jamaican government to provide mobile services on the island, including one that was previously owned by AT&T Wireless but never utilised, and one new licence. Industry analysts argue that with a near market saturation, there is very little room for new operators.

## Military

The Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) is the small but professional military force of Jamaica. The JDF is based upon the British military model with organisation, training, weapons and traditions closely aligned with Commonwealth realms. Once chosen, officer candidates are sent to one of several British or Canadian basic officer courses depending upon which arm of service they are selected for. Enlisted soldiers are given basic training at JDF Training Depot, Newcastle or Up Park Camp, both in St. Andrew. As on the British model, NCOs are given several levels of professional training as they rise up the ranks. Additional military schools are available for speciality training in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

The JDF is directly descended from the British West Indies Regiment formed during the colonial era. The West Indies Regiment was used extensively by the British Empire in policing the empire from 1795 to 1926. Other units in the JDF heritage include the early colonial Jamaica Militia, the Kingston Infantry



Volunteers of WWI and reorganised into the Jamaican Infantry Volunteers in World War II. The West Indies Regiment was reformed in 1958 as part of the West Indies Federation. The dissolution of the Federation resulted in the establishment of the JDF.

The Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) comprises an infantry Regiment and Reserve Corps, an Air Wing, a Coast Guard fleet and a supporting Engineering Unit. The infantry regiment contains the 1st, 2nd and 3rd (National Reserve) battalions. The JDF Air Wing is divided into three flight units, a training unit, a support unit and the JDF Air Wing (National Reserve). The Coast Guard is divided between sea-going crews and support crews. It conducts maritime safety and maritime law enforcement as well as defence-related operations. The support battalion contains a Military Police platoon as well as vehicle, armourers and supply units. The 1st Engineer Regiment provides military engineering support to the JDF. The Headquarters JDF contains the JDF Commander, Command Staff as well as Intelligence, Judge Advocate office, Administrative and Procurement sections.

In recent years the JDF has been called upon to assist the nation's police, the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) in fighting drug smuggling and a rising crime rate which includes one of the highest murder rates in the world. JDF units actively conduct armed patrols with the JCF in high-crime areas and known gang neighbourhoods. There has been vocal controversy as well as support of this JDF role. In early 2005, an Opposition leader, Edward Seaga, called for the merger of the JDF and JCF. This has not garnered support in either organisation nor among the majority of citizens.

## Crime

Some areas of Jamaica experience high levels of violent crime. Jamaica has had one of the highest murder rates in the world for many years, usually ranking third after Colombia and South Africa, according to UN estimates. Jamaica's former Prime Minister P.J. Patterson described the situation as "a national challenge of unprecedented proportions". In 2005, Jamaica had 1,674 murders for a murder rate of 64.10 per 100,000 people; that year Jamaica had the highest murder rate in the world. The spate of gangland killings in the UK in particular, can be attributed to Yardie criminals illegally entering the country as part of the international drugs trade.

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# Martinique

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

**Martinique** is an island in the eastern Caribbean Sea, having a land area of 1,128 km<sup>2</sup>. It is an overseas department of France. As with the other overseas departments, Martinique is also one of the twenty-six regions of France (being an overseas region) and an integral part of the Republic. As part of France, Martinique is part of the European Union, and its currency is the euro. Its official language is French, although almost all of its inhabitants also speak Antillean Creole (*Créole Martiniquais*). Martinique is pictured on all euro banknotes, on the reverse at the bottom of each note, right of the Greek ΕΥΡΩ (EURO) next to the denomination.


- Largest urban areas: Fort-de-France (134,727 inhabitants in 1999, 35% of Martinique's population), Le Lamentin (35,460 in 1999), Sainte-Marie (32,988 in 1999), Le Robert (31,905 in 1999)
- Population: 381,427 inhabitants after the census of 1999 (359,572 en 1990), estimated 401,000 in January 2007.
- Population density: 338 inhab./km<sup>2</sup> (1999, estimated 354 in 2006)
- Urban population: 42%
- Life expectancy: 79 years (men) and 82 (women) (2000)
- Official language: French
- Principal religion: Roman Catholicism
- GDP/inhab.: €19,050 in 2006, i.e. US\$23,931 at 2006 market exchange rates
- Total GDP: €7.65 billion in 2006, i.e. US\$9.61 billion at 2006 market exchange rates
- Exports: €606 million (2006)
- Imports: €2,584 million (2006)
- Principal suppliers: Metropolitan France, European Union, Latin America
- Unemployment rate: 23% (2004, (without taking into account "non-declared" revenues). 26,3% in 2000).

## Politics


The inhabitants of Martinique are French citizens with full political and legal rights.

Martinique sends four deputies to the French National Assembly and two senators to the French Senate.

### Région Martinique





Unofficial region flag



Region logo

#### Location

<b>Administration</b>	
Capital	Fort-de-France
Regional President	Alfred Marie-Jeanne (MIM) (since 1998)
Departments	Martinique
Arrondissements	4
Cantons	45
Communes	34
<b>Statistics</b>	



Coconut palm

## Overview

- Surface area: 1,130 km<sup>2</sup> (length 75 km, width 35 km)
- Status: overseas department since 19 March 1946, overseas region since 1982
- Prefectorial office: Fort-de-France (a total of 34 habitations).

## History

Land area <sup>1</sup>	1,128 km <sup>2</sup>
Population	(Ranked 24th)
- January 1, 2007 est.	401,000
- March 8, 1999 census	381,427
- Density (2007)	355/km <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> French Land Register data, which exclude lakes, ponds, and glaciers larger than 1 km<sup>2</sup> (0.386 sq. mi. or 247 acres) as well as the estuaries of rivers



Map of Martinique



Before European colonization, Martinique was inhabited by at least two waves of amerindian settlements. Initially, Arawak tribes lived on the island, of which only traces were found. At the time of European colonization, the Carib Indians had taken over the island.

The island was under Britain's command during the Seven Years' War from 1762 to 1763; during the French Revolutionary Wars from 1794 to 1802; and again during the Napoleonic wars from 1809 to 1814. The last British governor was General Sir Charles Wale.

Napoleon's wife, Joséphine, was born in Martinique to a family of the wealthy Creole elite. The ruins of the Habitation de la Pagerie where she spent her childhood can still be visited in Trois-Ilets, across the bay from Fort-de-France, the island's capital.

During the French Revolution, severe conflicts rapidly broke out, developing into civil war. In 1789, a slave rebellion was put down. The following year open war broke out when monarchists, who wanted freedom from revolutionary France, massacred troops faithful to the Parisian revolutionary government. The royalist faction gained the upper hand in 1791 and declared the independence of Martinique followed by refusal to grant rights to the free people of colour. In 1793, the republican-Parisian faction gained support from the revolutionary government in Saint Lucia, which prompted the monarchists to invite British occupation in 1794.

Slavery was banned in 1848. People from India and China were brought to work the sugar cane plantations.

Mount Pelée erupted in 1902, killing 26,000 to 36,000 people and destroying Saint-Pierre.

During World War II the island was controlled by the Vichy regime from 1940-1943; later it was under the Free French Forces.

An important role in the independence movement was played by Aimé Césaire (June 26, 1913 – April 17, 2008), a famous poet and essayist. Martinique was the home of Frantz Fanon ( July 20, 1925 – December 6, 1961), an author, essayist, psychoanalyst, and anti-colonialist revolutionary, who was strongly influenced by Césaire.

On November 29, 2007, Martinique experienced an earthquake registering a magnitude of 7.4.

## Subdivisions

## Environment



Battle of Martinique in 1779 between France and Great Britain



The north of the island is mountainous and lushly forested. It features 4 ensembles of dramatic pitons and mornes: the Piton Conil on the extreme North, which dominates the Dominica Channel, the Mount Pelee, an active volcano, the Morne Jacob, and the Pitons du Carbet, an ensemble of 5 beautifully shaped, rainforest covered extinct volcanoes dominating the Bay of Fort de France at 1,196 meters. The most dominating of the island's many beautiful mountains, with 1397 meters, is the infamous volcano Mount Pelée. The volcanic ash has created beautiful grey and black sand beaches in the north (in particular between Anse Ceron and Anse des Gallets), contrasting markedly from the white sands of Les Salines in the south.

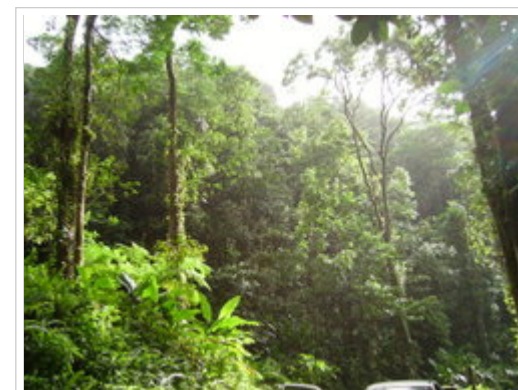
The south is more easily traversed, though it still features some impressive geographic features. Because it is easier to travel and because of the many beautiful beaches and food throuout this region, the south receives the bulk of the tourist traffic. The beaches from Pointe de Bout, through Diamant (which features right off the coast the beautiful Roche de Diamant), St. Luce, the town of St. Anne all the way down to Les Salines are very popular.

## Demographics

### Historical population

#### Historical population

1700 estimate	1738 estimate	1848 estimate	1869 estimate	1873 estimate	1878 estimate	1883 estimate	1888 estimate	1893 estimate
24,000	74,000	120,400	152,925	157,805	162,861	167,119	175,863	189,599
1900 estimate	1954 census	1961 census	1967 census	1974 census	1982 census	1990 census	1999 census	2007 estimate
203,781	239,130	292,062	320,030	324,832	328,566	359,572	381,427	401,000
Official figures from past censuses and INSEE estimates.								



Tropical forest near Fond St-Denis



Les Salines, wide sand beach at the southern end of the island

## Culture

As an overseas *département* of France, **Martinique's** culture blends French and Caribbean influences. The city of Saint-Pierre (destroyed by a volcanic eruption of Mount Pelée), was often referred to as the *Paris of the Lesser Antilles*. Following traditional French custom, many businesses close at midday, then reopen later in the afternoon. The official language is French, although many Martinicans speak Martinican Creole, a subdivision of Antillean Creole virtually identical to the varieties spoken in neighbouring British-speaking islands of Saint Lucia and Dominica. Mostly based on French, Martinique's creole also



incorporates a few elements of English, Spanish, Portuguese, and African languages. Originally passed down through oral storytelling traditions, it continues to be used more often in speech than in writing. Its use is predominant within friends and the family cell. Though it is normally not to be used in professional situations, it is being increasingly used in the media and by politicians as a way to redeem national identity and by fear from a complete cultural assimilation by mainland France.

Most of Martinique's population is descended from African slaves brought to work on sugar plantations during the colonial era, generally mixed with some French, Amerindian, Indian (Tamil), Lebanese or Chinese elements. Between 5 to 10% of the population is of Eastern Indian (Tamil) origin. The island also boasts a small Syro-Lebanese community, a small but increasing Chinese community, and the "Beke" community, White descendants from the first French and British settlers, which still dominate parts of the Agricultural and Trade sectors. The Beke people (which total around 5,000 people in the island, most of them of aristocratic origin) generally live in mansions on the Atlantic coast of the island (mostly in the François - Cap Est district). In addition to the island population, the island hosts a metropolitan French community, most of which lives on the island on a temporary basis (generally from 3 to 5 years).

There is an estimated 250.000 people of martinican origin living in mainland France, most of them in the Parisian region.

Today, the island enjoys a higher standard of living than most other Caribbean countries. The finest French products are easily available, from Chanel fashions to Limoges porcelain. Studying in the *métropole* is common for young adults. For the rest of the French, Martinique has been a vacation hotspot for many years, attracting both upper-class and more budget-conscious travelers.

Martinique has a hybrid cuisine, mixing elements of French, African, and Asian traditions. One of its most famous dishes is the Colombo, a unique curry of chicken (curry chicken), meat or fish with vegetables, spiced with a distinctive masala of Bengali or Tamil origins, acidulated with tamarind and often containing wine, coconut milk, and rum. There is also a strong tradition of créole desserts and cakes, often employing pineapple, rum, and a wide range of local ingredients.

## Martinique in Popular Culture

- Martinique was the main setting of the 1944 film *To Have and Have Not* starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall.
- The island is mentioned in the song *Uffington wassail* by Half Man Half Biscuit.
- In the gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows*, the characters of Angelique Bouchard Collins, Josette du Pres, and her family are from Martinique.
- Martinique was also featured in the 1999 remake of "The Thomas Crown Affair," and in the movie "Sugar Cane Alley".
- It is also mentioned in the Beach Boys hit "Kokomo" with the line "To Martinique, that Montserrat mystique"

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# Mexico

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; North American Geography

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The **United Mexican States** (Spanish: *Estados Unidos Mexicanos* ( help · info)), or commonly **Mexico** (IPA: /ˈmɛksɪkoʊ/) (Spanish: *México* ( help · info) IPA: [ˈmexiko]), is a federal constitutional republic in North America. It is bordered on the north by the United States; on the south and west by the North Pacific Ocean; on the southeast by Guatemala, Belize, and the Caribbean Sea; and on the east by the Gulf of Mexico. The United Mexican States are a federation comprising thirty-one states and a federal district, the capital Mexico City, whose metropolitan area is one of the world's most populous.

Covering almost 2 million square kilometers, Mexico is the fifth-largest country in the Americas by total area and the 14th largest independent nation in the world. With an estimated population of 109 million, it is the 11th most populous country and the most populous Spanish-speaking country in the world.

As a regional power and the only Latin American member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) since 1994, Mexico is firmly established as an upper middle-income country.

Mexico is the 12th largest economy in the world by GDP by purchasing power parity. The economy is strongly linked to those of its North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) partners. Despite being considered an emerging world power, the uneven distribution of income and the increase in insecurity are issues of concern.

Elections held in July 2000 marked the first time that an opposition party won the presidency from the Institutional Revolutionary Party ("Partido Revolucionario Institucional" : PRI) which had held it since 1929, culminating the political alternation at the federal level, which had begun at the local level during the 1980s.

## Etymology

<b>Estados Unidos Mexicanos</b> <b>United Mexican States</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> "Himno Nacional Mexicano" Mexican National Anthem	
<b>National seal:</b> Seal of the United Mexican States 	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Mexico City
<b>Official languages</b>	None at federal level. Spanish (de facto)
<b>National language</b>	Spanish, and 62 Indigenous



Image of Mexico-Tenochtitlan from the Mendoza codex.

After winning independence from Spain, it was decided that the new country would be named after its capital city, whose original name of foundation was México-Tenochtitlan, in reference to the Mexica tribe, the main group of people that came to be known as the Aztec civilization. The origin of the name Mexica is obscure and subject to diverse interpretations. Some argue that it derives from the Nahuatl *Mēxitl* or *Mēxitli*, a secret name for the god of war and patron of the Aztecs, Huitzilopochtli, in which case *Mēxihco* means "Place where *Mēxitli* lives". Another hypothesis is that the word *Mēxihco* derives from the *mētztli* ("moon"), *xictli* ("navel", "centre" or "son"), and the suffix *-co* (place), in which case it means "Place at the center of the moon" or "Place at the centre of the Lake Moon", in reference to Lake Texcoco. The system of interconnected lakes, of which Texcoco was at the center, had the form of a rabbit, the same image that the Aztecs saw in the moon. Tenochtitlan was located at the centre (or navel) of the lake (or rabbit/moon). Still another hypothesis suggests that it is derived from

*Mēctli*, the goddess of maguey.

The name of the city was transliterated to Spanish as *México* with the phonetic value of the *x* in Medieval Spanish, which represented the voiceless postalveolar fricative /*x̄*/. This sound, as well as the voiced postalveolar fricative /*ç*/, represented by a *j*, evolved into a voiceless velar fricative /*x*/ during the sixteenth century. This led to the use of the variant *Méjico* in many publications in Spanish, most notably in Spain, whereas in Mexico and some other Spanish-speaking countries *México* was the preferred spelling. In recent years the *Real Academia Española*, which regulates the Spanish language, determined that both variants are acceptable in Spanish but that the normative recommended spelling is *México*. The majority of publications in all Spanish-speaking countries now adhere to the new norm, even though the alternative variant is still occasionally used. In English, the *x* in Mexico represents neither the original nor the current sound, but the consonant cluster /*ks*/.

## History

### Pre-Columbian civilizations

	Amerindian languages.
<b>Demonym</b>	Mexican
<b>Government</b>	Federal presidential republic
<span> </span> - President	Felipe Calderón ( PAN)
<b>Independence</b>	from Spain
<span> </span> - Declared	September 16, 1810
<span> </span> - Recognized	September 27, 1821
<b>Area</b>	
<span> </span> - Total	1,972,550 km <sup>2</sup> ( 15th) 761,606 sq mi
<span> </span> - Water (%)	2.5
<b>Population</b>	
<span> </span> - mid-2008 estimate	106,682,500 ( 11th)
<span> </span> - 2005 census	103,263,388
<span> </span> - Density	55/km <sup>2</sup> ( 142nd) 142/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$1.149 trillion ( 12th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$12,775 ( 60th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2006 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$840.012 billion (short scale) ( 14th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$8,066 ( 55th)
<b>Gini (2008)</b>	<span>▼</span> 46.1 (high)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span>▲</span> 0.829 (high) ( 52nd)
<b>Currency</b>	Mexican peso ( <span>MXN</span> )
<b>Time zone</b>	U.S Central to Western



Human presence in Mesoamerica was once thought to date back 40,000 years based upon what were believed to be ancient human footprints discovered in the Valley of Mexico, but after further investigation using radioactive dating, it appears this is untrue. It is currently unclear whether 21,000 year old campfire remains found in the Valley of Mexico are the earliest human remains found in the region. For thousands of years, Mesoamerica was a land of hunter-gatherers. Around 9,000 years ago, ancient indigenous peoples domesticated corn and initiated an agricultural revolution, leading to the formation of many complex civilizations.

These civilizations revolved around cities with writing, monumental architecture, astronomical studies, mathematics, and large militaries. For almost three thousand years, Aridoamerica and Mesoamerica were the site of several advanced Amerindian civilizations.

In 1519, the native civilizations of Mesoamerica were invaded by Spain; among them the Aztecs, Mayans, etc. This was one of the most important conquest campaigns in America. Two years later, in 1521, the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan was conquered by the Spaniards along with the Tlaxcaltecs, the main enemies of the Aztecs, marking the end of the Aztec Empire and giving rise to the Viceroyalty of New Spain in 1535. It became the first and largest provider of resources for the Spanish Empire and the most populous of all Spanish colonies.

## Colonial era and independence



Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the founder of the Mexican independence movement.

Almost 300 years after the New Spain was created, on September 16, 1810, independence from Spain was declared by Priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, in the small town of Dolores, Guanajuato. This was the catalyst for a long war that ended in 1821 which eventually led to the independence and creation of the ephemeral First Mexican Empire. The Empire's territory encompassed the area of the current Mexican republic as well as the present-day states of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, parts of Colorado and Wyoming, and all current Central American countries except for Panama and Belize. Agustín de Iturbide was the first and only emperor. Two years later, he was deposed by the republican forces. The Central American states separated, forming the Federal Republic of Central America. In 1824, a republican constitution was drafted creating the United Mexican States with Guadalupe Victoria as its first President.

The first four decades after the creation of the country were marked by a constant strife between *liberales* (those who supported the federal form of government stipulated in the 1824 constitution) and *conservadores* (who proposed a hierarchical form of government in which all local authorities were appointed and subject to a central authority). General Antonio López de Santa Anna was a strong influence in Mexican politics, a centralist and a two-time dictator. In 1836, he approved the *Siete Leyes*, a radical amendment to the constitution that institutionalized the centralized form of

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Archaeological sites of Chichén-Itzá, one of the New Seven Wonders.



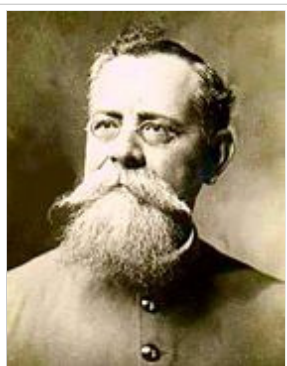
Benito Juárez, regarded as the greatest 19th Century Mexican president.



government. Having suspended the Constitution of 1824, civil war spread across the country, and three new governments declared independence; the Republic of Texas, the Republic of the Rio Grande (recognized by the United Kingdom) and the Republic of Yucatán. Only Texas was able to defeat Santa Anna, and later the annexation of Texas by the United States created a border dispute that would cause the Mexican-American War. Santa Anna played a big role in trying to muster Mexican forces but this war resulted in the resolute defeat of Mexico and as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), Mexico lost one third of its surface area due to civil war with Texas, and later war with the United States.

Dissatisfaction with Santa Anna's return to power, and his unconstitutional rule, led to the liberal Revolution of Ayutla, which initiated an era of liberal reforms, known as *La Reforma*, after which a new constitution was drafted that reestablished federalism as the form of government and first introduced freedom of religion. In the 1860s the country again underwent a military occupation, this time by France, which established the Habsburg Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria on the Mexican throne as Emperor Maximilian I of Mexico with support from the Catholic clergy and the conservative Mexicans. This Second Mexican Empire was victorious for only a few years, when the previous president of the Republic, the Zapotec Indian Benito Juárez, managed to restore the republic in 1867.

## 20th and 21st centuries



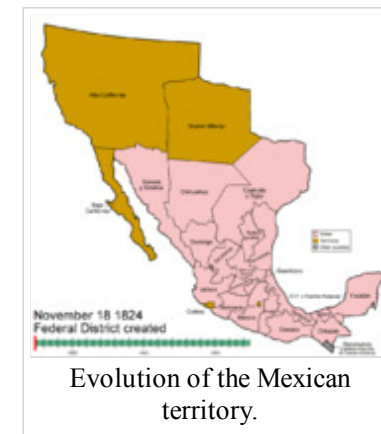
Venustiano Carranza, former president and supporter of the 1917 constitution.

Porfirio Díaz, a republican general during the French intervention, ruled Mexico from 1876–1880 and then from 1880–1911 in five consecutive reelections. The period of his rule is known as the *Porfiriato*, which was characterized by remarkable economic achievements, investments in art and sciences, but also of huge economic inequality and political repression. An obvious and preposterous electoral fraud that led to his fifth reelection sparked the Mexican Revolution of 1910, initially led by Francisco I. Madero. Díaz resigned in 1911 and Madero was elected president but overthrown and murdered in a coup d'état in 1913 led by a conservative general named Victoriano Huerta after a secret council held with the U.S. ambassador Henry Lane Wilson. This re-ignited the civil war, with participants such as Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata who formed their own forces. A third force, the constitutional army led by Venustiano Carranza, managed to bring an end to the war, and radically amended the 1857 Constitution to include many of the social premises and demands of the revolutionaries into what was eventually called the 1917 Constitution. Carranza was killed in 1920 and succeeded by another revolutionary hero, Álvaro Obregón, who in turn was succeeded by Plutarco Elías Calles. Obregón was reelected in 1928 but assassinated before he could assume power. In 1929, Calles founded the National Revolutionary Party (PNR), later renamed the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) which became the most influential party during the next 70 years.

Between 1940 and 1980, Mexico experienced substantial economic growth that some historians call "El Milagro Mexicano", the Mexican Miracle. The assumption of mineral rights by the government, and the subsequent nationalization of the oil industry into PEMEX during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (1938) was a popular move, but sparked a diplomatic crisis with those countries whose citizens had lost businesses expropriated by the Cárdenas government.

Although the economy continued to flourish, social inequality remained a factor of discontent. Moreover, the PRI rule became increasingly authoritarian and at times oppressive. An example of this is the Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968, which according to government officials claimed the life of around 30 protesters, while

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according to many reputable international accounts around 250 protesters were killed.

In the 1970s there was extreme dissatisfaction with the administration of Luis Echeverría which took missteps in both the national and international arenas. Nonetheless, it was in this decade that the first substantial changes to electoral law were made, which initiated a movement of democratization of a system that had become electorally authoritarian. While the prices of oil were at historically high records and interest rates were low, Mexico made impressive investments in the state-owned oil company, with the intention of revitalizing the economy, but overborrowing and mismanagement of oil revenues led to inflation and exacerbated the crisis of 1982. That year, oil prices plunged, interest rates soared, and the government defaulted on its debt. In an attempt to stabilize the current account balance, and given the reluctance of international lenders to return to Mexico given the previous default, President de la Madrid resorted to currency devaluations which in turn sparked inflation.

The first small cracks in the political monopolistic position of PRI were seen in the late 1970s with the creation of 100 deputy seats in the Chamber of Deputies assigned through proportional representation with closed party-lists. Even though at the municipal level the first non-PRI mayor was elected in 1947, it was not until 1989 that the first non-PRI governor of a state was elected. However, many sources claimed that in 1988 the party resorted to electoral fraud in order to prevent leftist opposition candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas from winning the national presidential elections who lost to Carlos Salinas, which led to massive protests in the capital. Salinas embarked on a program of neoliberal reforms which fixed the exchange rate, controlled inflation and culminated with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which came into effect in 1994. However, that very same day, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) started a two-week-lived armed rebellion against the federal government, and has continued as a non-violent opposition movement against neoliberalism and globalization. Being an election year, in a process that was then called the most transparent in Mexican history, authorities were reluctant to devalue the peso, a move which caused a rapid depletion of the National Reserves. In December 1994, a month after Salinas was succeeded by Ernesto Zedillo, the Mexican economy collapsed.



Former President Vicente Fox and U.S. President George Bush at the signature of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America.

With a rapid rescue packaged authorized by United States President Bill Clinton and major macroeconomic reforms started by president Zedillo, the economy rapidly recovered and growth peaked at almost 7% by the end of 1999. After a comprehensive electoral reform to increase party representation during Zedillo's administration, as well as discontent with PRI after the economic crisis, led the PRI to lose its absolute majority in the Congress in 1997. In 2000, after 71 years the PRI lost a presidential election to Vicente Fox of the opposition National Action Party (PAN). Neither party had absolute majority in the Congress.

On March 23, 2005, the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America was signed by Vicente Fox. During the 2006 elections, the position of PRI in the Congress was further weakened and became the third political force in number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies after PAN and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), even though the party still has the plurality of state governorships. In the concurrent presidential elections, Felipe Calderón, from PAN was declared winner, with a razor-thin margin over Andrés Manuel López Obrador PRD. López Obrador, however, contested the election and pledged to create an "alternative government".

## Government and politics



The United Mexican States are a federation whose government is representative, democratic and republican based on a congressional system according to the 1917 Constitution. The constitution establishes three levels of government: the federal Union, the state governments and the municipal governments. All officials at the three levels are elected by voters through first-past-the-post plurality, proportional representation or are appointed by other elected officials.

The federal government is constituted by the Powers of the Union, the three separate branches of government:

- **Legislative:** the bicameral Congress of the Union, composed of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies, which makes federal law, declares war, imposes taxes, approves the national budget and international treaties, and ratifies diplomatic appointments.
- **Executive:** the President of the United Mexican States, who is the head of state and government, as well as the commander in chief of the Mexican military forces. The President also appoints, with Senate approval, the Cabinet and other officers. The President is responsible for executing and enforcing the law, and has the authority of vetoing bills.
- **Judiciary:** The Supreme Court of Justice, comprised by eleven judges appointed by the President with Senate approval, who interpret laws and judge cases of federal competency. Other institutions of the judiciary are the Electoral Tribunal, collegiate, unitary and district tribunals, and the Council of the Federal Judiciary.






Felipe Calderón, current President of Mexico.

All elected executive officials are elected by plurality (first-past-the-post). Seats to the legislature are elected by plurality and proportional representation at the federal and state level. The Chamber of Deputies of the Congress of the Union is conformed by 300 deputies elected by plurality and 200 deputies by proportional representation with closed party lists for which the country is divided into 5 electoral constituencies or circumscriptions. The Senate is conformed by a total of 128 senators: 64 senators, two per state and the Federal District elected by plurality in pairs; 32 senators assigned to the first minority or first-runner up (one per state and the Federal District), and 32 elected by proportional representation with closed party lists for which the country conforms a single electoral constituency.

According to the constitution, all constituent states must have a republican form of government composed of three branches: the executive, represented by a governor and an appointed cabinet, the legislative branch constituted by a unicameral congress and the judiciary, also called a Supreme Court of Justice. They also have their own civil and judicial codes.

In the 2006–2009 Congress of the Union, eight parties are therein represented; five of them, however, have not received neither in this nor in previous congresses more than 4% of the national votes. The other three parties have historically been the dominant parties in Mexican politics:

-  National Action Party (*Partido Acción Nacional*, PAN): a centre-right conservative party founded in 1939.
-  Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, PRI): a centre-left party that ascribes to social democracy, founded in 1929 to unite all the factions of the Mexican Revolution. Prominent left-wing Mexican politicians have been members of the party.
-  Party of the Democratic Revolution (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*, PRD): a centre-left party founded in 1989 by the coalition of socialists and liberal parties, the National Democratic Front which had presented the candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in the 1988 elections.

The PRI held an almost hegemonic power in Mexican politics since 1929. Since 1977 consecutive electoral reforms allowed opposition parties to win more posts

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at the local and federal level. This process culminated in the 2000 presidential elections in which Vicente Fox, candidate of the PAN, became the first non-PRI president to be elected in 71 years.

In 2006, Felipe Calderón of the PAN faced Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the PRD in a very close election (0.58% difference), in a system without a second-ballot. On September 6, 2006, Felipe Calderón was declared President-elect by the electoral tribunal. His cabinet was sworn in at midnight on December 1, 2006 and Calderón was handed the presidential sash by outgoing Vicente Fox at Los Pinos. He was officially sworn as President on the morning of December 1, 2006 in Congress.

## Foreign relations

Traditionally, the Mexican government has sought to maintain its interests abroad and project its influence largely through moral persuasion rather than through political or economical pressure.

Since the Mexican Revolution, and until the administration of President Ernesto Zedillo, Mexico had been known for its foreign policy or "doctrine" known as the *Doctrina Estrada* (" Estrada Doctrine", named after its creator Genaro Estrada). The Estrada Doctrine was a foreign policy guideline of an enclosed view of sovereignty. It claimed that foreign governments should not judge, positively or negatively, the governments or changes in government of other nations, in that such action would imply a breach to their sovereignty. This policy was said to be based on the principles of Non-Intervention, Pacific Solution to Controversies, and Self-Determination of all nations.

During his presidency, Vicente Fox appointed Jorge Castañeda to be his Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Castañeda immediately broke with the Estrada Doctrine, promoting what was called by critics the " Castañeda Doctrine". The new foreign policy called for an openness and an acceptance of criticism from the international community, and the increase of Mexican involvement in foreign affairs.

In line with this new openness in Mexico's foreign policy, some political parties have proposed an amendment of the Constitution in order to allow the Mexican Army, Air Force or Navy to collaborate with the United Nations in peace-keeping missions, or to provide military help to countries that officially ask for it.

## Military

Mexico has the second largest defence budget (\$60.07 billion USD) and armed forces in the region. Mexico's military includes 503,777 total personnel, of which around 192,770 are active in the frontline. The Mexican Military has three branches; the Mexican Army, the Mexican Air Force, and the Mexican Navy.

- Mexican Army



President Calderón and Canadian Prime Minister Harper at the 2007 North American Leaders' Summit.



There are three main components of the Army: a national headquarters, territorial commands, and independent units. The Minister of Defense commands the Army by means of a very centralized system and a large number of general officers. The Army uses a modified continental staff system in its headquarters. The Army is the largest branch of Mexico's armed services. At present there are 12 "Military Regions", which are further broken down into 44 subordinate "Military Zones".

#### ■ Mexican Air Force

The Air Force national headquarters is embedded in the Army headquarters in Mexico City. It also follows the continental staff system, with the usual A1, A2, A3, and A4 sections. The tactical forces form what is loosely called an Air Division, but it is dispersed in four regions—Northeast, Northwest, Central, and Southern. The Air Force maintains a total of 18 air bases, and has the additional capability of opening temporary forward operating bases in austere conditions for some of the rotary wing and light fixed-wing assets.

#### ■ Mexican Navy

The Ministry of the Navy, the Navy's national headquarters, is located in Veracruz City. The "Junta (or Council) of Admirals" plays a unique consultative and advisory role within the headquarters, an indication of the institutional importance placed on seniority and "year groups" that go back to the admirals' days as cadets in the naval college. They are a very tightly knit group, and great importance is placed on consultation among the factions within these year groups.

The Navy's operational forces are organized as two independent groups: the Gulf (East) Force and the Pacific (West) Force. Each group has its own headquarters, a destroyer group, an auxiliary vessel group, a Marine Infantry Group, and a Special Forces group. The Navy also has an air arm with troop transport, reconnaissance, and surveillance aircraft.

The Navy maintains significant infrastructure, including naval dockyards that have the capability of building ships, such as the Holzinger class gunboats. These dockyards have a significant employment and economic impact in the country.

## Law enforcement and crime

Public security is enacted at the three levels of government, each of which has different prerogatives and responsibilities. Local and state police department are primarily in charge of law enforcement, whereas the Federal Preventive Police is in charge of specialized duties. All levels report to the *Secretaría de Seguridad Pública* (Secretariat of Public Security). The General Attorney's Office (*Procuraduría General de la República*, PGR) is the executive power's agency in charge of investigating and prosecuting crimes at the federal level, mainly those related to drug and arms trafficking, espionage, and bank robberies. The PGR operates the Federal Agency of Investigation (*Agencia Federal de Investigación*, AFI) an investigative and preventive agency.

While the government respects the human rights of most citizens, serious abuses of power have been reported in security operations in indigenous communities and poor urban neighborhoods. The National Human Rights Commission, however, has had little impact in reversing this trend, engaging mostly in documentation



Mexican army during the Independence Day parade



Northrop F-5 from the Mexican Air Force





but failing to use its powers to issue public condemnations to the officials who ignore its recommendations. By law, all defendants have the rights that assure them fair trials and human treatment; however, the system is overburdened and overwhelmed with several problems. Despite the efforts of the authorities to fight crime and fraud, few Mexicans have strong confidence in the police or the judicial system, and therefore, few crimes are actually reported by the citizens. In 2008, president Calderón proposed a major reform of the judicial system, which was approved by the Congress of the Union, which included oral trials, the presumption of innocence for defendants, the authority of local police to investigate crime—until then a prerogative of special police units—and several other changes intended to speed up trials.

Total crimes per capita average 12 per 1,000 people in Mexico, ranking 39 in a survey of 60 countries. Violent crime is a critical issue in Mexico; with a rate of homicide varying from 11 to 14 per 100,000 inhabitants. Drug-traffic and narco-related activities are a major concern in Mexico. Drug cartels are active in the shared border with the US and police corruption and collusion with drug cartels is a crucial problem. Current president, Felipe Calderón, made abating drug-trafficking one of the top priorities of his administration. In a very controversial move, Calderón deployed military personnel to cities where drug cartels operate. While this move has been criticized by the opposition parties and the National Human Rights Commission, its effects have been praised by the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs as having obtained "unprecedented results..." with "many important successes". In October 2007, the president Calderón and US president George W. Bush announced the Mérida Initiative a historic plan of law enforcement cooperation between the two countries.

## The federation: States of Mexico and the Federal District

The United Mexican States are a federation of thirty-one free and sovereign states which form a Union that exercises jurisdiction over the Federal District and other territories. Each state has its own constitution and congress, as well as a judiciary, and its citizens elect by direct voting, a governor (*gobernador*) for a six-year term, as well as representatives (*diputados locales*) to their respective state congresses, for three-year terms. The 31 states and the Federal District are collectively called "federal entities", and all are equally represented in the Congress of the Union.

Mexican states are also divided into municipalities (*municipios*), the smallest official political entity in the country, governed by a mayor or "municipal president" (*presidente municipal*), elected by its residents by plurality. Municipalities can be further subdivided into non-autonomous boroughs or in semi-autonomous auxiliary presidencies.

Constitutionally, Mexico City, as the capital of the federation and seat of the powers of the Union, is the Federal District, a special political division in Mexico that belongs to the federation as a whole and not to a particular state, and as such, has more limited local rule than the nation's states. Nonetheless, since 1987 it has progressively gained a greater degree of autonomy, and residents now elect a head of government (*Jefe de Gobierno*) and representatives of a Legislative Assembly directly. Unlike the states, the Federal District does not have a constitution but a statute of government. Mexico City is *conterminous* and coextensive with the Federal District.





The names of the thirty-one states and the Federal district and their official postal abbreviations in parentheses are:

- |                             |                         |                         |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| ■ Aguascalientes (Ags)      | ■ Distrito Federal (DF) | ■ Mexico State (Edomex) | ■ San Luis Potosí (SLP) |
| ■ Baja California (BC)      | ■ Durango (Dgo)         | ■ Nayarit (Nay)         | ■ Sonora (Son)          |
| ■ Baja California Sur (BCS) | ■ Guerrero (Gro)        | ■ Nuevo León (NL)       | ■ Tabasco (Tab)         |
| ■ Chihuahua (Chih)          | ■ Guanajuato (Gto)      | ■ Oaxaca (Oax)          | ■ Tlaxcala (Tlax)       |
| ■ Colima (Col)              | ■ Hidalgo (Hgo)         | ■ Puebla (Pue)          | ■ Tamaulipas (Tamps)    |
| ■ Campeche (Camp)           | ■ Jalisco (Jal)         | ■ Quintana Roo (Q Roo)  | ■ Veracruz (Ver)        |
| ■ Coahuila (Coah)           | ■ Michoacán (Mich)      | ■ Querétaro (Qro.)      | ■ Yucatán (Yuc)         |
| ■ Chiapas (Chis)            | ■ Morelos (Mor)         | ■ Sinaloa (Sin)         | ■ Zacatecas (Zac)       |

## Geography and climate



A picture of Mexico as seen from space.

Mexico is located in the southern portion of North America,. Mexico is also the northern constituent of the region known as Middle America, at about 23° N and 102° W. Almost all of Mexico lies in the North American Plate, with parts of the Baja California Peninsula in the northwest on the Pacific and Cocos Plates. Geophysically, some geographers include the south-eastern part of the territory (around 12% of the total) in Central America. Geopolitically, however, Mexico is considered part of North America.

Mexico's total area is 1,972,550 km<sup>2</sup>, making it the world's 14th largest country by total area, and includes approximately 6,000 km<sup>2</sup> of islands in the Pacific Ocean (including the remote Guadalupe Island and the Islas Revillagigedo), Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of California. On its north, Mexico shares a 3,141 km border with the United States. The meandering Río Bravo del Norte (known as the Rio Grande in the United States) defines the border from Ciudad Juárez east to the Gulf of Mexico. A series of natural and artificial markers delineate the United States-Mexican border west from Ciudad Juárez to the

Pacific Ocean. On its south, Mexico shares an 871 km border with Guatemala and a 251 km border with Belize.

## Topography



Mexico is crossed from north to south by two mountain ranges known as Sierra Madre Oriental and Sierra Madre Occidental, which are the extension of the Rocky Mountains from northern North America. From east to west at the centre, the country is crossed by the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt also known as the *Sierra Nevada*. A fourth mountain range, the Sierra Madre del Sur, runs from Michoacán to Oaxaca. As such, the majority of the Mexican central and northern territories are located at high altitudes, and the highest elevations are found at the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt: Pico de Orizaba (5,700 m), Popocatepetl (5,462 m) and Iztaccíhuatl (5,286 m) and the Nevado de Toluca (4,577 m). Three major urban agglomerations are located in the valleys between these four elevations: Toluca, Greater Mexico City and Puebla.

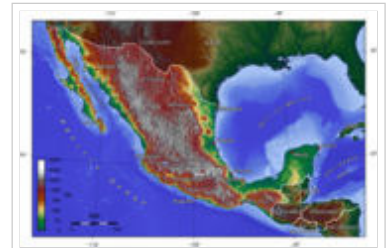
## Climate

The Tropic of Cancer effectively divides the country into temperate and tropical zones. Land north of the twenty-fourth parallel experiences cooler temperatures during the winter months. South of the twenty-fourth parallel, temperatures are fairly constant year round and vary solely as a function of elevation. This gives Mexico one of the worlds most diverse weather systems in the world.

Areas south of the twenty-fourth parallel with elevations up to 1,000 meters (the southern parts of both coastal plains as well as the Yucatán Peninsula), have a yearly median temperature between 24 and 28 °C. Temperatures here remain high throughout the year, with only a 5 °C difference between winter and summer median temperatures. Although low-lying areas north of the twentieth-fourth parallel are hot and humid during the summer, they generally have lower yearly temperature averages (from 20 to 24 °C) because of more moderate conditions during the winter.

Many large cities in Mexico are located in the Valley of Mexico or in adjacent valleys with altitudes generally above 2,000 m, this gives them a year-round temperate climate with yearly temperature averages (from 16 to 18 °C) and cool nighttime temperatures throughout the year. Many parts of Mexico, particularly the north, have a dry climate with sporadic rainfall while parts of the tropical lowlands in the south average more than 200 cm of annual precipitation.

## Biodiversity



Topographic map of Mexico.



Annual snowfall in Chihuahua and an isolated beach in Cabo



A "Lepisosteus", one of the endemic species of Mexico.

Mexico is one of the 18 megadiverse countries of the world. With over 200,000 different species, Mexico is home of 10–12% of the world's biodiversity. Mexico ranks first in biodiversity in reptiles with 707 known species, second in mammals with 438 species, fourth in amphibians with 290 species, and fourth in flora, with 26,000 different species. Mexico is also considered the second country in the world in ecosystems and fourth in overall species. Approximately 2,500 species are protected by Mexican legislations. The Mexican government created the National System of Information about Biodiversity, in order to study and promote the sustainable use of ecosystems.

In Mexico, 170,000 square kilometres are considered "Protected Natural Areas." These include 34 reserve biospheres (unaltered ecosystems), 64 national parks, 4 natural monuments (protected in perpetuity for their aesthetic, scientific or historical value), 26 areas of protected flora and fauna, 4 areas for natural resource protection (conservation of soil, hydrological basins and forests) and 17 sanctuaries (zones rich in diverse species).

The discovery of the Americas brought to the rest of the world many widely used ingredients. Some of Mexico's native ingredients include: chocolate, tomato, maize and corn, vanilla, avocado, guava, chayote, epazote, camote, jícama, nopal, tejocote, huitlacoche, sapote, mamey sapote, and many varieties of beans. Most of these names are in indigenous languages like Nahuatl.

## Economy



View from Paseo de la Reforma Mexico City

Mexico has a free market mixed economy, and is firmly established as an upper middle-income country. It is the 12th largest economy in the world as measured in Gross Domestic Product in purchasing power parity. According to the latest information available from the World Bank, Mexico had the highest Gross National Income per capita in Latin America, both in nominal terms and in purchasing power parity(PPP), at \$7,830 and \$11,990 respectively in 2006. After the 1994 economic debacle, Mexico has made an impressive recovery, building a modern and diversified economy. Recent administrations have also improved infrastructure and opened competition in seaports, railroads, telecommunications, electricity generation, natural gas distribution and airports. Oil is Mexico's largest source of foreign income. According to Goldman Sachs BRIMC review of emerging economies, by 2050 the largest economies in the world will be as follows: China, United States, India, Japan, Brazil, and Mexico.



Santa Fe, business district.

According to the director for Mexico at the World Bank, the population in extreme poverty has decreased from 24.2% to 17.6% in the general population and from 42% to 27.9% in rural areas from 2000-2004. Nonetheless, income inequality remains a problem, and huge gaps remain not only between rich and poor but also between the north and the south, and between urban and rural areas. Sharp contrasts in income and Human Development are also a grave problem in Mexico. The 2004 United Nations Human Development Index report for Mexico states that Benito Juárez, a district of the Distrito Federal, and San Pedro Garza García, in the State of Nuevo León, would have a similar level of economic, educational and life expectancy development to Germany or New Zealand. In contrast, Metlatonoc, in the state of Guerrero, would have an HDI similar to that of Syria.



Many of the positive effects in poverty reduction and the increase in purchasing power of the middle class are attributed to the macroeconomic stability pursued by the last two administrations. GDP annual average growth for the period of 1995–2002 was 5.1%. The economic downturn in the United States also caused a similar pattern in Mexico, from which it rapidly recovered to grow 4.1% in 2005 and 3% in 2005. Inflation has reached a record low of 3.3% in 2005, and interest rates are low, which have spurred credit-consumption in the middle class. The Fox administration also provided monetary stability: the budget deficit was further reduced and foreign debt was decreased to less than 20% of GDP. Along with Chile, Mexico has the highest rating of long-term sovereign credit in Latin America. Poverty in Mexico is further reduced by remittances from Mexican citizens working in the United States of America, which reaches US\$20 billion dollars per year and is the second largest source of foreign income after oil exports.

Approximately 90% of Mexican trade has been put under free trade agreements with over 40 countries, of which the North American Free Trade Agreement remains the most significant. Almost 90% of Mexican exports go to the United States and Canada and close to 65% of its imports come from these two countries. Other major trade agreements have been signed with the European Union, Japan, Israel and many countries in Central and South America. As such, Mexico has become a major player in international trade and an export power. Measured in the dollar value of exports, Mexico was the 15th largest exporter in the world—tenth if the European Union is treated as a single entity. Mexican exports roughly equal the total exports of all Mercosur members together, Venezuela inclusive.

Ongoing economic concerns include the commercial and financial dependence on the US, low real wages, underemployment for a large segment of the population, inequitable income distribution (the top 20% of income earners account for 55% of income), and few advancement opportunities for the largely Amerindian population in the impoverished southern states. Lack of structural reform is further exacerbated by an ever increasing outflow of the population into the United States, decreasing domestic pressure for reform.

## Tourism

According to the World Tourism Organization, Mexico has one of the largest tourism industries in the world. In 2005 it was the seventh most popular tourist destination worldwide, receiving over 20 million tourists per year; it is the only country in Latin America to be within the top 25. Tourism is also the third largest sector in the country's industrial GDP. The most notable tourist draws are the ancient Meso-American ruins, and popular beach resorts. The coastal climate and unique culture – a fusion of European (particularly Spanish) and Meso-American cultures; also make Mexico attractive. The peak tourist seasons in Mexico are during December and during July and August, with brief surges during the week before Easter and during spring break at many of the beach resort sites which are popular among vacationing college students from the United States.

Mexico's middle/lower class typically take their vacations within Mexico, in contrast to the middle/higher class who travel worldwide, especially to Europe and the United States, and in lesser numbers to Asia and South America. Mexico is the twenty-third highest tourism spender in the world, and the highest in Latin America.



Coastal Skyline of Acapulco,  
Guerrero

## Infrastructure



## Energy

Energy production in Mexico is managed by State-owned companies: the Federal Commission of Electricity (*Comisión Federal de Electricidad*, CFE) and Pemex (*Petróleos Mexicanos*). The CFE is in charge of the operation of electricity-generating plants and its distribution all across the territory, with the exception of the states of Morelos, México, Hidalgo and the Federal District, whose distribution of electricity is in charge of the State-owned *Luz y Fuerza del Centro*. Most of the electricity is generated in thermoelectrical plants, even though CFE operates several hydroelectrical plants, as well as wind power, geothermal and nuclear generators.

Pemex is in charge of the exploration, extraction, transportation and marketing of crude oil and natural gas, as well as the refining and distribution of petroleum products and petrochemicals. Pemex is the largest company in Latin America, and the ninth-largest oil company in the world. In terms of total output, in 2007 it was the sixth-largest producer in the world—in 2003 it was the third-largest—producing 3.1 million of barrels a day, way above the production of Kuwait or Venezuela.

## Transportation



A Metrobús in Santa Fe.

The paved-roadway network in Mexico is the most extensive in Latin America at 116,802 km in 2005; 10,474 km were multi-lane freeways or expressways, most of which were tollways. Nonetheless, Mexico's diverse orography—most of the territory is crossed by high-altitude ranges of mountains—as well as economic challenges have led to difficulties in creating an integrated transportation network and even though the network has improved, it still cannot meet national needs adequately.

Being one of the first Latin American countries to promote railway development, the network, though extensive at 30,952 km, is still inefficient to meet the economic demands of transportation. Most of the rail network is mainly used for merchandise or industrial freight and was mostly operated by National Railway of Mexico (*Ferrocarriles Nacionales de*

*México*, FNM), privatized in 1997.

In 1999, Mexico had 1,806 airports, of which 233 had paved runways; of these, 35 carry 97% of the passenger traffic. The Mexico City International Airport remains the largest in Latin America and the 44th largest in the world transporting 21 million passengers a year. There are more than 30 domestic airline companies of which only two are known internationally: Aeromexico and Mexicana.

Mass transit in Mexico is modest. Most of the domestic passenger transport needs are served by an extensive bus network with several dozen companies operating by regions. Train passenger transportation between cities is limited. Inner-city rail mass transit is available at Mexico City—with the operation of the metro, elevated and ground train, as well as a Suburban Train connecting the adjacent municipalities of Greater Mexico City—as well as at Guadalajara and Monterrey, the first served by a commuter rail and the second by an underground and elevated metro.



An Aeromexico plane landing at Mexico City International Airport



## Communications

The telecommunications industry is mostly dominated by Telmex (*Teléfonos de México*), privatized in 1990. As of 2006, Telmex had expanded its operations to Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay and the United States. Other players in the domestic industry are Axtel and Maxcom. Due to Mexican orography, providing landline telephone service at remote mountainous areas is expensive, and the penetration of line-phones per capita is low compared to other Latin American countries, at twenty-percent. Mobile telephony has the advantage of reaching all areas at a lower cost, and the total number of mobile lines is almost three times that of landlines, with an estimation of 57 million lines. The telecommunication industry is regulated by the government through Cofetel (*Comisión Federal de Telecomunicaciones*).

Usage of radio, television, and Internet in Mexico is prevalent. There are approximately 1,410 radio broadcast stations and 236 television stations (excluding repeaters). Major players in the broadcasting industry are Televisa—the largest Spanish media company in the Spanish-speaking world— and TV Azteca.



A Telmex retail store in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco

## Demographics

According to the latest official census, which reported a population of 103 million, Mexico is the most populous Spanish-speaking country in the world. Mexican annual population growth has drastically decreased from a peak of 3.5% in 1965 to 0.99% in 2005. Life expectancy in 2006 was estimated to be at 75.4 years (72.6 male and 78.3 female). The states with the highest life expectancy are Baja California (75.9 years) and Nuevo Leon (75.6 years). The Federal District has a life expectancy of the same level as Baja California. The lowest levels are found in Chiapas (72.9), Oaxaca (73.2) and Guerrero (73.2 years). The mortality rate in 1970 was 9.7 per 1000 people; by 2001, the rate had dropped to 4.9 men per 1000 men and 3.8 women per 1000 women. The most common reasons for death in 2001 were heart problems (14.6% for men 17.6% for women) and cancer (11% for men and 15.8% for women).

Mexican population is increasingly urban, with close to 75% living in cities. The five largest urban areas in Mexico ( Greater Mexico City, Greater Guadalajara, Greater Monterrey, Greater Puebla and Greater Toluca) are home to 30% of the country's population. Migration patterns within the country show positive migration to north-western and south-eastern states, and a negative rate of migration for the Federal District. While the annual population growth is still positive, the national net migration rate is negative (-4.7/1000), attributable to the emigration phenomenon of people from rural communities to the United States.

### Metropolitan areas of Mexico

Metropolitan areas in Mexico have been traditionally defined as the group of municipalities that heavily interact with each other, usually around a core city. In 2004, a joint effort between CONAPO, INEGI and the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL) agreed to define metropolitan areas as either:

- the group of two or more municipalities in which a city with a population of at least 50,000 is located whose urban area extends over the limit of the municipality that originally contained the core city incorporating either physically or under its area of direct influence other adjacent predominantly urban municipalities all of which have a high degree of social and economic integration or are relevant for urban politics and administration; or



- a single municipality in which a city of a population of at least one million is located and fully contained, (that is, it does not transcend the limits of a single municipality); or
- a city with a population of at least 250,000 which forms a conurbation with other cities in the United States.

It should be noted, however, that northwestern and southeastern states are divided into a small number of large municipalities whereas central states are divided into a large number of smaller municipalities. As such, metropolitan areas in the northwest usually do not extend over more than one municipality (and figures usually report population for the entire municipality) whereas metropolitan areas in the centre extend over many municipalities.


Few metropolitan areas extend beyond the limits of one state, namely: Greater Mexico City (Federal District, Mexico and Hidalgo), Puebla-Tlaxcala (Puebla and Tlaxcala, but excludes the city of Tlaxcala), Comarca Lagunera (Coahuila and Durango), and Tampico (Tamaulipas and Veracruz).

The following is a list of the major metropolitan areas of Mexico, as reported in the 2005 census.


### Metropolitan areas by population

Rank	City proper	State	Pop.	Rank	City proper	State	Pop.
1	<b>Mexico City</b>	Federal District	19,231,829	11	<b>Querétaro</b>	Querétaro	918,100
2	<b>Guadalajara</b>	Jalisco	4,095,853	12	<b>Mérida</b>	Yucatán	897,740
3	<b>Monterrey</b>	Nuevo Leon	3,664,331	13	<b>Mexicali</b>	Baja California	855,962
4	<b>Puebla</b>	Puebla	2,109,049	14	<b>Aguascalientes</b>	Aguascalientes	805,666
5	<b>Toluca</b>	Mexico State	1,610,786	15	<b>Tampico</b>	Tamaulipas	803,196
6	<b>Tijuana</b>	Baja California	1,483,992	16	<b>Culiacán</b>	Sinaloa	793,730
7	<b>León</b>	Guanajuato	1,425,210	17	<b>Cuernavaca</b>	Morelos	787,556
8	<b>Ciudad Juárez</b>	Chihuahua	1,313,338	18	<b>Acapulco</b>	Guerrero	786,830
9	<b>Torreón</b>	Coahuila	1,110,890	19	<b>Chihuahua</b>	Chihuahua	784,882
10	<b>San Luis Potosí</b>	San Luis Potosí	957,753	20	<b>Morelia</b>	Michoacán	735,624

2005 Census



**Mexico City**



**Guadalajara**

## Immigration

Mexico is home to the largest number of U.S. citizens abroad (estimated at one million as of 1999), which represents 1% of the Mexican population and 25% of all U.S. citizens abroad. Other significant communities of foreigners are those of Central and South Americans, most notably from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Cuba, Venezuela, Guatemala, and Belize. Though estimations vary, the Argentine community is considered to be the second largest foreign community in the country (estimated somewhere between 30,000 and 150,000). Throughout the 20th century, the country followed a policy of granting asylum to fellow Latin Americans and Europeans (mostly Spaniards in the 1940s) fleeing political persecution in their home countries.





Discrepancies between the figures for official legal aliens and those of all foreign-born residents regardless of their immigration status are quite large. The official figure for foreign-born legal residents in Mexico is 493,000 (since 2004), with a majority (86.9%) of these born in the United States (except Chiapas, where the majority of immigrants are from Central America). The five states with the most immigrants are Baja California (12.1% of total immigrants), Mexico City (the *Federal District*; 11.4%), Jalisco (9.9%), Chihuahua (9%) and Tamaulipas (7.3%). More than 54.6% of the immigrant population are fifteen years old or younger, while 9% are fifty or older.

## Ethnography

Mexico is ethnically diverse, and the constitution defines the country to be a pluricultural nation.

- Mestizos (those of mixed European and Amerindian ancestry) form the largest group, comprising up to 60-75% of the total population.
- Amerindians called indigenous peoples (*indigenas*) are estimated to be between 12% (pure Amerindian) and 30% (predominantly Amerindian). Indigenous peoples are considered the foundation of the Mexican pluricultural nation and therefore enjoy self-determination in certain areas. Indigenous languages are also considered "national languages" and are protected by law.
- Whites make up 9%-17% of the population, mostly descendants of the first Spanish settlers; although there are a minority of French, Italian, Portuguese, Basque, German, Irish, Polish, Romanian, Russian and British descents from recent contemporary migration after the waves of immigration that brought many Europeans at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, along with some Canadians and Euro-Americans from the United States and Argentina. Most are found in major cities.



School children, from Monterrey, Nuevo León.

Mexico also received a large number of Lebanese, Turkish, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and Filipino immigrants.

Afro-Mexicans, mostly of mixed ancestry, live in the coastal areas of Veracruz, Tabasco and Guerrero.

## Language

There is no *de jure* constitutional official language at the federal level in Mexico. Spanish, spoken by 97% of the population, is considered a national language by The General Law of Linguistic Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, which also grants all indigenous minority languages spoken in Mexico, regardless of the number of speakers, the same validity as Spanish in all territories in which they are spoken, and indigenous peoples are entitled to request some public services and documents in their native languages. Along with Spanish, the law has granted them –more than 60 languages– the status of "national languages". The law includes all Amerindian languages regardless of origin; that is, it includes the Amerindian languages of ethnic groups non-native to the territory. As such the National Commission for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples recognizes the language of the Kickapoo, who immigrated from the United States, and recognizes the languages of the Guatemalan Amerindian refugees. The Mexican government has promoted and established bilingual primary and secondary education in some indigenous rural communities. Approximately 7.1% of the population speaks an indigenous language and 1.2% do not speak Spanish.



Mexico has the largest Spanish-speaking population in the world with more than twice as many as the second largest Spanish-speaking country. Almost a third of all Spanish native speakers in the world live in Mexico. Nahuatl is spoken by 1.5 million people and Yucatec Maya by 800,000. Some of the national languages are in danger of extinction; Lacandon is spoken by fewer than one hundred people.

English is widely used in business, at the border cities, as well as by the one million U.S. citizens that live in Mexico, mostly retirees in small towns in Baja California, Guanajuato and Chiapas. Other European languages spoken by sizable communities in Mexico are Venetian, Plautdietsch, German, French and Romani.

## Religion

Unlike some other Latin American countries, Mexico has no official religion, and the Constitution of 1917 and the anti-clerical laws imposed limitations on the church and sometimes codified state intrusion into church matters. The government does not provide any financial contributions to the church, and the church does not participate in public education.

The last census reported, by self-ascription, that 95% of the population is Christian. Roman Catholics are 89% of the total population, 47% percent of whom attend church services weekly. In absolute terms, Mexico has the world's second largest number of Catholics after Brazil.

About 6% of the population (more than 4.4 million people) is Protestant, of whom Pentecostals and Charismatics (called Neo-Pentecostals in the census), are the largest group (1.37 million people). There are also a sizeable number of Seventh-day Adventists (0.6 million people). The 2000 national census counted more than one million Jehovah's Witnesses. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claims one million registered members as of 2006, about 250,000 of whom are active, though this is disputed.

The presence of Jews in Mexico dates back to 1521, when Hernando Cortés conquered the Aztecs, accompanied by several Conversos. According to the last national census by the INEGI, there are now more than 45,000 Mexican Jews. Almost three million people in the 2000 National Census reported having no religion.

In 1992, Mexico lifted almost all restrictions on the Catholic Church and other religions, including granting all religious groups legal status, conceding them limited property rights, and lifting restrictions on the number of priests in the country. Until recently, priests did not have the right to vote, and even now they cannot be elected to public office.



Metropolitan Cathedral of Guadalajara, Jalisco.

## Culture



Mexican culture reflects the complexity of the country's history through the blending of pre-Hispanic civilizations and the culture of Spain, imparted during Spain's 300-year colonization of Mexico. Exogenous cultural elements mainly from the United States have been incorporated into Mexican culture. As was the case in most Latin American countries, when Mexico became an independent nation, it had to slowly create a national identity, being an ethnically diverse country in which, for the most part, the only connecting element amongst the newly independent inhabitants was Catholicism.

The Porfirian era (*el Porfiriato*), in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, was marked by economic progress and peace. After four decades of civil unrest and war, Mexico saw the development of philosophy and the arts, promoted by President Díaz himself. Since that time, though accentuated during the Mexican Revolution, cultural identity had its foundation in the *mestizaje*, of which the indigenous (i.e. Amerindian) element was the core. In light of the various ethnicities that formed the Mexican people, José Vasconcelos in his publication *La Raza Cósmica* (The Cosmic Race) (1925) defined Mexico to be the melting pot of all races (thus extending the definition of the *mestizo*) not only biologically but culturally as well. This exalting of *mestizaje* was a revolutionary idea that sharply contrasted with the idea of a superior pure race prevalent in Europe at the time.



A type of traditional Mexican dance and costumes.

## Cinema

Mexican films from the Golden Era in the 1940s and 1950s are the greatest examples of Latin American cinema, with a huge industry comparable to the Hollywood of those years. Mexican films were exported and exhibited in all of Latin America and Europe. *Maria Candelaria* (1944) by Emilio Fernández, was one of the first films awarded a Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1946, the first time the event was held after World War II. Famous actors and actresses from this period include María Félix, Pedro Infante, Dolores del Río, Jorge Negrete and the comedian Cantinflas.

More recently, films such as *Como agua para chocolate* (1992), *Cronos* (1993), *Amores Perros* (2000), *Y tu mamá también* (2001), *El Crimen del Padre Amaro* (2002), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) and *Babel* (2006) have been successful in creating universal stories about contemporary subjects, and were internationally recognised, as in the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. Mexican directors Alejandro González Iñárritu ( *Amores Perros*, *Babel*), Alfonso Cuarón ( *Children of Men*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*), Guillermo del Toro, Carlos Carrera ( *The Crime of Father Amaro*), and screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga are some of the most known present-day film makers.

## Music



Jalisco Symphony Orchestra.

Mexican society enjoys a vast array of music genres, showing the diversity of Mexican culture. Traditional music includes Mariachi, Banda, Norteño, Ranchera and Corridos; on an every-day basis most Mexicans listen to contemporary music such as Pop, Rock, etc. in both English and Spanish. Mexico has the largest media industry in Latin America, producing Mexican artists who are famous in Central and South America and parts of Europe, especially Spain. Some well-known Mexican singers are Thalía and Luis Miguel. Popular groups are Café Tacvba, Molotov, RBD and Mana, among others.

Most states, through their Ministry of Culture or of Education, sponsor an *Orquesta Sinfónica* or *Orquesta Filarmónica* (Symphony Orchestra or Philharmonica Orchestra) so people can enjoy classical music. The *Orquesta Filarmónica de Jalisco* is the oldest in the country.

## Fine arts

Post-revolutionary art in Mexico had its expression in the works of renowned artists such as Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, Rufino Tamayo, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Juan O'Gorman. Diego Rivera, the most well-known figure of Mexican muralism, painted the *Man at the Crossroads* at the Rockefeller Centre in New York City, a huge mural that was destroyed the next year due to the inclusion of a portrait of Russian communist leader Lenin. Some of Rivera's murals are displayed at the Mexican National Palace and the Palace of Fine Arts.

Academic music composers of Mexico include Manuel M. Ponce, Mario Lavista, Silvestre Revueltas, Arturo Marquez, and Juventino Rosas, many of whom incorporated traditional elements into their music. Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz, Carlos Fuentes, Juan Rulfo, Elena Poniatowska, and José Emilio Pacheco, are some of the most recognized authors of Mexican literature.



Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City.

## Cuisine



Mexican cuisine is known for its intense and varied flavours, colorful decoration, and variety of spices. Most of today's Mexican food is based on pre-hispanic traditions, including the Aztecs and Maya, combined with culinary trends introduced by Spanish colonists. The *conquistadores* eventually combined their imported diet of rice, beef, pork, chicken, wine, garlic and onions with the native pre-Columbian food, including maize, tomato, vanilla, avocado, papaya, pineapple, chile pepper, beans, squash, limes (*limón* in Mexican Spanish), sweet potato, peanut and turkey.

The most internationally recognized dishes include chocolate, tacos, quesadillas, enchiladas, burritos, tamales and mole among others. Regional dishes include mole poblano, chiles en nogada and chalupas from Puebla; cabrito and machaca from Monterrey, cochinita pibil from Yucatán, Tlayudas from Oaxaca, as well as barbacoa, chilaquiles, milanesas, and many others.

## Sports

Mexico City hosted the XIX Olympic Games in 1968, making it the only Latin American city to do so. The country has also hosted the FIFA World Cup twice, in 1970 and 1986.

Mexico's most popular sport is football (soccer). It is commonly believed that Football was introduced in Mexico by Cornish miners at the end of the 19th century. By 1902 a 5 team league emerged still with a strong English influence . Football became a professional sport in 1943. Since the "Era Professional" started, Mexico's top clubs have been Guadalajara with 11 championships, América with 10 and Toluca and Cruz Azul with 8 . In Mexican Football many players have been raised to the level of legend, but two of them have received international recognition above others. Antonio Carbajal was the first player to appear in 5 World Cups, and Hugo Sanchez was named best CONCACAF player of the 20th Century by IFFHS. Mexican's biggest stadiums are Estadio Azteca, Estadio Olimpico Universitario and Estadio Jalisco.

The national sport of Mexico is Charrería. Bullfighting is also a popular sport in the country, and almost all large cities have bullrings. *Plaza México* in Mexico City, is the largest bullring in the world, which seats 55,000 people. Professional wrestling (or *Lucha libre* in Spanish) is a major crowd draw with national promotions such as AAA, LLL, CMLL and others.

Baseball, is also popular, especially in the Gulf of Mexico, Yucatan Peninsula and the Northern States. The season runs from March to July with playoffs held in August. The Mexican professional league is named the Liga Mexicana de Beisbol. Current champions (2007) are Sultanes de Monterrey who defeated in a tight series Leones de Yucatán. However the best level of baseball is played in Liga Mexicana del Pacífico, played in Sinaloa, Sonora and Baja California. Given that it is played during the MLB off-season, some of its players are signed to play with the league 8 teams. Current champions (2007) are Naranjeros de Hermosillo. The league champion participates in the Caribbean Series, a tournament between the Champions of Winter Leagues of Mexico, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.



Enchiladas, a traditional Mexican dish



The Estadio Azteca (Aztec Stadium) is the official home stadium of the Mexico national football team.



Baseball stadium in Monterrey, home to Monterrey Sultans.



Lorena Ochoa, world's number one woman golfer according to the LPGA.

The most important professional basketball league is the Liga Nacional de Baloncesto Profesional and covers the whole Mexican territory, where the Soles de Mexicali are the current champions. In 2007 three Mexican teams will be competing in the American Basketball Association. In the northwestern states is the CIBACOPA Competition, with professional basketball players from Mexico and the U.S. Universities and some teams from the NBA.

American football is played at the major universities like ITESM ( Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey), UANL ( Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León), UDLA (University of the Americas), IPN (Instituto Politécnico Nacional) and UNAM. The college league in Mexico is called ONEFA. There is also a strong following of the NFL in Mexico with the Cowboys, Steelers, Dolphins and Raiders being the most popular teams. Rugby is played at the amateur level throughout the country with the majority of clubs in Mexico City and others in Monterrey, Guadalajara, Celaya, Guanajuato and Oaxaca.

Car racing is very popular in Mexico. Throughout the years, Mexico has hosted races for some of the most important international championships such as Formula 1, NASCAR, Champ Car, A1 Grand Prix, among others. Mexico also has its own NASCAR-sanctioned stock car series, the NASCAR Corona Series, which runs 14 events in different cities, drawing large crowds. Other forms of racing include Formula Renault, Formula Vee, touring cars, Pick-up trucks, endurance racing, rallying, and off-road.

Ice Hockey is played in larger cities like Monterrey, Guadalajara, Villahermosa, Culiacan and of course Mexico City, with teams like: Galerias Pumas, Gran Sur Wolves, Lomas Verdes Falcons, Metepec Tigres, Monterrey Toros, San Jeronimo Bears, Villahermosa Garrobos and as independent teams: Bosques, Cuatitlan Izcalli, Jalapa, Jalisco, Leon, Merida, Puebla, Jurasicos. The IIHF or Federación Deportiva de Mexico de Hockey Sobre Hielo A.C. is the Official Mexico National Ice Hockey Federation and regulates all tournaments in Mexico.

Other notable Mexican athletes include golfer Lorena Ochoa, who is currently ranked first in the LPGA world rankings, Ana Guevara, former world champion of the 400 metres and Olympic subchampion in Athens 2004, and Fernando Platas, a numerous Olympic medal winning diver.

Sport fishing is popular in Baja California and the big Pacific coast resorts, while freshwater bass fishing is growing in popularity too. The gentler arts of diving and snorkeling are big around the Caribbean, with famous dive sites at Cozumel and on the reefs further south. The Pacific coast is becoming something of a centre for surfing, with few facilities as yet; all these sports attract tourists to Mexico.

## Health Care and Education



In the 1990s, Mexico entered a transitional stage in the overall health of the population; in the 1990s Mexico exhibited mortality patterns similar to those found in developed societies.

Health and hospital care is free and available to all Mexicans through the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) and the Institute for Social Security and Services for State Workers (ISSSTE). Overall, health services are adequate; though exceptional cases are mostly centralized in large cities and offered by private hospitals. Residents of small towns have to travel to large urban centers to get specialized attention. Disparities between large cities, urban and rural are quite noticeable; health coverage in rural and indigenous communities is poor. Medical training is done mostly at public universities with specializations abroad. Some public universities in Mexico, most notably the University of Guadalajara, have signed agreements with the US to receive and train American students in Medicine. Health care costs in private institutions and prescription drugs in Mexico are on average lower than that of its North American economic partners; drugs manufactured in Mexico are 50% less costly on average than those manufactured in the US.

In 2004, the literacy rate was at 97% for youth under the age of 14 and 91% for people over 15, placing Mexico at the 24th place in the world rank accordingly to UNESCO. Primary and secondary education (9 years) is free and mandatory. Even though different bilingual education programs have existed since the 1960s for the indigenous communities, after a constitutional reform in the late 1990s, these programs have had a new thrust, and free text books are produced in more than a dozen indigenous languages.

In the 1970s, Mexico established a system of "distance-learning" through satellite communications to reach otherwise inaccessible small rural and indigenous communities. Schools that use this system are known as *telesecundarias* in Mexico. The Mexican distance learning secondary education is also transmitted to some Central American countries and to Colombia, and it is used in some southern regions of the United States as a method of bilingual education. There are approximately 30,000 *telesecundarias* and approximately a million *telesecundaria* students in the country.

The largest and most prestigious public university in Mexico, today numbering over 269,000 students, is the National Autonomous University of Mexico (*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*, UNAM) founded in 1551. Three Nobel laureates and most of Mexico's modern-day presidents are among its former students. UNAM conducts 50% of Mexico's scientific research and has presence all across the country with satellite campuses and research centers. The National Autonomous University of Mexico ranks 192th place in the Top 200 World University Ranking published by The Times Higher Education Supplement in 2007, making it the highest ranked Spanish-speaking university in the world and the third highest ranked in Latin America. The second largest university is the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN). These institutions are public, and there are at least a couple of public universities per state.

One of the most prestigious private universities is Monterrey's Technological and Higher Education Institute (ITESM). It was ranked by the *Wall Street Journal* as the 7th top International Business School worldwide and 74th among the world's top arts and humanities universities ranking of *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, published in 2005. ITESM has thirty-two secondary campuses, apart from its Monterrey Campus. Other important private universities include Mexico's Autonomous Technological Institute (ITAM), ranked as the best economics school in Latin America, Universidad de las Américas Puebla (UDLAP) and the Ibero-American University ( Universidad Iberoamericana).



Biotechnology centre, ITESM  
Campus Monterrey



Hospital Angeles in  
Villahermosa, Tabasco.



## Science and technology

Notable Mexican technologists include Luis E. Miramontes, the co-inventor of the contraceptive pill, Guillermo González Camarena, who invented the "Chromoscopic adapter for television equipment", an early colour television transmission system, and Mario J. Molina, who won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Rodolfo Neri Vela, an UNAM graduate, was the first Mexican to enter space (as part of the STS-61-B mission in 1985.)

In recent years, the biggest scientific project being developed in Mexico was the construction of the Large Millimeter Telescope (Gran Telescopio Milimétrico, GMT), the world's largest and most sensitive single-aperture telescope in its frequency range. It was designed to observe regions of space obscured by stellar dust.

Nonetheless, the government currently spends only 4.16% of GDP in science and technology, a low percentage in comparison with other countries, although Mexico has shown outstanding scientific success with such a small budget. Mexico has a low number of researchers compared to other OECD countries, with only 19.7 researchers per 10,000 inhabitants. Mexico trains sixty-five PhDs per million inhabitants per year. Moreover, there is a regional disparity in the allocation of scientific resources; 75% of all doctorate degrees are awarded from institutions in Mexico City area.

In 1962, the National Commission of Outer Space (*Comisión Nacional del Espacio Exterior*, CONNE) was established, but was dismantled in 1977. In 2007, a project was presented to re-open a new Mexican Space Agency (AEXA). It is awaiting Senate approval by the end of 2008.

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Rodolfo Neri Vela, the first Mexican in space.





# Montserrat




## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

**Montserrat** (pronounced /ˌmɒntsəˈræt/) is a British overseas territory located in the Leeward Islands, part of the chain of islands called the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean Sea. It measures approximately 16 km (10 miles) long and 11 km (7 miles) wide, giving 40 kilometres (25 mi) of coastline. Montserrat was given its name by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage to the New World in 1493, after its namesake located in Catalonia. Montserrat is often referred to as *the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean*, due both to its resemblance to coastal Ireland and to the Irish descent of most of its early European settlers.

Its Georgian era capital city of Plymouth was destroyed and two-thirds of the island's population forced to flee abroad by an eruption of the previously dormant Soufriere Hills volcano that began on July 18, 1995. The eruption continues today on a much reduced scale, the damage being confined to the areas around Plymouth including its docking facilities and the former W.H. Bramble Airport. An exclusion zone extending from the south coast of the island north to parts of the Belham Valley has been closed because of an increase in the size of the existing volcanic dome. This zone includes St. George's Hill which provided visitors with a spectacular view of the volcano and the destruction it has wrought upon the capital. A new airport at Gerald's in the northern part of the island opened in 2005. The village of Brades currently serves as the *de facto* centre of government.

## History

Montserrat was populated by Arawak and Carib people when it was claimed by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage for Spain in 1493, naming the island *Santa María de Montserrate*, after the *Blessed Virgin of the Monastery of Montserrat*, which is located on the Mountain of Montserrat, in Catalonia. The island fell under English control in 1632 when a group of Irish fleeing anti-Roman Catholic sentiment in Saint Kitts and Nevis settled there. The import of slaves (including many Irish slaves exiled there from Oliver Cromwell's reign of terror in Ireland), common to most Caribbean islands, mainly coming from West Africa, followed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and an economy based on sugar, rum, arrowroot and Sea Island cotton was established.

<b>Montserrat</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> " God Save the Queen"	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Plymouth <sup>1</sup> Brades (de facto)
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Government</b>	British Overseas Territory
- Queen	Elizabeth II
- Governor	Peter Andrew Waterworth
- Chief Minister	Lowell Lewis



In 1782, during the American Revolutionary War, Montserrat was briefly captured by France. It was returned to the United Kingdom under the Treaty of Paris which ended that conflict. A failed slave uprising on 17 March 1798 led to Montserrat later becoming one of only four places in the world that celebrates St Patrick's Day as a public or bank holiday (the others being the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador). Slavery was finally abolished in Montserrat in 1834, presumably as a result of the general emancipation of slaves within the British Empire in that same year.

Falling sugar prices during the nineteenth century had an adverse effect on the island's economy and in 1869 the philanthropist Joseph Sturge of Birmingham formed the Montserrat Company to buy sugar estates that were no longer economically viable. The company planted limes starting production of the island's famous lime juice, set up a school, and sold parcels of land to the inhabitants of the island, with the result that much of Montserrat came to be owned by smallholders.

From 1871 to 1958 Montserrat was administered as part of the Federal Colony of the Leeward Islands, becoming a province of the short-lived West Indies Federation from 1958 to 1962.

<b>British overseas territory</b>	
- British control established	1632
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	102 km <sup>2</sup> ( 219th) 39 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2005 estimate	4,488 <sup>2</sup> ( 216th)
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2002 estimate
- Total	\$29 million ( not ranked)
- Per capita	\$3,400 ( not ranked)
<b>HDI</b>	n/a (unranked) ( n/a)
<b>Currency</b>	East Caribbean dollar ( XCD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ms
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 664
<p><sup>1</sup> Abandoned in 1997 following a volcanic eruption. Government buildings are currently located in Brades, making it the <i>de facto</i> capital.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> An estimated 8,000 refugees left the island following the resumption of volcanic activity in July 1995; some have returned.</p>	



A Montserrat sunset.

With the completion of Beatles producer George Martin's AIR Studios Montserrat in 1979, the island attracted world-famous musicians who came to record in the peace and quiet and lush tropical surroundings of Montserrat.

The last several years of the 20th century, however, brought two events which devastated the island. In September 1989, Hurricane Hugo struck Montserrat with full force, damaging over 90 percent of the structures on the island. AIR Studios closed, and the tourist trade upon which the island depended was nearly wiped out. Within a few years, however, the island had recovered considerably—only to be struck again by disaster.



Montserrat's coastline.



Volcano eruption from space, looking south from the northern tip of the island.

In July 1995, Montserrat's Soufriere Hills volcano, dormant throughout recorded history, rumbled to life and began an eruption which eventually buried the island's capital, Plymouth, in more than 12 metres (39 ft) of mud, destroyed its airport and docking facilities, and rendered the southern half of the island uninhabitable. This forced more than half of the population to flee the island because they lacked housing. After a period of regular eruptive events during the late 1990s including one on June 25, 1997 in which 19 people lost their lives, the volcano's activity in recent years has been confined mostly to infrequent ventings of ash into the uninhabited areas in the south. However, this ash venting does occasionally extend into the populated areas of the northern and western parts of the island. As an example, on May 20, 2006, the lava dome that had been slowly building collapsed, resulting in an ashfall of about an inch (2.5 cm) in Old Towne and parts of Olveston. There were no injuries or significant property

damage.



Long referred to as "The Emerald Isle of the Caribbean" for both its Irish heritage and its resemblance to coastal Ireland, Montserrat today remains lush and green. A new airport, opened officially by the Princess Royal Princess Anne in February 2005, received its first commercial flights on July 11, 2005, and docking facilities are in place at Little Bay where a new capital is being constructed out of reach of any further volcanic activity.

The people of Montserrat were granted full residency rights in the United Kingdom in 1998, and citizenship was granted in 2002.

## Primary schools

- Government Primary Schools— Brades, and Look Out Primary.
- St. Augustine Roman Catholic School (Palm Loop, Montserrat)

## Parishes

Montserrat is divided into three parishes:

- Saint Anthony Parish
- Saint Georges Parish
- Saint Peter Parish

## Villages

- Brades (de facto capital)
- Davy Hill
- Farells Yard
- Flemmings
- Gerald's
- Hope
- Little Bay
- LookOut
- Old Towne
- Olveston
- Plymouth (official capital, abandoned)
- Saint John's



View of the dome of Montserrat's Soufriere Hills Volcano, taken from MVO (April 2007).



Montserrat's Soufriere Hills Volcano.



- Salem
- Sweeney's
- Woodlands

## Geography

The island of Montserrat is located approximately 480 km (300 miles) east-southeast of Puerto Rico and 48 km (30 miles) southwest of Antigua. It comprises only 104 km<sup>2</sup> (40 square miles) and is increasing gradually owing to volcanic deposits on the southeast coast of the island; it is 16 km (10 miles) long and 11 km (7 miles) wide, with dramatic rock faced cliffs rising 15 to 30 m (50-100 feet) above the sea and smooth bottomed sandy beaches scattered among coves on the west side of the island. Montserrat has been a quiet haven of extraordinary scenic beauty.

Montserrat has two islets: Little Redonda and Virgin.

The Soufrière Hills or Montserrat volcano is an active complex stratovolcano with many lava domes forming its summit on the island. After a long period of dormancy it became active in 1995, and eruptions have continued up to the present. The last major eruption was in July 2003.



## Economy

It was formerly the home of a branch of George Martin's AIR Studios (and other amenities) that made the island popular with working and vacationing musicians and other celebrities, celebrities often went there to record their songs in the recording studios.

## Famous Montserratians

- Alphonsus "Arrow" Cassell, MBE born in Montserrat is well known for his soca song "Hot Hot Hot" which has sold over 4 million copies.
- Jim Allen—A former cricketer who represented the World Series Cricket West Indians.
- Junior Mendes—A professional footballer who has represented Montserrat twice in international games, currently playing for Aldershot Town in the Conference National League.
- Shabazz Baidoo—A football player of Montserrat descent, plays in Football League 2 for Dagenham & Redbridge.
- Tesfaye Bramble—A football player, currently unattached, but who most recently played in the Conference National in England for Stevenage Borough.

## Demographics



Population: 8,400 (2002 estimate)

Note: an estimated 8,000 refugees left the island following the resumption of volcanic activity in July 1995; few have returned. Pre-eruption population was 13,000 in 1994.

Age structure:

- 0-14 years: 23.4% (male 1,062; female 1,041)
- 15-64 years: 65.3% (male 2,805; female 3,066)
- 65 years and over: 11.3% (male 537; female 484) (2003 est.)

Median age:

- total: 27.8 years
- male: 27.7 years
- female: 27.9 years (2002)

Population growth rate: 4.5% (2003 est.)

Birth rate: 17.57 births/1,000 population (2003 est.)

Death rate: 7.34 deaths/1,000 population (2003 est.)

Net migration rate: 195.35 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Sex ratio:

- at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female
- under 15 years: 1.02 male(s)/female
- 15-64 years: 0.91 male(s)/female
- 65 years and over: 1.11 male(s)/female
- total population: 0.96 male(s)/female (2000 est.)

Infant mortality rate:

- total: 7.77 deaths/1,000 live births (2003 est.)
- female: 6.43 deaths/1,000 live births
- male: 9.05 deaths/1,000 live births



Life expectancy at birth:

- total population: 78.36 years
- male: 76.24 years
- female: 80.59 years (2003 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.8 children born/woman (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS—adult prevalence rate: NA%

HIV/AIDS—people living with HIV/AIDS: NA

HIV/AIDS—deaths: NA

Nationality:

- noun: Montserratian(s)
- adjective: Montserratian

Ethnic groups: black, white—mainly of mixed Irish and African descent

Religions: Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Seventh-Day Adventist, other Christian denominations

Languages: English

Literacy:

- definition: age 15 and over has ever attended school
- total population: 97%
- male: 97%
- female: 97% (1970 est.)

## Culture

Cricket is a popular sport in Montserrat. Although not many players from Montserrat have played for West Indies they are in fact eligible to play for the West Indies cricket team. Jim Allen was the first to play for West Indies and he represented the World Series Cricket West Indians. No other player from Montserrat has gone on to represent West Indies.



Montserrat has its own FIFA Affiliated Football Team, and has twice competed in the World Cup qualifiers. A field for the team was built near the airport by FIFA. The Montserrat team are currently tied for 199st place in the FIFA world rankings with eight other teams, including American Samoa and Guam. In 2002, the team competed in a friendly with the second-lowest-ranked team in FIFA at that time, Bhutan, in *The Other Final*- the same day as the final of the 2002 World Cup. Bhutan won 4-0.

## Operation Montserrat

Currently, American and British elementary and middle school students are eligible to participate in an Operation Montserrat live simulation. This is a videoconference program based on events of 1996 in which a hurricane approaches and a volcanic eruption occur nearly at the same time. The students are responsible for rescuing all of the people. In the weeks leading up to this, they practice the skills they need in their classroom.

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# Netherlands Antilles

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

The **Netherlands Antilles** (Dutch: *Nederlandse Antillen* ), previously known as the **Netherlands West Indies** or **Dutch Antilles/West Indies**, is part of the Lesser Antilles and consists of two groups of islands in the Caribbean Sea: Curaçao and Bonaire, just off the Venezuelan coast, and Sint Eustatius, Saba and Sint Maarten, located southeast of the Virgin Islands. The islands form an autonomous part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The islands' economy depends mostly upon tourism, international financial services, international commerce and shipping and petroleum.

The Netherlands Antilles was scheduled to be dissolved as a unified political entity on 15 December 2008, so that the five constituent islands will attain new constitutional statuses within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This dissolution is still planned, but has been postponed to an indefinite future date.


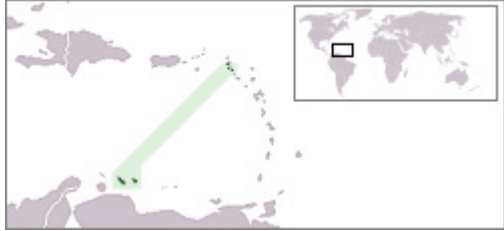
## History

Both the leeward ( Alonso de Ojeda, 1499) and windward (Christopher Columbus, 1493) island groups were discovered and initially settled by Spain. In the 17th century, the islands were conquered by the Dutch West India Company and were used as military outposts and trade bases, most prominent the slave trade. Slavery was abolished in 1863.

In 1954, the status of the islands was up-graded from a colonial territory to a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as a separate country within the kingdom. The island of Aruba was part of the Netherlands Antilles until 1986, when it was granted *status aparte*, becoming yet another part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as a separate country within the kingdom.

Between June 2000 and April 2005, each island of the Netherlands Antilles had a referendum on its future status. The four options that could be voted on were:

- closer ties with the Netherlands
- remaining within the Netherlands Antilles
- autonomy as a country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands (*status aparte*)
- independence

<b>Nederlandse Antillen</b> <b>Antia Ulandes</b> <b>Antia Hulandes</b> <b>Netherlands Antilles</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> Libertate unanimes (Latin: "Unified by freedom")	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Anthem Without a Title</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Willemstad
<b>Official languages</b>	Dutch, English, Papiamentu



Of the five islands, Sint Maarten and Curaçao voted for *status aparte*, Saba and Bonaire voted for closer ties to the Netherlands, and Sint Eustatius voted to stay within the Netherlands Antilles.

The full results were:

Island	Date of referendum	Vote for closer ties with the Netherlands	Vote for remaining within the Netherlands Antilles	Vote for <i>status aparte</i>	Vote for independence	Reference
Sint Maarten	June 22, 2000	11.6%	3.7%	69.9%	14.2%	
Bonaire	September 10, 2004	59.0%	15.9%	24.1%	<1%	
Saba	November 5, 2004	86.05%	13.18%	-	<1%	
Curaçao	April 8, 2005	23%	-	68%	5%	
Sint Eustatius	April 8, 2005	20%	76%	-	1%	

On November 26, 2005 a Round Table Conference (RTC) was held between the governments of the Netherlands, Aruba, the Netherlands Antilles, and each island in the Netherlands Antilles. The final statement to emerge from the RTC stated that autonomy for Curaçao and Sint Maarten, plus a new status for Bonaire, Saba, and Sint Eustatius would come into effect by July 1, 2007. On October 12, 2006, the Netherlands reached an agreement with Saba, Bonaire, and Sint Eustatius; this agreement would make these islands special municipalities. On November 3, 2006, Curaçao and Sint Maarten were granted autonomy in an agreement, but this agreement was rejected by the then island council of Curaçao on November 28. The Curaçao government was not sufficiently convinced that the agreement would provide enough autonomy for Curaçao. On July 9, 2007 the new island council of Curaçao approved the agreement previously rejected in November 2006.

## Constitution

The head of state is the ruling monarch of the Netherlands, who is represented in the Netherlands Antilles by a governor. A council of ministers, chaired by a

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<b>Government</b>	
- Monarch	Queen Beatrix
- Governor	Frits Goedgedrag
- Prime Minister	Emily de Jongh-Elhage
<b>constitutional monarchy</b>	part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	800 km² ( 184th) 309 sq mi
- Water (%)	Negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2005 estimate	183,000 ( 185th)
- Density	229/km² ( 51st) 593/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2003 estimate
- Total	\$ 2.45 billion ( 180th)
- Per capita	\$ 11,400 (2003 est.) ( 79th)
<b>HDI (2003)</b>	n/a (unranked) ( n/a)
<b>Currency</b>	Netherlands Antillean guilder ( ANG)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.an
<b>Calling code</b>	+599



prime minister, forms the local government. Together with the governor, who holds responsibility for external affairs and defense, it forms the executive branch of the government.

The legislative branch is two-layered. Delegates of the islands are represented in the government of the Netherlands Antilles, but each island has its own government that takes care of the daily affairs on the island.

The Netherlands Antilles are not part of the European Union. Since 2006 the Islands have given rise to diplomatic disputes between Venezuela and the Netherlands. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez claims that the Netherlands may allow the United States to install military bases that would be necessary for a planned U.S. invasion of Venezuela. On May 23, 2006 an international military manoeuver known as *Joint Caribbean Lion 2006*, including forces of the U.S. Navy, began.

## Future status

The Netherlands Antilles was to be disbanded on December 15, 2008. This dissolution is still planned, but has been postponed to an indefinite future date. The idea of the Netherlands Antilles as a state never enjoyed full support of all islands and political relations between islands were often strained. After a long struggle, Aruba seceded from the Netherlands Antilles in 1986, and formed its own state within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The desire for secession has also been strong in Sint Maarten.

In 2004 a commission of the governments of the Netherlands Antilles and the Netherlands reported on a future status for the Netherlands Antilles. The commission advised a revision of the Statute of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in order to dissolve the Netherlands Antilles.

Two new associated states within the Kingdom of the Netherlands would be formed, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. Meanwhile, Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius would become a direct part of the Netherlands as special municipalities (*bijzondere gemeente*), a form of "public body" (*openbaar lichaam*) as outlined in article 134 of the Dutch Constitution. These municipalities will resemble ordinary Dutch municipalities in most ways (they will have a mayor, aldermen and a municipal council, for example) and will have to introduce most Dutch law. Residents of these three islands will also be able to vote in Dutch national and European elections. There are, however, some derogations for these islands. Social security, for example, will not be on the same level as it is in the Netherlands, and it is not certain whether the islands will be obliged to introduce the euro; they may retain the Antillean guilder pending further negotiations. All five of the island territories may also continue to access the Common Court of Justice of Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles (with the Joint Court probably receiving a new name). The three islands will also have to involve the Dutch Minister of Foreign Relations before they can make





agreements with countries in the region.

Originally the term used for Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius to describe their expected association with the Netherlands was "Kingdom Islands" (*Koninkrijkseilanden*). The Dutch province of North Holland has offered the three new municipalities the opportunity to become part of the province.

Additionally, the Kingdom government would consist of the government of the Netherlands and one mandated minister per Caribbean country. The special municipalities would be represented in the Kingdom Government by the Netherlands, as they can vote for the Dutch parliament.

The Netherlands has proposed that the new EU constitution allow the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba to opt for the status of *Outermost Region (OMR)* also called *Ultra Peripheral Region (UPR)*, if they wish.

## Islands

The Netherland Antilles have no major administrative divisions, although each island has its own local government.

The two island groups of which the Netherlands Antilles consists are:

- the "Leeward Islands" (*Benedenwindse Eilanden*), part of the Leeward Antilles island chain off the Venezuelan coast (along with Aruba) ( ABC islands).
  - Bonaire, including an islet called Klein Bonaire ("Little Bonaire")
  - Curaçao, including an islet called Klein Curaçao ("Little Curaçao")
- the "Windward Islands" (*Bovenwindse Eilanden*) east of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands ( SSS islands). These are part of what are in English called the Leeward Islands, but in e.g. French, Spanish, Dutch and the English spoken locally these are considered part of the *Windward Islands*.
  - Saba
  - Sint Eustatius
  - Sint Maarten, the southern half of the island Saint Martin (the northern half, Saint-Martin, is an overseas collectivity of France).

## Geography



The windward islands are all of volcanic origin and hilly, leaving little ground suitable for agriculture. The leeward islands have a mixed volcanic and coral origin. The highest point is Mount Scenery, 862 metres (2,828 ft), on Saba (also the highest point in all the Kingdom of the Netherlands).

The Netherlands Antilles have a tropical climate, with warm weather all year round. The windward Islands are subject to hurricanes in the summer months.

## Economy

Tourism, petroleum transshipment and oil refinement (on Curaçao), as well as offshore finance are the mainstays of this small economy, which is closely tied to the outside world. The islands enjoy a high per capita income and a well-developed infrastructure as compared with other countries in the region. Almost all consumer and capital goods are imported, with Venezuela, the United States, and Mexico being the major suppliers, as well as the Dutch government which supports the islands with substantial development aid. Poor soils and inadequate water supplies hamper the development of agriculture. The Antillean guilder has a fixed exchange rate with the United States dollar of 1.79:1.

## Demographics

A large part of the Netherlands Antilleans descends from European colonists and African slaves that were brought and traded here from the 17th to 19th century. The rest of the population originates from other Caribbean islands, Latin America, East Asia and elsewhere in the world.

Papiamentu is predominant on Curaçao and Bonaire (as well as the neighboring island of Aruba). This creole descends from Portuguese and West African languages with a strong admixture of Dutch, plus subsequent lexical contributions from Spanish and English.

After a decades-long debate, English and Papiamentu have been made official languages alongside Dutch in early March 2007. Legislation is produced in Dutch but parliamentary debate is in Papiamentu or English, depending on the island. Due to the islands' closeness to South America, Spanish is becoming increasingly known and used throughout the archipelago.

The majority of the population are followers of the Christian faith, mostly Roman Catholic. Curaçao also hosts a sizeable group of followers of the Jewish faith, descendants of a Portuguese group of Sephardic Jews that arrived from Amsterdam and Brazil in 1654.

Most Netherlands Antilleans are Dutch citizens and this status permits and encourages the young and university-educated to emigrate to the Netherlands. This exodus is considered to be to the islands' detriment as it creates a brain drain. On the other hand, immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, the Anglophone Caribbean and Colombia have increased their presence in recent years.

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Map of the Netherlands Antilles



## Culture

The origins of the population and location of the islands give the Netherlands Antilles a mixed culture.

Tourism and overwhelming media presence from the United States has increased the regional United States influence. On all the islands, the holiday of Carnival is, like in many Caribbean and Latin American countries, an important one. Festivities include "jump-up" parades with beautifully colored costumes, floats, and live bands as well as beauty contests and other competitions. Carnival on the islands also includes a middle-of-the-night j'ouvert (juvé) parade that ends at sunrise with the burning of a straw King Momo, cleansing the island of sins and bad luck. On Statia he is called Prince Stupid.

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# Nicaragua

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

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**Nicaragua** (IPA: /ˌnɪkəˈrɑɡwə/) officially the **Republic of Nicaragua** (Spanish: *República de Nicaragua* ( help· info), Spanish pronunciation: [reˈpuβlika ðe nikaˈrajwa]), is a representative democratic republic and the largest nation in Central America. It is also the least densely populated with a demographic similar in size to its smaller neighbors. The country is bordered by Honduras to the north and by Costa Rica to the south. The Pacific Ocean lies to the west of the country, while the Caribbean Sea lies to the east. Falling within the tropics, Nicaragua sits 11 degrees north of the Equator, in the Northern Hemisphere.

The country's name is derived from Nicaraο, the name of the Nahuatl-speaking tribe which inhabited the shores of Lago de Nicaragua before the Spanish conquest of the Americas, and the Spanish word *Agua*, meaning water, due to the presence of the large lakes Lago de Nicaragua (Cocibolca) and Lago de Managua (Xolotlán), as well as lagoons and rivers in the region.

At the time of the Spanish conquest, Nicaragua was the name given to the narrow strip of land between Lake Nicaragua and the Pacific Ocean. Chief Nicaraο ruled over the land when the first conquerors arrived. The term was eventually applied, by extension, to the Nicaraο or Niquirano groups that inhabited that region.

The Nicaraο tribe migrated to the area from northern regions after the fall of Teotihuacán, on the advice of their religious leaders. According to tradition, they were to travel south until they encountered a lake with two volcanoes rising out of the waters, and so they stopped when they reached Ometepe, the largest fresh-water volcanic island in the world.

## History

### Pre-Columbian history

In Pre-Columbian times the Indigenous people, in what is now known as Nicaragua, were part of the

<i><b>República de Nicaragua</b></i> <b>Republic of Nicaragua</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Salve a ti, Nicaragua</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Managua
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish <sup>1</sup>
<b>Demonym</b>	Nicaraguan
<b>Government</b>	Presidential republic
- President	Daniel Ortega ( FSLN)
- Vice President	Jaime Morales Carazo



Intermediate Area located between the Mesoamerican and Andean cultural regions. This has recently been updated to include the influence of the Isthmo-Colombian area. It was the point where the Mesoamerican and South American native cultures met.

Nicaragua was inhabited by Paleo-Indians as far back as 6000 years ago. This is confirmed by the ancient footprints of Acahualinca, along with other archaeological evidence, mainly in the form of ceramics and statues made of volcanic stone like the ones found on the island of Zapatera and petroglyphs found in Ometepe island. At the end of the 15th century, western Nicaragua was inhabited by several indigenous peoples related by culture and language to the Mayans. They were primarily farmers who lived in towns, organized into small kingdoms. Meanwhile, the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua was inhabited by indigenous peoples, mostly chibcha related groups, that had migrated from what is now Colombia. They lived a less sedentary life based on hunting and gathering.

<b>Independence</b>	from Spain
- Declared	September 15, 1821
- Recognized	July 25, 1850
- Revolution	July 19, 1979
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	129,494 km <sup>2</sup> ( 97th) 50,193 sq mi
- Water (%)	7.14
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2006 estimate	5,603,000 ( 107th)
- 2005 census	5,142,098
- Density	42/km <sup>2</sup> ( 132th) 109/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$15.839 billion ( 109th)
- Per capita	\$3,200 ( 128th)
<b>Gini (2001)</b>	43.1 (medium)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	▲ 0.710 (medium) ( 110th)
<b>Currency</b>	Córdoba ( NIO)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-6)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ni
<b>Calling code</b>	+505
<p><sup>1</sup> English and indigenous languages on Caribbean coast are also spoken.</p>	





The people of eastern Nicaragua appear to have traded with and been influenced by the native peoples of the Caribbean, as round thatched huts and canoes, both typical of the Caribbean, were common in eastern Nicaragua. In the west and highland areas, occupying the territory between Lake Nicaragua and the Pacific Coast, the Niquirano were governed by chief Nicarao, or Nicaragua, a rich ruler who lived in Nicaraocali, now the city of Rivas. The Chorotega lived in the central region of Nicaragua. These two groups had intimate contact with the Spanish conquerors, paving the way for the racial mix of native and European stock now known as mestizos. However, within three decades an estimated Indian population of one million plummeted to a few tens of thousands, as approximately half of the indigenous people in western Nicaragua died from the rapid spread of new diseases brought by the Spaniards, something the indigenous people of the Caribbean coast managed to escape due to the remoteness of the area.

## The Spanish conquest

In 1502, Christopher Columbus was the first European known to have reached what is now Nicaragua as he sailed south along the Central America isthmus. On his fourth voyage Columbus sailed alongside and explored the Mosquito Coast on the east of Nicaragua. The first attempt to conquer what is now known as Nicaragua was by Spanish conquistador Gil González Dávila, whose Central American exploits began with his arrival in Panama in January 1520. González claimed to have converted some 30,000 indigenous peoples and discovered a possible transisthmian water link. After exploring and gathering gold in the fertile western valleys González was attacked by the indigenous people, some of whom were commanded by Nicarao and an estimated 3,000 led by chief Diriangén. González later returned to Panama where governor Pedrarias Dávila attempted to arrest him and confiscate his treasure, some 90,000 pesos of gold. This resulted in González fleeing to Santo Domingo.

It was not until 1524 that the first Spanish permanent settlements were founded. Conquistador Francisco Hernández de Córdoba founded two of Nicaragua's principal towns in 1524: Granada on Lake Nicaragua was the first settlement and León east of Lake Managua came after. Córdoba soon found it necessary to prepare defenses for the cities and go on the offensive against incursions by the other conquistadores. Córdoba was later publicly beheaded following a power struggle with Pedrarias Dávila, his tomb and remains were discovered some 500 years later in the Ruins of León Viejo.

The inevitable clash between the Spanish forces did not impede their devastation of the indigenous population. The Indian civilization was destroyed. The series of battles came to be known as *The War of the Captains*. By 1529, the conquest of Nicaragua was complete. Several conquistadores came out winners, and some were executed or murdered. Pedrarias Dávila was a winner; although he had lost control of Panama, he had moved to Nicaragua and established his base in León. Through adroit diplomatic machinations, he became the first governor of the colony. The land was parceled out to the conquistadores. The area of most interest was the western portion. Many indigenous people were soon enslaved to develop and maintain "estates" there. Others were put to work in mines in northern Nicaragua, few were killed in warfare, and the great majority were sent as slaves to other New World Spanish colonies, for significant profit to the new landed aristocracy. Many of the indigenous people died as a result of disease and neglect by the Spaniards who controlled everything necessary for their subsistence.



6000 year old human footprints preserved in volcanic mud near the lake in Managua, Nicaragua.



Colonial architecture of the city of Granada, Nicaragua



## From colony to nation

In 1538, the Viceroyalty of New Spain was established. By 1570, the southern part of New Spain was designated the Captaincy General of Guatemala. The area of Nicaragua was divided into administrative "parties" with León as the capital. In 1610, the Momotombo erupted, destroying the capital. It was rebuilt northwest of what is now known as the Ruins of Old León. Nicaragua became a part of the Mexican Empire and then gained its independence as a part of the United Provinces of Central America in 1821 and as an independent republic in its own right in 1838. The Mosquito Coast based on the Caribbean coast was claimed by the United Kingdom and its predecessors as a protectorate from 1655 to 1850; this was delegated to Honduras in 1859 and transferred to Nicaragua in 1860, though it remained autonomous until 1894. Jose Santos Zelaya, president of Nicaragua from 1893-1909, managed to negotiate for the annexation of this region to the rest of Nicaragua. In his honour the entire region was named Zelaya.



Founding members of the Deutsche Club in Nicaragua

Much of Nicaragua's politics since independence has been characterized by the rivalry between the liberal elite of León and the conservative elite of Granada. The rivalry often degenerated into civil war, particularly during the 1840s and 1850s. Initially invited by the Liberals in 1855 to join their struggle against the Conservatives, a United States adventurer named William Walker (later executed in Honduras) set himself up as president of Nicaragua, after conducting a farcical election in 1856. Honduras and other Central American countries united to drive him out of Nicaragua in 1857, after which a period of three decades of Conservative rule ensued.

In the 1800s Nicaragua experienced a wave of immigration, primarily from Europe. In particular, families from Germany, Italy, Spain, France and Belgium generally moved to Nicaragua to set up businesses with money they brought from Europe. They established many agricultural businesses such as coffee and sugar cane plantations, and also newspapers, hotels and banks.

## United States involvement (1909 - 1933)

In 1909, the United States provided political support to conservative-led forces rebelling against President Zelaya. U.S. motives included differences over the proposed Nicaragua Canal, Nicaragua's potential as a destabilizing influence in the region, and Zelaya's attempts to regulate foreign access to Nicaraguan natural resources. On November 18, 1909, U.S. warships were sent to the area after 500 revolutionaries (including two Americans) were executed by order of Zelaya. The U.S. justified the intervention by claiming to protect U.S. lives and property. Zelaya resigned later that year. U.S. Marines occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1933, except for a nine month period beginning in 1925. From 1910 to 1926, the conservative party ruled Nicaragua. The Chamorro family, which had long dominated the party, effectively controlled the government during that period. In 1914, the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty was signed, giving the U.S. control over the proposed canal, as well as leases for potential canal defenses. Following the evacuation of U.S. marines, another violent conflict between liberals and conservatives took place in 1926, known as the Constitutionalist War, which resulted in a coalition government and the return of U.S. Marines.



Corn Island off the Atlantic Coast was originally a British protectorate until it was ceded along with the rest of the Mosquito Coast to Nicaragua



From 1927 until 1933, Gen. Augusto César Sandino led a sustained guerrilla war first against the Conservative regime and subsequently against the U.S. Marines, who withdrew upon the establishment of a new Liberal government. Sandino was the only Nicaraguan general to refuse to sign the *el tratado del Espino Negro* agreement and then headed up to the northern mountains of Las Segovias, where he fought the US Marines for over five years. The revolt finally forced the United States to compromise and leave the country. When the Americans left in 1933, they set up the Guardia Nacional (National Guard), a combined military and police force trained and equipped by the Americans and designed to be loyal to U.S. interests. Anastasio Somoza García, a close friend of the American government, was put in charge. He was one of the three rulers of the country, the others being Sandino and the mostly figurehead President Juan Bautista Sacasa.

After the US Marines withdrew from Nicaragua in January 1933, Sandino and the newly-elected Sacasa government reached an agreement by which he would cease his guerrilla activities in return for amnesty, a grant of land for an agricultural colony, and retention of an armed band of 100 men for a year. But a growing hostility between Sandino and Somoza led Somoza to order the assassination of Sandino. Fearing future armed opposition from Sandino, Somoza invited him to a meeting in Managua, where Sandino was assassinated on February 21 of 1934 by the National Guard. Hundreds of men, women, and children were executed later.

### **The Somoza Dynasty (1936 - 1979)**

Nicaragua has seen many interventions by the United States. It has also experienced long military dictatorships, the longest one being the rule of the Somoza family for much of the 20th century. The Somoza family came to power as part of a US-engineered pact in 1927 that stipulated the formation of the National Guard to replace the small individual armies that had long reigned in the country. Somoza deposed Sacasa and became president on Jan. 1, 1937 in a rigged election.

Nicaragua was the first country to ratify the UN Charter, and declared war on Germany during World War II. No troops were sent to the war but Somoza did seize the occasion to confiscate attractive properties held by German-Nicaraguans, the best-known of which was the Montelimar estate which today operates as a privately-owned luxury resort and casino.

Somoza used the National Guard to force Sacasa to resign, and took control of the country in 1937, destroying any potential armed resistance. Somoza was in turn assassinated by Rigoberto López Pérez, a liberal Nicaraguan poet, in 1956. After his father's death, Luis Somoza Debayle, the eldest son of the late dictator, was appointed President by the congress and officially took charge of the country. He is remembered by some for being moderate, but was in power only for a few years and then died of a heart attack. Then came president Rene Schick whom most Nicaraguans viewed "as nothing more than a puppet of the Somozas". Somoza's brother, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, who succeeded his father in charge of the National Guard, controlled the country, and officially took the presidency after Schick.

Nicaragua experienced high economic growth during the 1960s and 1970s largely as a result of industrialization, and became one of Central America's most developed nations despite its political instability. Due to its stable and high growth economy, foreign investments grew, primarily from U.S. companies such as Citigroup, Sears, Westinghouse and Coca Cola. However, the capital city of Managua suffered a major earthquake in 1972 which destroyed nearly 90% of the city creating major losses. Some Nicaraguan historians see the 1972 earthquake that devastated Managua as the final 'nail in the coffin' for Somoza. The



mishandling of relief money also prompted Pittsburgh Pirates star Roberto Clemente to personally fly to Managua on December 31, 1972, but he died enroute in an airplane accident. Even the economic elite were reluctant to support Somoza, as he had acquired monopolies in industries that were key to rebuilding the nation, and did not allow the elite to share the profits that would result. In 1973 (the year of reconstruction) many new buildings were built, but the level of corruption in the government prevented further growth, and the ever increasing tensions and anti-government uprisings slowed growth in the last two years of the Somoza dynasty.

## The Nicaraguan revolution

In 1961, a young student, Carlos Fonseca, turned back to the historical figure of Sandino, and along with 2 others founded the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The FSLN was a tiny party throughout most of the 1960s, but Somoza's utter hatred of it and his heavy-handed treatment of anyone he suspected to be a Sandinista sympathizer gave many ordinary Nicaraguans the idea that the Sandinistas were much stronger.

After the 1972 earthquake and Somoza's brazen corruption, mishandling of relief, and refusal to rebuild Managua, the ranks of the Sandinistas were flooded with young disaffected Nicaraguans who no longer had anything to lose. These economic problems propelled the Sandinistas in their struggle against Somoza by leading many middle- and upper-class Nicaraguans to see the Sandinistas as the only hope for removing the brutal Somoza regime. On January 1978, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, the editor of the national newspaper La Prensa and ardent opponent of Somoza, was assassinated. This is believed to have led to the extreme general disappointment with Somoza. The planners and perpetrators of the murder were at the highest echelons of the Somoza regime and included the dictator's son, "El Chiguin", the President of Housing, Cornelio Hueck, the Attorney General, and Pedro Ramos, a close Cuban ally who commercialized blood plasma.

The Sandinistas, supported by much of the populace, elements of the Catholic Church, and regional and international governments, took power in July of 1979. Somoza fled the country and eventually ended up in Paraguay, where he was assassinated in September 1980, allegedly by members of the Argentinian Revolutionary Workers Party. The Sandinistas inherited a country in ruins with a debt of U.S.\$1.6 billion dollars, an estimated 50,000 war dead, 600,000 homeless, and a devastated economic infrastructure. To begin the task of establishing a new government, they created a Council (or *junta*) of National Reconstruction, made up of five members – Sandinista militants Daniel Ortega and Moises Hassan, novelist Sergio Ramírez Mercado (a member of Los Doce "the Twelve"), businessman Alfonso Robelo Callejas, and Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (the widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro). The preponderance of power, however, remained with the Sandinistas and their mass organizations, including the Sandinista Workers' Federation (*Central Sandinista de Trabajadores*), the Luisa Amanda Espinoza Nicaraguan Women's Association (*Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses Luisa Amanda Espinoza*), and the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (*Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos*).

## Sandinistas and the Contras

Upon assuming office in 1981, U.S. President Ronald Reagan condemned the FSLN for joining with Cuba in supporting Marxist revolutionary movements in other Latin American countries such as El Salvador. His administration authorized the CIA to begin financing, arming and training rebels, some of whom were the remnants of Somoza's National Guard, as anti-Sandinista guerrillas that were branded "counter-revolutionary" by leftists (*contrarrevolucionarios* in Spanish). This was shortened to *Contras*, a label the anti-Communist forces chose to embrace. Eden Pastora and many of the indigenous guerrilla forces, who were not associated with the "Somozistas," also resisted the Sandinistas. The Contras operated out of camps in the neighboring countries of Honduras to the



north and Costa Rica to the south. As was typical in guerrilla warfare, they were engaged in a campaign of economic sabotage in an attempt to combat the Sandinista government and disrupted shipping by planting underwater mines in Nicaragua's Corinto harbour, an action condemned by the World Court as illegal. The U.S. also sought to place economic pressure on the Sandinistas, and the Reagan administration imposed a full trade embargo.

U.S. support for this Nicaraguan insurgency continued in spite of the fact that impartial observers from international groupings such as the European Union, religious groups sent to monitor the election, and observers from democratic nations such as Canada and the Republic of Ireland concluded that the Nicaraguan general elections of 1984 were completely free and fair. The Reagan administration disputed these results however, despite the fact that the government of the United States never had any observers in Nicaragua at the time.

After the U.S. Congress prohibited federal funding of the Contras in 1983, the Reagan administration continued to back the Contras by covertly selling arms to Iran and channeling the proceeds to the Contras (The Iran-Contra Affair). When this scheme was revealed, Reagan admitted that he knew about the Iranian "arms for hostages" dealings but professed ignorance about the proceeds funding the Contras; for this, National Security Council aide Lt. Col. Oliver North took much of the blame. Senator John Kerry's 1988 U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations report on Contra-drug links concluded that "senior U.S. policy makers were not immune to the idea that drug money was a perfect solution to the Contras' funding problems." According to the National Security Archive, Oliver North had been in contact with Manuel Noriega, a Panamanian general and the de facto military dictator of Panama from 1983 to 1989 when he was overthrown and captured by a U.S. invading force. He was taken to the United States, tried for drug trafficking, and imprisoned in 1992.

The Reagan administration's support for the Contras continued to stir controversy well into the 1990s. In August 1996, *San Jose Mercury News* reporter Gary Webb published a series titled *Dark Alliance*, linking the origins of crack cocaine in California to the Contras. Freedom of Information Act inquiries by the National Security Archive and other investigators unearthed a number of documents showing that White House officials, including Oliver North, knew about and supported using money raised via drug trafficking to fund the Contras. Sen. John Kerry's report in 1988 led to the same conclusions; however, major media outlets, the Justice Department, and Reagan denied the allegations.

## 1990s and the post-Sandinista era

Multi-party democratic elections were held in 1990, which saw the defeat of the Sandinistas by a coalition of anti-Sandinista (from the left and right of the political spectrum) parties led by Violeta Chamorro, the widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. The defeat shocked the Sandinistas as numerous pre-election polls had indicated a sure Sandinista victory and their pre-election rallies had attracted crowds of several hundred thousand people. The unexpected result was subject to a great deal of analysis and comment, and was attributed by commentators such as Noam Chomsky and S. Brian Willson to the U.S./ Contra threats to continue the war if the Sandinistas retained power, the general war-weariness of the Nicaraguan population, and the abysmal Nicaraguan economic situation.



Violeta Barrios de Chamorro in 1990 became the first female president democratically elected in the Americas.

On the other hand, P. J. O'Rourke wrote in "Return of the Death of Communism", *the unfair advantages of using state resources for party ends, about how Sandinista control of the transit system prevented UNO supporters from attending rallies, how Sandinista domination of the army forced soldiers to vote for Ortega and how Sandinista bureaucracy kept \$3.3 million of U.S. campaign aid from getting to UNO while Daniel Ortega spent millions donated by overseas people and millions and millions more from the Nicaraguan treasury . . .*"

Exit polls of Nicaraguans reported Chamorro's victory over Ortega was achieved with only 55%. Violeta Chamorro was the first woman to be popularly elected as President of a Latin American nation and first woman president of Nicaragua. Exit polling convinced Daniel Ortega that the election results were legitimate, and were instrumental in his decision to accept the vote of the people and step down rather than void the election. Nonetheless Ortega vowed that he would govern "desde abajo" (from below), in other words due to his widespread control of institutions and Sandinista individuals in all government agencies, he would still be able to maintain control and govern even without being president.

Chamorro received an economy entirely in ruins. The per capita income of Nicaragua had been reduced by over 80% during the 1980s, and a huge government debt which ascended to US\$12 billion primarily due to financial and social costs of the Contra war with the Sandinista-led government. Much to the surprise of the U.S. and the contra forces, Chamorro did not dismantle the Sandinista People's Army, though the name was changed to the Nicaraguan Army. Chamorro's main contribution to Nicaragua was the disarmament of groups in the northern and central areas of the country. This provided stability that the country had lacked for over ten years.

In subsequent elections in 1996 Daniel Ortega and the Sandinistas of the FSLN were again defeated, this time by Arnaldo Alemán of the Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC).

In the 2001 elections the PLC again defeated the FSLN, with Enrique Bolaños winning the Presidency. However, President Bolaños subsequently charged and brought forward allegations of money laundering, theft and corruption against former President Alemán. The ex-president was sentenced to 20 years in prison for embezzlement, money laundering, and corruption. The Liberal members who were loyal to Alemán and also members of congress reacted angrily, and along with Sandinista parliament members stripped the presidential powers of President Bolaños and his ministers, calling for his resignation and threatening impeachment.



The Sandinistas alleged that their support for Bolaños was lost when U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell told Bolaños to keep his distance from the FSLN. This "slow motion coup" was averted partially due to pressure from the Central American presidents who would fail to recognize any movement that removed Bolaños; The U.S., the OAS, and the European Union also opposed the "slow motion coup". The proposed constitutional changes that were going to be introduced in 2005 against the Bolaños administration were delayed until January 2007 after the entrance of the new government. Though one day before they were to be enforced, the National Assembly postponed their enforcement until January 2008.

Before the general elections on 5 November 2006, the National Assembly passed a bill further restricting abortion in Nicaragua 52-0 (9 abstaining, 29 absent). President Enrique Bolaños supported this measure, but signed the bill into law on 17 November 2006, as a result Nicaragua is one of three countries in the world where abortion is illegal with no exceptions, along with El Salvador and Chile.

Legislative and presidential elections took place on November 5, 2006. Daniel Ortega returned to the presidency with 37.99% of the vote. This percentage was enough to win the presidency outright, due to a change in electoral law which lowered the percentage requiring a runoff election from 45% to 35% (with a 5% margin of victory).

## Politics

Politics of Nicaragua takes place in a framework of a presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the President of Nicaragua is both head of state and head of government, and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the National Assembly. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature.

## Departments and municipalities

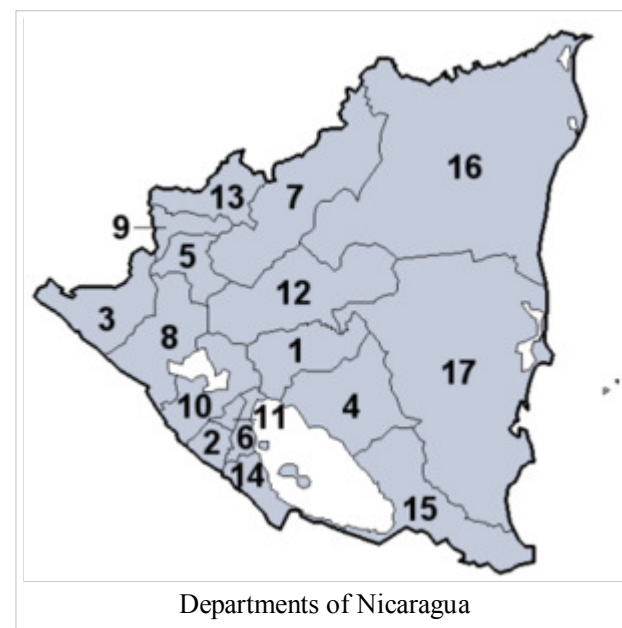


President of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, Celebrating May 1, 2005, in the Plaza of the Revolution in Havana, Cuba. President Ortega is currently serving his second term.



Nicaragua is a unitary republic. For administrative purposes it is divided into 15 departments (*departamentos*) and two self-governing regions (autonomous communities) based on the Spanish model. The departments are then subdivided into 153 municipios ( municipalities). The two autonomous regions are Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte and Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur, often referred to as *RAAN* and *RAAS*, respectively. Until they were granted autonomy in 1985 they formed the single department of Zelaya.

- |                             |                                |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Boaco ( Boaco)           | 10. Managua (Managua)          |
| 2. Carazo ( Jinotepe)       | 11. Masaya ( Masaya)           |
| 3. Chinandega ( Chinandega) | 12. Matagalpa ( Matagalpa)     |
| 4. Chontales ( Juigalpa)    | 13. Nueva Segovia ( Ocotal)    |
| 5. Estelí ( Estelí)         | 14. Rivas ( Rivas)             |
| 6. Granada ( Granada)       | 15. Río San Juan ( San Carlos) |
| 7. Jinotega ( Jinotega)     | 16. RAAN ( Bilwi)              |
| 8. León ( León)             | 17. RAAS ( Bluefields)         |
| 9. Madriz ( Somoto)         |                                |



## Geography

Nicaragua occupies a landmass of 129,494 km<sup>2</sup> - roughly the size of Greece or the state of New York and 1.5 times larger than Portugal. Close to 20% of the country's territory is designated as protected areas such as national parks, nature reserves and biological reserves. The country is bordered by Costa Rica on the south and Honduras on the north, with the Caribbean Sea to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west.

Nicaragua has three distinct geographical regions: the Pacific Lowlands, the North-Central Mountains or highlands and the Atlantic Lowlands.

### Pacific lowlands





Turtles are common in many beaches of Nicaragua when on a yearly basis they collectively arrive at the same time on the same beach to lay their eggs.

They are protected by the Nicaraguan government in National Parks



Nicaragua is known as the land of lakes and volcanoes, pictured here are three volcanoes from the Chinandega department, El Chonco, San Cristobal and Casitas

Located in the west of the country, these lowlands consist of a broad, hot, fertile plain. Punctuating this plain are several large volcanoes of the Marrabios mountain range, including Mombacho just outside Granada, and Momotombo near León. The lowland area runs from the Gulf of Fonseca to Nicaragua's Pacific border with Costa Rica south of Lake Nicaragua. Lake Nicaragua is the largest freshwater lake in Central America (20th largest in the world), and is home to the world's only freshwater sharks (Nicaraguan shark). The Pacific lowlands region is the most populous, with over half of the nation's population. The capital city of Managua is the most populous and it is the only city with over 1 million inhabitants.

In addition to its beach and resort communities, the Pacific Lowlands is also the repository for much of Nicaragua's Spanish colonial heritage. Cities such as Granada and León abound in colonial architecture and artifacts. Granada, founded in 1524, is the oldest colonial city in the Americas.

### Central highlands

This is an upland region away from the Pacific coast, with a cooler climate than the Pacific Lowlands. About a quarter of the country's agriculture takes place in this region, with coffee grown on the higher slopes. Oaks, pines, moss, ferns and orchids are abundant in the cloud forests of the region.

Bird life in the forests of the central region includes

Resplendent Quetzal, goldfinches, hummingbirds, jays and toucanets.



Toucan is a common bird in Nicaragua's Rainforests

### Atlantic lowlands

This large rainforest region, with several large rivers running through it, is very sparsely populated. The Rio Coco is the largest river in Central America, it forms the border with Honduras. The Caribbean coastline is much more sinuous than its generally straight Pacific counterpart. Lagoons and deltas make it very irregular.

Nicaragua's Bosawas Biosphere Reserve is located in the Atlantic lowlands, it protects 1.8 million acres (7,300 km<sup>2</sup>) of Mosquitia forest - almost seven percent of the country's area - making it the largest rainforest north of the Amazon in Brazil.

Nicaragua's tropical east coast is very different from the rest of the country. The climate is predominantly tropical, with high



*Guardabarranco* (Turquoise-browed Motmot): the national bird.



temperature and high humidity. Around the area's principal city of Bluefields, English is widely spoken along with the official Spanish and the population more closely resembles that found in many typical Caribbean ports than the rest of Nicaragua.

A great variety of birds can be observed including eagles, turkeys, toucans, parakeets and macaws. Animal life in the area includes different species of monkeys, ant-eaters, white-tailed deer and tapirs.

## Economy

Nicaragua's economy ranks as 61st freest economy, although it is 1.7% lower than in 2006, it ranks 14 (out of 29) in the Americas. Nicaragua's economy is 62.7% free with high levels of fiscal, government, labor, investment, financial, and trade freedom. Nicaragua is primarily an agricultural country, but light industry (maquila), tourism, banking, mining, fisheries, and general commerce are expanding. Nicaragua's agrarian economy has historically been based on the export of cash crops such as bananas, coffee, sugar, beef and tobacco. At present agriculture constitutes 60% of its total exports which annually yield approximately US \$300 million. In addition, Nicaragua's Flor de Caña rum is renowned as among the best in Latin America, and its tobacco and beef are also well regarded. Nicaragua also depends heavily on remittances from Nicaraguans living abroad, which totaled \$655.5 million in 2006. During the war between the Contras and the Sandinistas in the 1980s, much of the country's infrastructure was damaged or destroyed. Inflation averaged 30% throughout the 1980s. After the United States imposed a trade embargo in 1985, which lasted 5 years, Nicaragua's inflation rate rose dramatically. The 1985 annual rate of 220% tripled the following year and skyrocketed to more than 13,000% in 1988, the highest rate for any country in the Western Hemisphere in that year. Since the end of the war almost two decades ago, more than 350 state enterprises were privatized, reducing inflation from 33,500% in 1988 to 9.45% in 2006, and cutting the foreign debt in half.

Though sources give slightly differing data on the country's gross domestic product (GDP), Nicaragua is one of the smallest economies in the Western Hemisphere. According to the CIA Fact Book, inflation averaged 8.1% from 2000 through 2006. As of 2007, Nicaragua's inflation stands at 9.8%. The World Bank also indicates moderate economic growth at an average of 5% from 1995 through 2004. In 2005 the economy grew 4%, with overall GDP reaching \$4.91 billion. In 2006, the economy expanded by 3.7% as GDP reached \$5.3 billion. According to the United Nations, 28% of the population in Nicaragua live in poverty (2006 est), unemployment is 3.1%, and another 46.5% are underemployed (2007 est.).

As in many other developing countries, a large segment of the economically poor in Nicaragua are women. In addition, a relatively high proportion of Nicaragua's average homes have a woman as head of household: 39% of urban homes and 28% of rural homes.



A 1000 Córdoba banknote, which was re-printed with a value of 200,000 Córdoba during the inflationary period of the late 1980s.



Maderas and Concepcion Volcanoes, popular tourist destination in Nicaragua.

The country is still a recovering economy and it continues to implement further reforms, on which aid from the IMF is conditional. In 2005 finance ministers of the leading eight industrialized nations ( G-8) agreed to forgive some of Nicaragua's foreign debt, as part of the HIPC program. According to the World Bank Nicaragua's GDP was around \$4.9 US billion dollars. Recently, in March 2007, Poland and Nicaragua signed an agreement to write off 30.6 million dollars which was borrowed by the Nicaraguan government in the 1980s.

According to the World Bank, Nicaragua ranked as the 62nd best economy for starting a business making it the second best in Central America, after Panama.

The Nicaraguan unit of currency is the Córdoba (NIO) and was named after Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, its national founder.

### Components of the economy

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in purchasing power parity (PPP) in 2007 was estimated at \$18.17 billion USD. The service sector is the largest component of GDP at 56.9%, followed by the industrial sector at 25.9% (2006 est.). Agriculture represents only 17.1% of GDP (2007 est.). Nicaraguan labor force is estimated at 2.262 million of which 29% is occupied in agriculture, 19% in the industry sector and 52% in the service sector (est. 2007).

## Tourism

Tourism in Nicaragua is booming, it is currently the second largest industry in the nation, over the last 7 years tourism has grown about 70% nationwide with rates of 10%-16% annually. Nicaragua has seen positive growth in the tourism sector over the last decade and is expected to become the first largest industry in 2007. The increase and growth led to the income from tourism to rise more than 300% over a period of 10 years. The growth in tourism has also positively affected the agricultural, commercial, and finance industries, as well as the construction industry. Despite the positive growth throughout the last decade, Nicaragua remains the least visited nation in the region.

Every year about 60,000 U.S. citizens visit Nicaragua, primarily business people, tourists, and those visiting relatives. Some 5,300 people from the U.S. reside in the country now. The majority of tourists that visit Nicaragua are from the U.S., Central or South America, and Europe. According to the Ministry of Tourism of Nicaragua (INTUR), the colonial city of Granada is the preferred spot for tourists. Also, the cities of León, Masaya, Rivas and the likes of San Juan del Sur, San Juan River, Ometepe, Mombacho Volcano, the Corn Islands, and others are main tourist attractions. In addition, ecotourism and surfing attract many tourists to Nicaragua.

According to TV Noticias (news program) on Canal 2, a Nicaragua television station, the main attractions in Nicaragua for tourists are the beaches, scenic routes, the architecture of cities such as León and Granada and most recently ecotourism and agritourism, particularly in Northern Nicaragua.



Pacific beaches in Nicaragua

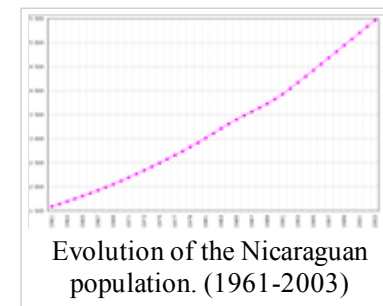


## Demographics

### Population

According to the CIA World Factbook, Nicaragua has a population of 5,570,129; 69% mestizo, 17% white, 9% black and 5% amerindian. Nicaraguan demographics reflected a different composition prior to the Sandinista revolution of 1979. Most of the migration during the years that followed were primarily of white upper or middle class Nicaraguans. A growing number of these expats have been returning although the vast majority remain living abroad. There is also large and ever growing expatriate (expat) community of people of all ages, the majority of whom move for business, investment or who are retirees. The expat communities include people from United States, Canada, Europe, Taiwan, and other countries, the majority have settled in Managua, Granada and San Juan del Sur.

The most populous city in Nicaragua is the capital city, Managua, with a population of 1.2 million (2005). As of 2005, over 4.4 million inhabitants live in the Pacific, Central and North regions, 2.7 in the Pacific region alone, while inhabitants in the Caribbean region only reached an estimated 700,000. The population is 54% urban and many Nicaraguans live abroad, outside of Nicaragua.



### Ethnic groups



The majority of the Nicaraguan population is Mestizo and White. Exactly 69% are Mestizos (mixed Amerindian and White) and 17% are White with the majority being of Spanish, German, Italian, or French ancestry. Mestizos and Whites mainly reside in the western region of the country and combined make up 86% of the Nicaraguan population, approximately 4.8 million people.

About 9% of Nicaragua's population is black, or Afro-Nicaragüense, and mainly reside on the country's sparsely populated Caribbean or Atlantic coast. The black population is mostly of West Indian (Antillean) origin, the descendants of indentured laborers brought mostly from Jamaica when the region was a British protectorate. Nicaragua has the largest Afro Latin American population in Central America with the second largest percentage. There is also a smaller number of Garifuna, a people of mixed Carib, Angolan, Congolese and Arawak descent.

The remaining 5% are Amerindians, the unmixed descendants of the country's indigenous inhabitants. Nicaragua's pre-Colombian population consisted of many indigenous groups. In the western region the Nicarao people, whom the country is named after, were present along with other groups related by culture and language to the Mayans. The Caribbean coast of Nicaragua was inhabited by indigenous peoples who were mostly chibcha related groups that had migrated from South America, primarily present day Colombia and Venezuela. These groups include the Miskitos, Ramas and Sumos. In the nineteenth century, there was a substantial indigenous minority, but this group was also largely assimilated culturally into the mestizo majority. In the mid-1980s, the government divided the department of Zelaya - consisting of the eastern half of the country - into two autonomous regions and granted the black and indigenous people of this region limited self-rule within the Republic.

## Immigration



Nicaraguan women at a concert in Managua.



An Afro-Nicaraguan.



In the 1800s Nicaragua experienced several waves of immigration, primarily from Europe. In particular, families from Germany, Italy, Spain, France and Belgium immigrated to Nicaragua, particularly the departments in the Central and Pacific region. As a result, the Northern cities of Esteli, Jinotega and Matagalpa have significant fourth generation Germans. They established many agricultural businesses such as coffee and sugar cane plantations, and also newspapers, hotels and banks.

Also present is a small Middle Eastern-Nicaraguan community of Syrians, Armenians, Palestinian Nicaraguans, Jewish Nicaraguans, and Lebanese people in Nicaragua with a total population of about 30,000. There is also an East Asian community mostly consisting of Chinese, Taiwanese, and Japanese. The Chinese Nicaraguan population is estimated at around 12,000. The Chinese arrived in the late 1800s but were unsubstantiated until the 1920s.

Relative to its overall population, Nicaragua has never experienced any large scale wave of immigrants. The total number of immigrants to Nicaragua, both originating from other Latin American countries and all other countries, never surpassed 1% of its total population prior to 1995. The 2005 census showed the foreign-born population at 1.2%, having risen a mere .06% in 10 years. This is not to say that immigrants were not important to the evolution of Nicaragua or the Nicaraguan society.

## Culture



Palestinian Nicaraguans celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution in Managua waving Palestinian and Sandinista flags.



Nicaraguan culture has strong folklore, music and religious traditions, deeply influenced by European culture but enriched with Amerindian sounds and flavours. Nicaraguan culture can further be defined in several distinct strands. The Pacific coast has strong folklore, music and religious traditions, deeply influenced by Europeans. It was colonized by Spain and has a similar culture to other Spanish-speaking Latin American countries. The Caribbean coast of the country, on the other hand, was once a British protectorate. English is still predominant in this region and spoken domestically along with Spanish and indigenous languages. Its culture is similar to that of Caribbean nations that were or are British possessions, such as Jamaica, Belize, The Cayman Islands, etc. The indigenous groups that were present in the Pacific coast have largely been assimilated into the mestizo culture, however, the indigenous people of the Caribbean coast have maintained a distinct identity.



Celebrating the annual *Alegria por la vida* Carnival in Managua, Nicaragua



An example of typical Nicaraguan artisans which are sold in markets all over the country

Nicaraguan music is a mixture of indigenous and European, especially Spanish, influences. Musical instruments include the marimba and others common across Central America. The marimba of Nicaragua is uniquely played by a sitting performer holding the instrument on his knees. He is usually accompanied by a bass fiddle, guitar and guitarrilla (a small guitar like a mandolin). This music is played at social functions as a sort of background music. The marimba is made with hardwood plates, placed over bamboo or metal tubes of varying lengths. It is played with two or four hammers. The Caribbean coast of Nicaragua is known for a lively, sensual form of dance music called Palo de Mayo which is

very much alive all throughout the country. It is especially loud and celebrated during the Palo de Mayo festival in May. The Garifuna community exists in Nicaragua and is known for its popular music called Punta.



Nicaraguan women wearing the Mestizaje costume, which is a traditional costume worn to dance the Mestizaje dance. The costume demonstrates the Spanish influence on Nicaraguan clothing.



Literature of Nicaragua can be traced to pre-Columbian times with the myths and oral literature that formed the cosmogonic view of the world that indigenous people had. Some of these stories are still know in Nicaragua. Like many Latin American countries, the Spanish conquerors have had the most effect on both the culture and the literature. Nicaraguan literature has historically been an important source of poetry in the Spanish-speaking world, with internationally renowned contributors such as Rubén Darío who is regarded as the most important literary figure in Nicaragua, referred to as the *Father of Modernism* for leading the modernismo literary movement at the end of the 19th century. Other literary figures include Ernesto Cardenal, Gioconda Belli, Claribel Alegría and Jose Coronel Urtecho, among others.

El Güegüense is a satirical drama and was the first literary work of pre-Columbian Nicaragua. It is regarded as one of Latin America's most distinctive colonial-era expressions and as Nicaragua's signature folkloric masterpiece combining music, dance and theatre. The theatrical play was written by an anonymous author in the 16th century, making it one of the oldest indigenous theatrical/dance works of the Western Hemisphere. The story was published in a book in 1942 after many centuries.

## Language

Spanish is spoken by about 90% of the country's population. In Nicaragua the Voseo form is common, just as in other countries in Central and South America like Honduras, El Salvador, Argentina, Uruguay or coastal Colombia. Spanish has many different dialects spoken throughout Latin America, Central American Spanish is the dialect spoken in Nicaragua. In the Caribbean coast many afro-Nicaraguans and creoles speak English and creole English as their first language. Also in the Caribbean coast, many Indigenous people speak their native languages, such as the Miskito, Sumo, Rama and Garifuna language. In addition, many ethnic groups in Nicaragua, such as the Chinese Nicaraguans and Palestinian Nicaraguans, have maintained their ancestral languages, which are minority languages, while also speaking Spanish or English. These minority languages include Chinese, Arabic, German, and Italian, among others.

Nicaragua has a total of 3 extinct languages, one of which was never classified. Nicaraguan Sign Language is also of particular interest to linguists.

## Religion

Religion is a significant part of the culture of Nicaragua and forms part of the constitution. Religious freedom, which has been guaranteed since 1939, and religious tolerance is promoted by both the Nicaraguan government and the constitution. Bishops are expected to lend their authority to important state occasions, and their pronouncements on national issues are closely followed. They can also be called upon to mediate between contending parties at moments of political crisis.

Nicaragua has no official religion. The largest denomination, and traditionally the religion of the majority, is Roman Catholic.

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Distinctive traditional costumes and dance from a very renowned folk dance from Nicaragua, El Güegüense.



A sign in Bluefields in English (top), Spanish (middle) and Miskito (bottom).

Religious Affiliation in Nicaragua





However, practicing Roman Catholics have been declining, while evangelical Protestant groups and Mormons have been rapidly growing since the 1990s. There are also strong Anglican and Moravian communities on the Caribbean coast.

Roman Catholicism came to Nicaragua in the sixteenth century with the Spanish conquest and remained, until 1939, the established faith. Protestantism and other Christian denominations came to Nicaragua during the nineteenth century, but only during the twentieth century have Protestant denominations gained large followings in the Caribbean Coast of the country. Popular religion revolves around the saints, who are perceived as intermediaries between human beings and God. Most localities, from the capital of Managua to small rural communities, honour patron saints, selected from the Roman Catholic calendar, with annual *fiestas*. In many communities, a rich lore has grown up around the celebrations of patron saints, such as Managua's Saint Dominic (Santo Domingo), honored in August with two colorful, often riotous, day-long processions through the city. The high point of Nicaragua's religious calendar for the masses is neither Christmas nor Easter, but La Purísima, a week of festivities in early December dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, during which elaborate altars to the Virgin Mary are constructed in homes and workplaces.

## Cuisine

The Cuisine of Nicaragua is as diverse as its inhabitants. It is a mixture of criollo style food and pre-Columbian dishes. When the Spaniards first arrived in Nicaragua they found that the Creole people present had incorporated foods available in the area into their cuisine. Despite the blending and incorporation of pre-Columbian and Spanish influenced cuisine, traditional cuisine changes from the Pacific to the Caribbean coast. While the Pacific coast's main staple revolves around local fruits and corn, the Caribbean coast's cuisine makes use of seafood and the coconut.

Gallopinto is Nicaragua's national dish, it consists of red beans and rice. The dish has several variations including the addition of coconut oil and/or grated coconut which is primarily prepared on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast. Most Nicaraguans begin and end every day with Gallopinto, it is also thought to have originated in Nicaragua, however there is some controversy about the origins of this dish.

## Main staple

As in many other Latin American countries, corn is a main staple. Corn is used in many of the widely consumed dishes, such as the nacatamal, and indio viejo. Corn is not only used in food it is also an ingredient for drinks such as pinolillo and chicha as well as in sweets and desserts. Nicaraguans do not limit their cuisine to corn, local grown vegetables and fruits have been in use since before the arrival of the Spaniards and their influence on Nicaraguan cuisine. Many of Nicaragua's dishes include fruits and vegetables such as jocote, mango, papaya, tamarindo, pipian, banana, avocado, yuca, and herbs such as cilantro, oregano and achiote.



*The Metropolitan Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Managua*

Religion	Percentage
Roman Catholic	58.5%
Evangelical	21.6%
Moravian	1.6%
Jehovah's Witnesses	0.9%
None	15.7%
Other <sup>1</sup>	1.6%

<sup>1</sup> Includes Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism among other religions.

Source: 2005 Nicaraguan Census



A dish containing gallopinto, tajadas, fried cheese and cabbage.



## Education

Education is free for all Nicaraguans. Elementary education is free and compulsory, however, many children in rural areas are unable to attend due to lack of schools and other reasons. Communities located on the Caribbean coast have access to education in their native languages. The majority of higher education institutions are located in Managua, higher education has financial, organic and administrative autonomy, according to the law. Also, freedom of subjects is recognized.

Nicaragua's higher education consists of 48 universities and 113 colleges and technical institutes which serve student in the areas of electronics, computer systems and sciences, agroforestry, construction and trade-related services. The educational system includes 1 U.S. accredited English-language university, 3 Bilingual university programs, 5 Bilingual secondary schools and dozens of English Language Institutes. In 2005, almost 400,000 (7%) of Nicaraguans held a university degree. 18% of Nicaragua's total budget is invested in primary, secondary and higher education. University level institutions account for 6% of 18%.

When the Sandinistas came to power in 1979, they inherited an educational system that was one of the poorest in Latin America. Under the Somozas, limited spending on education and generalized poverty, which forced many adolescents into the labor market, constricted educational opportunities for Nicaraguans. A 1980 literacy campaign, using secondary school students, university students as well as teachers as volunteer teachers, reduced the overall illiteracy rate from 50.3% to 12.9% within only five months. The key large scale programs of the Sandinistas included a massive National Literacy Crusade (March-August, 1980), social program, which received international recognition for their gains in literacy, health care, education, childcare, unions, and land reform. In September 1980, UNESCO awarded Nicaragua with the "Nadezhda K. Krupskaya" award for their successful literacy campaign. This was followed by the literacy campaigns of 1982, 1986, 1987, 1995 and 2000, all of which were also awarded by UNESCO.

## Sports

Baseball is the most popular sport played in Nicaragua. Although some professional Nicaraguan baseball teams have folded in the recent past, Nicaragua enjoys a strong tradition of American-style Baseball. Baseball was introduced to Nicaragua at different years during the 19th century. In the Caribbean coast locals from Bluefields were taught how to play baseball in 1888 by Albert Addlesberg, a retailer from the United States. Baseball did not catch on in the Pacific coast until 1891 when a group of mostly students originating from universities of the United States formed "La Sociedad de Recreo" (Society of Recreation) where they played various sports, baseball being the most popular among them. There are five teams that compete amongst themselves: Indios del Boer (Managua), Chinandega, Tiburones (Sharks) of Granada, Leon and Masaya. Players from these teams comprise the National team when Nicaragua competes internationally. The country has had its share of MLB players (including current Texas Rangers Pitcher Vicente Padilla and Boston Red Sox pitcher Devern Hansack), but the most notable is Dennis Martínez, who was the first baseball player from Nicaragua to play in Major League Baseball. He became the first Latin-born pitcher to throw a perfect game, the 13th in major league history, against the Dodgers in 1991.



Batter of the Fieras del San Fernando, a Nicaraguan professional baseball team.



Boxing is the second most popular sport in Nicaragua. The country has had world champions such as Alexis Argüello and Ricardo Mayorga among others. Recently, football has gained some popularity, especially with the younger population. The Dennis Martínez National Stadium has served as a venue for both baseball and soccer but the first ever national football stadium in Managua is currently under construction.

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# Panama

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries**

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**Panama**, officially the **Republic of Panama** (Spanish: *República de Panamá*; Spanish pronunciation: [reˈpuβlika ðe panaˈma]), is the southernmost country of Central America. Situated on an isthmus, some categorize it as a transcontinental nation connecting the north and south part of America. It borders Costa Rica to the north-west, Colombia to the south-east, the Caribbean Sea to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the south. It is an international business centre and is also a transit country. Although Panama is also the 3rd largest economy in Central America, after Guatemala and Costa Rica, it has the largest expenditure on resource consumption, making the country the largest consumer in Central America.

## History




### Pre-Columbian period

Pre-Columbian heritage of native populations whose presence stretched back over 11,000 years. The earliest traces of these indigenous peoples include fluted projectile points. This changed into significant populations that are best known through the spectacular burials of the Conte site (dating to c. AD 500-900) and the polychrome pottery of the Coclé style. The monumental monolithic sculptures at the Barriles ( Chiriquí) site were another important clue of the ancient isthmian cultures. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Panama was widely settled by Chibchan, Chocoan, and Cueva peoples, among whom the largest group were the Cueva. There is no accurate knowledge of size of the indigenous population of the isthmus at the time of the European conquest. Estimates range as high as two million people, but more recent studies place that number closer to 200,000. Archaeological finds as well as testimonials by early European explorers describe diverse native isthmian groups exhibiting cultural variety and suggesting people already conditioned by regular regional routes of commerce.

### Independence

On 3 November 1903, Panama broke off from Colombia. The US gunboat Nashville prevented the

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<i><b>República de Panamá</b></i> (Spanish) <b>Republic of Panama</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Pro Mundi Beneficio</i> " (Latin) "For the Benefit of the World"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Himno Istmeño</i> (Spanish)	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Panama City
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Demonym</b>	Panamanian



Colombian military from sailing to Panama. An assault through the dense Panamanian jungle was impossible. The President of the Municipal Council, Demetrio H. Brid, the highest authority at the time, became its *de facto* president, appointing a *Provisional Government* on 4 November to run the affairs of the new republic. The United States, as the first country to recognize the new Republic of Panama, sent troops to protect its economic interests. The 1904 Constituent Assembly elected Dr. Manuel Amador Guerrero, a prominent member of the Conservative political party, as the first constitutional President of the Republic of Panama.



The Chagres river

In November 1903, Phillipe Bunau-Varilla—a French citizen who was not authorized to sign any treaties on behalf of Panama without the review of the Panamanians—unilaterally signed the Hay-Bunau Varilla Treaty which granted rights to the United States to build and administer indefinitely the Panama Canal, which was opened in 1914. This treaty became a contentious diplomatic issue between the two countries, reaching a boiling point on Martyr's Day ( 9 January 1964). The issues were resolved with the signing of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties in 1977 returning the former Canal Zone territories to Panama.

### Military dictators

The original intent of the founding fathers was to bring peace and harmony between the two major political parties (Conservatives and Liberals). The Panamanian government went through periods of political instability and corruption, however, and at various times in its history, the mandate of an elected president terminated prematurely. In 1968, a coup toppled the government of the recently elected President Arnulfo Arias Madrid.

While never holding the position of President himself, General Omar Torrijos eventually became the *de facto* leader of Panama. As a military dictator, he was the leading power in the governing military junta and later became an autocratic strong man. Torrijos maintained his position of power until his death in an airplane accident in 1981.

After Torrijos's death, several military strong men followed him as Panama's leader. Commander Florencio Flores Aguilar followed Torrijos. Colonel Rubén Darío Paredes followed Aguilar. Eventually, by 1983, power was concentrated in the hands of General Manuel Antonio Noriega.

Manuel Noriega came up through the ranks after serving in the Chiriquí province and in the city of

<b>Government</b>	Constitutional Democracy
- President	Martin Torrijos
- First Vice President	Samuel Lewis
- Second Vice President	Rubén Arosemena
<b>Independence</b>	
- from Spain	28 November 1821
- from Colombia	3 November 1903
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	75,517 km <sup>2</sup> ( 118th) 29,157 sq mi
- Water (%)	2.9
<b>Population</b>	
- Dec 2006 estimate	3,320,000 ( 133rd)
- May 2000 census	2,839,177
- Density	43/km <sup>2</sup> ( 156th) 111/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$31.411 billion ( 103rd)
- Per capita	\$9,000 ( 83rd)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	48.5
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.812 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 62nd)
<b>Currency</b>	Balboa, U.S. dollar ( PAB, USD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-5)
- Summer ( DST)	( UTC-5)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.pa
<b>Calling code</b>	+507



Puerto Armuelles for a time. He was a former head of Panama's secret police and was an ex-informant of the CIA. But Noriega's implication in drug trafficking by the United States resulted in difficult relations by the end of the 1980s.

## United States invasion of Panama

On 20 December 1989, twenty-seven thousand U.S. personnel invaded Panama in order to remove Manuel Noriega. A few hours before the invasion, in a ceremony that took place inside a U.S. military base in the former Panama Canal Zone, Guillermo Endara was sworn in as the new President of Panama. The invasion occurred ten years before the Panama Canal administration was to be turned over to Panamanian authorities, according to the timetable set up by the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. During the fighting, between one thousand and four thousand Panamanians, mostly military, were killed.

Noriega surrendered to the American military shortly after, and was taken to Florida to be formally extradited and charged by U.S. federal authorities on drug and racketeering charges. He became eligible for parole on September 9, 2007, but remained in custody while his lawyers fought an extradition request from France. Critics have pointed out that many of Noriega's former allies remain in power in Panama.



Aftermath of urban warfare during the U.S. invasion of Panama

## Post-Invasion

Under the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, the United States turned over all canal-related lands to Panama on 31 December 1999. Panama also gained control of canal-related buildings and infrastructure as well as full administration of the canal.

The people of Panama have already approved the widening of the canal which, after completion, will allow for post-Panamax vessels to travel through it, increasing the number of ships that currently use the canal.

## Politics

Panama's politics takes place in a framework of a presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the President of Panama is both head of state and head of government, and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the National Assembly. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. All National elections are universal and mandatory to all citizens 18 years and older.

## Provinces and regions



## Geography

Panama is located in Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, between Colombia and Costa Rica. Its location on the Isthmus of Panama is strategic. By 1999, Panama controlled the Panama Canal that links the North Atlantic Ocean via the Caribbean Sea with the North Pacific Ocean.

The dominant feature of the country's landform is the central spine of mountains and hills that forms the continental divide. The divide does not form part of the great mountain chains of North America, and only near the Colombian border are there highlands related to the Andean system of South America. The spine that forms the divide is the highly eroded arch of an uplift from the sea bottom, in which peaks were formed by volcanic intrusions.

The mountain range of the divide is called the Cordillera de Talamanca near the Costa Rican border. Farther east it becomes the Serranía de Tabasará, and the portion of it closer to the lower saddle of the isthmus, where the canal is located, is often called the Sierra de Veraguas. As a whole, the range between Costa Rica and the canal is generally referred to by Panamanian geographers as the Cordillera Central.

The highest point in the country is the Volcán Barú (formerly known as the Volcán de Chiriquí), which rises to 3475 meters (11401 ft.). A nearly impenetrable jungle forms the Darien Gap between Panama and Colombia. It creates a break in the Pan-American Highway, which otherwise forms a complete road from Alaska to Patagonia.

## Economy



The nine provinces and three provincial-level *comarcas* of Panama



Ancon Hill in Panama



According to the CIA World Factbook, Panama has an unemployment rate of 7.2% and according to the United Nations, the poverty rate is of 24.2% as of 2006, comparable to that of wealthier nations such as Argentina. However, the First World infrastructure and high standards of living shows Panama's strong and thriving economic growth.

Panama's economy is mainly service-based, heavily weighted toward banking, commerce, tourism, trading and private industries because of its key geographic location. The handover of the canal and military installations by the United States has given rise to new construction projects. The Martín Torrijos administration has undertaken controversial structural reforms, such as a fiscal reform and a very difficult Social Security Reform. Furthermore, a referendum regarding the building of a third set of locks for the Panama Canal was approved overwhelmingly (though with low voter turnout) on 22 October 2006. The official estimate of the building of the third set of locks is US\$5.25 billion.

The Panamanian currency is the balboa, fixed at parity with the United States dollar. In practice, however, the country is dollarized; Panama mints its own coinage but uses US dollars for all its paper currency. Panama was the first of the three countries in Latin America to have dollarized their economies, later followed by Ecuador and El Salvador.

## Globalization



Panama City skyline

The high levels of Panamanian trade are in large part from the Colón Free Trade Zone, the largest free trade zone in the Western Hemisphere. Last year the zone accounted for 92% of Panama's exports and 64% of its imports, according to an analysis of figures from the Colon zone management and estimates of Panama's trade by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Panama's economy is also very much supported by the trade and exportation of coffee.

## Inflation

According to the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean ( ECLAC, or CEPAL by its more-commonly used Spanish acronym), Panama's inflation as measured by weight CPI was 2.0 percent in 2006. Panama has traditionally experienced low inflation.

## Real estate

Panama City is currently experiencing a real estate boom. Tourists and retirees are arriving in greater quantities and consequently helping the local real estate market.

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A Panamax ship in transit through the Miraflores locks, Panama Canal



Traditional Afro-Panamanian building





Apart from the existing demand, future developments will also be helped by such factors as the planned expansion of the Panama Canal.

### **Bilateral Investment Treaty with the U.S.**

The Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) between the governments of the United States and Panama was signed on October 27, 1982. The treaty protects U.S. investment and assists Panama in its efforts to develop its economy by creating conditions more favorable for U.S. private investment and thereby strengthening the development of its private sector. The BIT with Panama was the first such treaty signed by the U.S. in the Western Hemisphere.

The importance of Panama to the U.S. stems from the Panama Canal which was built by the U.S. during the period of 1904-1914. Previously, if ships wanted to pass through the Americas, they would have to go all the way around the most southern tip of South America, the Tierra del Fuego, and through the Drake Passage. The Panama Canal connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans directly at the narrowest point in Panama. When previously a ship going from New York to San Francisco would have to travel for 20,900 kilometers (13,000 miles), now that travel time would be reduced to 8370 km (5200 mi).

The canal is of economic importance since it provides millions of dollars from toll revenue as well as a right to include and exclude any other nation or company from using it. The United States had complete monopoly over the Panama Canal for 85 years. However, the Torrijos-Carter Treaties signed in 1977 began the process of returning the canal to the Panamanian government in 1999 as long as they agreed to the neutrality of the canal, as well as allowing the U.S. to return at any time.

### **Proposed Free Trade Agreement with the United States**

A Trade Promotion Agreement between the United States and Panama was signed by both governments in 2007, but neither country has yet approved or implemented the Agreement. While the U.S. Congress was initially favorably disposed to the Panama pact, the election of the anti-American Pedro González, and his possible link with to the assassination of US soldier Zak Hernández, to the presidency of the Panamanian legislature on September 1, 2007 has halted progress of the pact in that body.

## **Demographics**



According to the CIA World Factbook, Panama has a population of 3,242,173. The majority of the population, 70%, is mestizo. The rest is 14% Amerindian and mixed West Indian, 10% white and 6% Amerindian. The Amerindian population includes seven indigenous peoples, the Emberá, Wounaan, Guaymí, Buglé, Kuna, Naso and Bribri. More than half the population lives in the Panama City– Colón metropolitan corridor.

The culture, customs, and language of the Panamanians are predominantly Caribbean and Spanish. Spanish is the official and dominant language. About eight percent of the population speak a creole, mostly in Panama City and in the islands off the northeast coast. English is spoken widely on the Caribbean coast and by many in business and professional fields.

The overwhelming majority of Panamanians is Roman Catholic, accounting for almost 75% of the population. Although the Constitution recognizes Catholicism as the religion of the great majority, Panama has no official religion. Minority religions in Panama include Islam (0.3), the Bahá'í Faith (0.1%), Buddhism (at least 0.5%), Greek Orthodox (0.1%), Judaism (0.4%), and Hinduism (0.3%). The Jewish community in Panama, with over 10,000 members, is by far the biggest in the region (including Central America and the Caribbean). Jewish immigration began in the late 19th century, and at present there are synagogues in Panama City, as well as two Jewish schools. Within Latin America, Panama has one of the largest Jewish communities in proportion to its population, surpassed only by Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. Panama is also the first country in Latin America to have a Jewish president, Eric Arturo Delvalle. Panama's communities of Muslims, East Asians, and South Asians, are also among the largest.



Kuna woman sewing



Colón City, Panama

Panama City hosts a Bahá'í House of Worship, one of only eight in the world. Completed in 1972, it is perched on a high hill facing the canal, and is constructed of local mud laid in a pattern reminiscent of Native American fabric designs.

Panama, because of its historical reliance on commerce, is above all a melting pot. This is shown, for instance, by its considerable population of Chinese origin. Many Chinese immigrated to Panama from southern China to help build the Panama Railroad in the 19th century; their descendants number around 50,000. Starting in the 1970s, a further 80,000 have immigrated from other parts of mainland China as well.

The country is also the smallest in Spanish-speaking Latin America in terms of population (est. 3,232,000), with Uruguay as the second smallest (est. 3,463,000). However, since Panama has a higher birth rate, it is likely that in the coming years its population will surpass Uruguay's.

## International rankings

Index (Year)	Author / Editor / Source	Year of publication	Countries sampled	World Ranking <sup>(1)</sup>	Ranking L.A. <sup>(2)</sup>
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Environmental Performance (2008)	Yale University	2008	149	32°	5°
Democracy (2006)	The Economist	2007	167	44°	5°
Global Peace (2008)	The Economist	2008	140	48°	4°
Economic Freedom (2008)	The Wall Street Journal	2008	157	46°	3°
Quality-of-life (2005)	The Economist	2007	111	47°	7°
Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (2008)	World Economic Forum	2008	130	50°	3°
Press Freedom (2007)	Reporters Without Borders	2007	169	54°	5°
Global Competitiveness (2007)	World Economic Forum	2007-08	131	59°	3°
Human Development (2005)	United Nations (UNDP)	2007-08	177	62°	7°
Corruption Perception (2006)	Transparency International	2007	163	84°	10°
Income inequality (1989-2007) <sup>(3)</sup>	United Nations (UNDP)	2007-2008	126	115°	14°

<sup>(1)</sup> Worldwide ranking among countries evaluated.

<sup>(2)</sup> Ranking among the 20 Latin American countries.

<sup>(3)</sup> Because the Gini coefficient used for the ranking corresponds to different years depending of the country, and the underlying household surveys differ in method and in the type of data collected, the distribution data are not strictly comparable across countries. The ranking therefore is only a proxy for reference purposes, and though the source is the same, the sample is smaller than for the HDI

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# Paraguay

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries**

SOS Children works in Paraguay. For more information see SOS Children in Paraguay

**Paraguay**, officially the **Republic of Paraguay** (Spanish: *República del Paraguay* Spanish pronunciation: [reˈpuβlika ðel paraˈɣwai]; Guaraní: *Tetã Paraguái*), is one of the only two landlocked countries in South America (along with Bolivia). It lies on both banks of the Paraguay River, bordering Argentina to the south and southwest, Brazil to the east and northeast, and Bolivia to the northwest, and is located in the centre of South America, the country is sometimes referred to as *Corazón de América* - Heart of (South) America along with Bolivia and Brazil

## Etymology

The country is named for a river that runs almost right through the middle of it, from north to south. There are at least four versions for the origin of the river's name:

The literal translation from Guaraní is Para=great river or sea; Gua=from or belonging to or place; Y=water or river or lake. This could lead to:

- "Water or river belonging to the sea" (the Atlantic Ocean).
- "Water or river that belongs to a great river" (the Paraná River).
- "Water or river that comes from a sea" or "water or river from the place where the sea is" (the Pantanal wetland).

The fourth version states that it could be a corruption from Payaguá-y, "river of the Payaguás", a tribe that inhabited the banks and navigated its course.

## History

<p><i>República del Paraguay</i> <i>Tetã Paraguái</i> Republic of Paraguay</p>	
 <p>Flag</p>	 <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p><b>Motto:</b> <i>Paz y justicia</i> (Spanish) "Peace and justice"</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Paraguayos, República o Muerte</i> (Spanish)</p>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Asunción
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish, Guaraní
<b>Demonym</b>	Paraguayan



Pre-Columbian civilization in the wooded, fertile region which is now present-day Paraguay consisted of seminomadic, Guaraní-speaking tribes, who were recognized for their fierce warrior traditions. Europeans first arrived in the area in the early sixteenth century and the settlement of Asunción was founded on August 15, 1537 by the Spanish explorer Juan de Salazar y Espinoza. The city eventually became the centre of a Spanish colonial province, as well as a primary site of the Jesuit missions and settlements in South America in the eighteenth century. Jesuit Reductions were founded and flourished in eastern Paraguay for about 150 years until their destruction by the Spanish crown in 1767. Paraguay declared its independence after overthrowing the local Spanish people on May 14, 1811.

<b>Government</b>	Constitutional presidential republic
- President	Nicanor Duarte
- Vice President	Francisco Oviedo
- President-elect	Fernando Lugo
<b>Independence</b>	from Spain
- Declared	May 14, 1811
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	406,752 km <sup>2</sup> ( 59th) 157,048 sq mi
- Water (%)	2.3
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2005 estimate	6,158,000 ( 101st)
- Density	15/km <sup>2</sup> ( 192nd) 39/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$28.342 billion ( 96th)
- Per capita	\$4,555 ( 107th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 (IMF) estimate
- Total	\$10.9 billion ( 111th)
- Per capita	\$1,802 ( 116th)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	57.8 ( <b>high</b> )
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	▼ 0.755 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 95th)
<b>Currency</b>	Guaraní ( PYG)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
- Summer ( DST)	( UTC-3)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.py



Francisco Solano López

Paraguay's history has been characterized by long periods of authoritarian governments, political instability and infighting, and devastating wars with its neighbors. Its post-colonial history can be divided into several distinct periods:

1811 - 1816: Establishment and consolidation of Paraguay's Independence

1816 - 1840: Governments of José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia

1840 - 1865: Governments of Carlos Antonio Lopez and Francisco Solano Lopez

1865 - 1870: War of the Triple Alliance

1870 - 1904: Post-war reconstruction and Colorado Party governments

1904 - 1932: Liberal Party governments and prelude to the Chaco War

1932 - 1935: Chaco War

1935 - 1940: Governments of the Revolutionary Febrerista Party and Jose Felix Estigarribia

1940 - 1948: Higinio Morinigo government

1947 - 1954: Paraguayan Civil War (March 1947 until August 1947) and the re-emergence of the Colorado Party

1954 - 1989: Alfredo Stroessner dictatorship

1989 to date: Transition to democracy



Asunción, the capital of Paraguay

In addition to the Declaration of Independence, the War of the Triple Alliance and the Chaco War are milestones in Paraguay's history. Paraguay fought the War of the Triple Alliance against Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, and was defeated in 1870 after five years of the bloodiest war in South America. Paraguay suffered extensive territorial losses to Brazil and Argentina. The Chaco War was fought with Bolivia in the 1930s and Bolivia was defeated. Paraguay re-established sovereignty over the region called the Chaco, and forfeited additional territorial gains as a price of peace.

The history of Paraguay is fraught with disputes among historians, educators and politicians. The official version of historical events, wars in particular, varies depending on whether you read a history book written in Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil or Bolivia, and even European and North American authors have been unable to avoid bias. Paraguay's history also has

been a matter of dispute among Paraguay's main political parties, and there is a Colorado Party and Liberal Party official version of Paraguayan history. Certain historical events from the Colonial and early national era have been difficult to investigate due to the fact that during the pillaging of Asuncion Saqueo de Asunción, the Brazilian Imperial army ransacked and relocated the Paraguayan National archives to Rio de Janeiro. The majority of the archives have been mostly under secret seal since then, in effect, precluding any historical investigation.

Leftist former bishop Fernando Lugo achieved a historic victory in Paraguay's presidential election in April 2008, defeating the ruling party candidate and ending 61 years of conservative rule. Lugo won with nearly 41 percent of the vote compared to almost 31 percent for Blanca Ovelar of the Colorado party.

Calling code

+595



Rendition of Paraguayan soldier grieving the loss of his son by José Ignacio Garmendia



## Politics

Paraguay's politics takes place in a framework of a presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the President of Paraguay is both head of state and head of government, and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of the National Congress. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature.

### Politics in 1980s

After World War II, politics became particularly unstable with several political parties fighting for power in the late 1940s, which most notably led to the Paraguayan civil war of 1947. A series of unstable governments ensued until the establishment in 1954 of the stable regime of Alfredo Stroessner, who remained in office for more than three decades. Alfredo Stroessner's human rights track record was one of the best in the continent, and he slowly modernized Paraguay, even though his government's efforts were hampered by interference from drug traffickers and narco-communists.

The splits in the Colorado Party in the 1980s and the conditions that led to this — Stroessner's age, the character of the regime, the economic downturn, and international isolation — provided an opportunity for demonstrations and statements by the opposition prior to the 1988 general elections.



A gathering in Caacupe

The PLRA leader Domingo Laíno served as the focal point of the opposition in the second half of the 1980s. The government's effort to isolate Laíno by exiling him in 1982 had backfired. On his fifth attempt, in 1986, Laíno returned with three television crews from the U.S., a former United States ambassador to Paraguay, and a group of Uruguayan and Argentine congressmen. Despite the international contingent, the police violently barred Laíno's return. However, the Stroessner regime relented in April 1987 and permitted Laíno to arrive in Asunción. Laíno took the lead in organizing demonstrations and diminishing somewhat the normal opposition party infighting. The opposition was unable to reach agreement on a common strategy regarding the elections, with some parties advocating abstention and others calling for blank voting. Nonetheless, the parties did cooperate in holding numerous lightning demonstrations (*mítines relámpagos*), especially in rural areas. Such demonstrations were held and disbanded quickly before the arrival of the police.

Obviously stung by the upsurge in opposition activities, Stroessner condemned the Accord for advocating "sabotage of the general elections and disrespect of the law" and used the national police and civilian vigilantes of the Colorado Party to break up demonstrations. A number of opposition leaders were imprisoned or otherwise harassed. Hermes Rafael Saguier, another key leader of the PRLA, was imprisoned for four months in 1987 on charges of sedition. In early February 1988, police arrested 200 people attending a National Coordinating Committee meeting in Coronel Oviedo. Forty-eight hours before the elections, Laíno and several other National Accord members were placed under house arrest.

Despite limited campaign activities, the government reported that 88.7% of the vote went to Stroessner, 7.1% to PLR candidate Luis María Vega, and 3.2% to



PL candidate Carlos Ferreira Ibarra. The remaining 1% of ballots were blank or annulled. The government also reported that 92.6% of all eligible voters cast their ballots. The National Coordinating Committee rejected the government's figures, contending that abstention was as high as 50% in some areas. In addition, election monitors from twelve countries, including the United States, France, Spain, Brazil, and Argentina, reported extensive irregularities.

Shortly after the elections, researchers from the Catholic University of Our Lady of Asunción and the West German Friedrich Naumann Foundation released the findings of a public opinion poll that they had conducted several weeks earlier. The poll, which measured political attitudes of urban Paraguayans - defined as those living in towns with at least 2,500 residents - suggested that the Colorado Party had considerable support, although nowhere near the level of official election statistics. Asked for whom they would vote in an election involving the free participation of all parties and political movements, 43% named the Colorado Party; the PLRA, which finished second in the poll, was mentioned by only 13% of all respondents. Stroessner's name also topped the list of those political leaders considered most capable of leading the country.

Although contending that these results reflected the Colorados' virtual monopoly of the mass media, opposition politicians also saw several encouraging developments. Some 53% of those polled indicated that there was an "uneasiness" in Paraguayan society. Furthermore, 74% believed that the political situation needed changes, including 45% who wanted a substantial or total change. Finally, 31% stated that they planned to abstain from voting in the February elections.

Relations between militants and traditionalists deteriorated seriously in the months following the elections. Although Chaves and his followers had not opposed Stroessner's re-election bid, Montanaro denounced them as "legionnaires" (a reference to those Paraguayan expatriates who fought against Francisco Solano López and who were regarded as traitors by the original Colorados). By late 1988 the only major agencies still headed by traditionalists were the IBR and the National Cement Industry (Industria Nacional de Cemento). In September 1988, traditionalists responded to these attacks by accusing the militants of pursuing "a deceitful populism in order to distract attention from their inability to resolve the serious problems that afflict the nation." Traditionalists also called for an end to personalism and corruption.

## Law

Paraguay's legal system is based on Roman law, Argentine codes, and French codes. In recent years, Paraguay has made important progress toward greater fiscal transparency. The fairly comprehensive financial administration law (1999) has been complemented by recent legal reforms that eliminated most tax exemptions, revamped revenue administration procedures and introduced standardized transparency requirements for public procurement, all of which reduce the scope for corruption. In addition, efforts are ongoing to clarify the relations between the government and the nonfinancial public enterprises (NFPEs), including through tariff adjustments that have reduced quasi-fiscal activities (QFAs) and the launching of external audits of the enterprises' financial health carried out by international firms. However, Paraguay fails to meet several requirements (at times even basic ones) of the code: (i) the transparency and credibility of the budget as an expression of the government's fiscal objectives and a guide to fiscal policy implementation are severely limited by the lack of an underlying consistent macroeconomic framework, the limited accountability imposed on the amendments introduced either by congress or the executive at both the approval and







execution stages, and the lack of a modern framework for civil service; (ii) relations across different branches of government and between the latter and the rest of the public sector are not always clear and little information is provided on QFAs; (iii) few assurances of data quality are provided, as data reconciliation and assessments by the relevant national body are weak; and (iv) disclosure of fiscal information is sparse and its coverage not comprehensive.

## Departments and districts

Paraguay consists of seventeen departments and one capital district (*distrito capital*): These are, with their capitals indicated:

Name	Capital	Name	Capital
1 Alto Paraguay	Fuerte Olimpo	10 Concepción	Concepción
2 Alto Paraná	Ciudad del Este	11 Cordillera	Caacupé
3 Amambay	Pedro Juan Caballero	12 Guairá	Villarrica
4 <i>Distrito Capital</i>	Asunción	13 Itapúa	Encarnación
5 Boquerón	Filadelfia	14 Misiones	San Juan Bautista
6 Caaguazú	Coronel Oviedo	15 Ñeembucú	Pilar
7 Caazapá	Caazapá	16 Paraguari	Paraguari
8 Canindeyú	Salto del Guairá	17 Presidente Hayes	Villa Hayes
9 Central	Areguá	18 San Pedro	San Pedro



The departments are further divided into districts (*distritos*).



## Largest cities 2002 (from www.citypopulation.de)

- Asunción 512,000
- Ciudad del Este 222,000
- San Lorenzo 204,000
- Luque 171,000
- Capiatá 154,000
- Lambaré 120,000
- Fernando de la Mora 114,000
- Limpio 73,000
- Ñemby 72,000
- Encarnación 67,000

## Projected, estimate 2027

- Ciudad del Este 1,100,000
- San Lorenzo 725,000
- Luque 684,000
- Capiatá 616,000
- Asunción 538,000
- Limpio 292,000
- Ñemby 288,000
- Mariano Roque Alonso 261,000
- Lambaré 193,000
- Fernando de la Mora 184,000

## Economy



Downtown Ciudad del Este



Asuncion Cathedral



Paraguay is a developing country with a 2005 Human Development Index score of 0.755. It ranks as the second poorest country in South America with a 2007 GDP per capita of US\$4,000. Approximately 2.1 million, or 35%, of its total population is poor and approximately 1 million, or 15.9%, are unemployed.

Paraguay has a market economy marked by a large informal sector that features both re-export of imported consumer goods to neighboring countries, and thousands of small business enterprises. Paraguay's largest economic activity is based on agriculture, agribusiness and cattle ranching. Paraguay is ranked as the world's third largest exporter of soybeans, and its beef exports are substantial for a country of its size. A large percentage of the population derive their living from agricultural activity, often on a subsistence basis. Despite difficulties arising from political instability, corruption and slow structural reforms, Paraguay has been a member of the free trade bloc Mercosur, participating since 1991 as one of the founding members.



Centre of Encarnación.

Paraguay's economic potential has been historically constrained by its landlocked geography, but it does enjoy access to the Atlantic Ocean via the Paraná River. Because it is landlocked, Paraguay's economy is very dependent on Brazil and Argentina, its neighbors and major trade partners. Roughly 38% of the GDP derives from trade and exports to Brazil and Argentina.

Through various treaties, Paraguay has been granted free ports in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil through which it sends its exports. The most important of these free ports is on the Brazilian Atlantic coast at Paranaguá. The Friendship Bridge that now spans the Paraná River between Ciudad del Este and the Brazilian city of Foz do Iguaçu permits about forty thousand travelers to commute daily between both cities, and allows Paraguay land access to Paranaguá. A vibrant economy has developed in Ciudad del Este and Foz do Iguaçu mostly based on international commerce and shopping trips by Brazilian buyers colloquially called *sacoleiros*.

Bilateral EU-Paraguay trade in goods amounts to €437 million in 2005; the EU importing around €269 million and exporting roughly €168 million. In 2005, trade with EU represented 8.9% of total Paraguay's trade. The EU market represents 13.7% of Paraguay exports and 6.1% of its imports.

While the country's external debt remains satisfactory (40% of GDP), Paraguay's economy is still driven by agricultural production (27% of GDP and 84% of exports). It is a structure which is very vulnerable to climatic factors and price volatility. In 2004 its main exports were soybeans (35%) and meat (10%). Because of the regional crisis, very limited economic growth (2.7% in 2005) and a population increase, GDP per capita has fallen considerably in the long term, standing at USD 1 155 in 2005. Combined with inequality, the aforementioned factors explain why poverty currently affects 40% of the population.

Although only ranked 112th out of 175 countries in the 2006 World Bank *Doing Business* ranking, Paraguay has ranked particularly well in the "Protecting Investors" sub-category within that index. The indexes vary between 0 and 10, with higher values indicating greater disclosure, greater liability of directors, greater powers of shareholders to challenge the transaction, and better investor protection, respectively.

The "Disclosure Index" for Paraguay is 6, whereas the Latin American region ranked only 4.3 (OECD countries ranked 6.3 on average). The country ranked 5 in "Director Liability Index", the same as OECD countries and better than the 5.1 attributed to its neighbors. In the "Shareholder Suits Index" category, Paraguay obtained 6 points, in contrast with 5.8 for its neighbors and 6.6 for OECD countries. The comprehensive "Investor Protection Index" attributed 5.7 to



Paraguay, 5.1 to its neighbors and 6.0 to OECD countries on average.

## Demographics

According to the CIA World Factbook, Paraguay has a population of 6,669,086; 95% of which are mestizo (mixed Spanish and Amerindian) and 5% are "other". Ethnically, culturally, and socially, Paraguay has one of the most homogeneous populations in Latin America with 95% of the people mestizos of mixed Spanish and Amerindian, mostly Guaraní Indian, descent. One trace of the original Guaraní culture that has endured is the Guaraní language, spoken by up to 90% of the population in the country. Small groups of ethnic Italians, Germans, Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Arabs, Ukrainians, Brazilians, and Argentines settled in Paraguay and they have to an extent retained their respective languages and culture, particularly the Brazilians who represent the largest number.

About 75% of all Paraguayans can speak Spanish. Guaraní and Spanish are both official languages.

Paraguay's population is distributed unevenly throughout the country. About 56% of Paraguayans live in urban areas. The vast majority of the people live in the eastern region near the capital and largest city, Asunción, that accounts for 10% of the country's population. The Gran Chaco region, which includes the Alto Paraguay, Boquerón and Presidente Hayes Department, and which accounts for about 60% of the territory, is home to less than 2% of the population.

According to the 2002 census, 89.6% of the population is Roman Catholic, 6.2% is evangelical Christian, 1.1% is other Christian, 0.6% practise indigenous religions and 0.3 profess non-Christian religions.

A US State Department report on Religious Freedom names Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Jewish (Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon), and Baha'i as prominent religious groups and also mentions a large Muslim community in Alto Paraná as a result of middle-eastern immigration, especially from Lebanon and also the Mennonite community in Boquerón.

The Church of the Latter Day Saints (LDS, Mormon), claims more than 66,000 members in Paraguay and that its membership has doubled in the past five years.

## Immigration

European and Middle Eastern immigrants began making their way to Paraguay in the decades following the War of the Triple Alliance. The government pursued a pro-immigration policy in an effort to increase population. Government records indicated that approximately 12,000 immigrants entered the port of Asunción between 1882 and 1907, of that total, almost 9,000 came from Italy, Germany, France, and Spain. Migrants also arrived from neighboring Latin American countries, especially Argentina.



A young Guaraní girl.



In addition, official records gave an imprecise sense of the number of Brazilians who had come to the country. According to the 1982 census, there were 99,000 Brazilians residing in Paraguay. Most analysts discounted this figure, however, and contended that between 300,000 and 350,000 Brazilians lived in the eastern border region. Analysts also rejected government figures on the number of immigrants from South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The 1982 census reported that there were 2,700 Koreans in Paraguay, along with another 1,100 non-Japanese or non-Korean Asian immigrants. The actual number of Koreans and ethnic Chinese, however, was believed to be between 30,000 and 50,000. Virtually all Koreans and ethnic Chinese lived in Ciudad del Este or Asunción and played a major role in the importation and sale of electronic goods manufactured in Asia.

## Social issues

Paraguay is a poor and unequal society. Various poverty estimates suggest that between one in every three Paraguayans (World Bank Poverty Assessment) to half of the population is poor (2003 Census Bureau Household Survey). In rural areas, 41.20% of the people lack a monthly income to cover basic necessities, whereas in urban centers this figure is 27.6%. The top 10% of the population holds 43.8% of the national income, while the lowest 10% has only 0.5%. The economic recession has worsened income inequality, notably in the rural areas, where the Gini Index has risen from 0.56 in 1995 to 0.66 in 1999. Similarly, land concentration in the Paraguayan countryside is one of the highest in the globe: 10% of the population controls 66% of the land, while 30% of the rural people are landless. This inequality has caused a great deal of tensions between the landless and elites.

The World Bank has helped the Paraguayan government in tackling overall reduction of Paraguay's maternal and infant mortality. The *Mother and Child Basic Health Insurance Project* aimed at contributing to reducing mortality by increasing the use of selected life-saving services included in the country's Mother and Child Basic Health Insurance Program (MCBI) by women of child-bearing age, and children under age six in selected areas. To this end, the project also targeted at improving the quality and efficiency of the health service network within certain areas, in addition to increasing the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare's (MSPBS) management.

## International rankings

Organization	Survey	Ranking
Heritage Foundation/The Wall Street Journal	Index of Economic Freedom, 2007	99 out of 157
The Economist	Worldwide Quality of Life Index, 2005	???
The Economist	Democracy Index, 2006	71 out of 167
Reporters Without Borders	Worldwide Press Freedom Index, 2006	82 out of 168
Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index, 2006	111 out of 163
United Nations Development Programme	Human Development Index	95 out of 177



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# Peru

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**Peru** (Spanish: *Perú*, Quechua: *Piruw*, Aymara: *Piruw*), officially the **Republic of Peru** (Spanish: , IPA: [reˈpu.βli.ka del peˈru]), is a country in western South America. It is bordered on the north by Ecuador and Colombia, on the east by Brazil, on the southeast by Bolivia, on the south by Chile, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean.

Peruvian territory was home to the Norte Chico civilization, one of the oldest in the world, and to the Inca Empire, the largest state in Pre-Columbian America. The Spanish Empire conquered the region in the 16th century and established a Viceroyalty, which included most of its South American colonies. After achieving independence in 1821, Peru has undergone periods of political unrest and fiscal crisis as well as periods of stability and economic upswing.

Peru is a representative democratic republic divided into 25 regions. Its geography varies from the arid plains of the Pacific coast to the peaks of the Andes mountains and the tropical forests of the Amazon Basin. It is a developing country with a medium Human Development Index score and a poverty level around 45%. Its main economic activities include agriculture, fishing, mining, and manufacturing of products such as textiles.

The Peruvian population, estimated at 28 million, is multiethnic, including Amerindians, Europeans, Africans and Asians. The main spoken language is Spanish, although a significant number of Peruvians speak Quechua and other native languages. This mixture of cultural traditions has resulted in a wide diversity of expressions in fields such as art, cuisine, literature, and music.

## Etymology

The word *Peru* is derived from *Birú*, the name of a local ruler who lived near the Bay of San Miguel, Panama, in the early 16th century. When his possessions were visited by Spanish explorers in 1522, they were the southernmost part of the New World yet known to Europeans. Thus, when Francisco Pizarro explored the regions farther south, they came to be designated Birú or Peru. The Spanish Crown gave the name legal status with the 1529 *Capitulación de Toledo*, which designated the newly encountered Inca

<b><i>República del Perú</i> (Spanish)</b> <b>Republic of Peru</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> " <i>Somos libres, seámoslo siempre</i> " (Spanish) "We are free, may we always be so"	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Lima
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish <sup>1</sup>
<b>Demonym</b>	Peruvian
<b>Government</b>	Presidential republic
- President	Alan García Pérez
- Vice President	Luis Giampietri Rojas



Empire as the province of Peru. Under Spanish rule, the country adopted the denomination Viceroyalty of Peru, which became Republic of Peru after independence.

## History

The earliest evidence of human presence in Peruvian territory has been dated to approximately 11,000 years BCE. The oldest known complex society in Peru, the Norte Chico civilization, flourished along the coast of the Pacific Ocean between 3000 and 1800 BCE. These early developments were followed by archaeological cultures such as Chavin, Paracas, Mochica, Nazca, Wari, and Chimú. In the 15th century, the Incas emerged as a powerful state which, in the span of a century, formed the largest empire in pre-Columbian America. Andean societies were based on agriculture, using techniques such as irrigation and terracing; camelid husbandry and fishing were also important. Organization relied on reciprocity and redistribution because these societies had no notion of market or money.



Machu Picchu, the "Lost City of the Incas"

In 1532, a group of *conquistadors* led by Francisco Pizarro defeated Inca Emperor Atahualpa and imposed Spanish rule. Ten years later, the Spanish Crown established the Viceroyalty of Peru, which included most of its South American colonies. Viceroy Francisco de Toledo reorganized the country in the 1570s with silver mining as its main economic activity and Indian forced labor as its primary workforce. Peruvian bullion provided revenue for the Spanish Crown and fueled a complex trade network that extended as far as Europe and the Philippines. However, by the 18th century, declining silver production and economic diversification greatly diminished royal income. In response, the Crown enacted the Bourbon Reforms, a series of edicts

that increased taxes and partitioned the Viceroyalty of Peru. The new laws provoked Túpac Amaru II's rebellion and other revolts, all of which were defeated.

In the early 19th century, while most of South America was swept by wars of independence, Peru remained a royalist stronghold. As the elite hesitated between emancipation and loyalty to the Spanish Monarchy, independence was achieved only after the military campaigns of José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar. During the early years of the Republic, endemic struggles for power between military leaders caused political instability. National identity was forged during this period, as Bolivarian projects for a Latin American Confederation foundered and a union with Bolivia proved ephemeral. Between the 1840s and 1860s, Peru enjoyed stability under the presidency of Ramón Castilla due to increased state revenues from guano exports. However, by the 1870s, these resources had been squandered, the country

- Prime Minister	Jorge Del Castillo
- President of Congress	Luis Gonzales Posada
<b>Independence</b>	from Spain
- Declared	July 28, 1821
- Recognized	December 9, 1824
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	1,285,220 km <sup>2</sup> ( 20th) 496,222 sq mi
- Water (%)	8.80
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2007 estimate	28,674,757 ( 41st)
- 2005 census	27,219,266
- Density	22/km <sup>2</sup> ( 183rd) 57/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$207.985 billion ( 51st)
- Per capita	\$7,410 ( 79th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$101.504 billion ( 55th)
- Per capita	\$3,616 ( 87th)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	54.6 (high)
<b>HDI (2005)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.773 (medium) ( 87th)
<b>Currency</b>	Nuevo Sol ( PEN)
<b>Time zone</b>	PET ( UTC-5)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.pe
<b>Calling code</b>	+51
<small><sup>1</sup> Quechua, Aymara and other indigenous languages are co-official in the areas where they are predominant.</small>	





was heavily indebted, and political in-fighting was again on the rise.

Peru was defeated by Chile in the 1879–1883 War of the Pacific, losing the provinces of Arica and Tarapacá in the treaties of Ancón and Lima. Internal struggles after the war were followed by a period of stability under the Civilista Party, which lasted until the onset of the authoritarian regime of Augusto B. Leguía. The Great Depression caused the downfall of Leguía, renewed political turmoil, and the emergence of the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA). The rivalry between this organization and a coalition of the elite and the military defined Peruvian politics for the following three decades.

In 1968, the Armed Forces, led by General Juan Velasco Alvarado, staged a coup against president Fernando Belaunde. The new regime undertook radical reforms aimed at fostering development but failed to gain widespread support. In 1975, Velasco was forcefully replaced as president by General Francisco Morales Bermúdez, who paralyzed reforms and oversaw the reestablishment of democracy. During the 1980s, Peru faced a considerable external debt, ever-growing inflation, a surge in drug trafficking, and massive political violence. Under the presidency of Alberto Fujimori (1990–2000), the country started to recover; however, accusations of authoritarianism, corruption, and human rights violations forced his resignation after the controversial 2000 elections. Since the end of the Fujimori regime, Peru has tried to fight corruption while sustaining economic growth; the current president is Alan García.



Angamos, a decisive battle during the War of the Pacific.

## Government

Peru is a presidential representative democratic republic with a multi-party system. Under the current constitution, the President is the head of state and government; he or she is elected for five years and may not immediately be re-elected. The President designates the Prime Minister and, with his advice, the rest of the Council of Ministers. There is a unicameral Congress with 120 members elected for a five-year term. Bills may be proposed by either the executive or the legislative branch; they become law after being passed by Congress and promulgated by the President. The judiciary is nominally independent, though political intervention into judicial matters has been common throughout history and arguably continues today.



Congress sits on the *Palacio Legislativo* in Lima.

The Peruvian government is directly elected, and voting is compulsory for all citizens aged 18 to 70. General elections held in 2006 ended in a second round victory for presidential candidate Alan García of the Peruvian Aprista Party (52.6% of valid votes) over Ollanta Humala of Union for Peru (47.4%). Congress is currently composed of the Peruvian Aprista Party (36 seats), Peruvian Nationalist Party (23 seats), Union for Peru (19 seats), National Unity (15 seats), the Fujimorista Alliance for the Future (13 seats), the Parliamentary Alliance (9 seats) and the Democratic Special Parliamentary Group (5 seats).

Peruvian foreign relations have been dominated by border conflicts with neighboring countries, most of which were settled during the 20th century. There is still an ongoing dispute with Chile over maritime limits in the Pacific Ocean. Peru is an active member of several regional blocs and one of the founders of the Andean Community of Nations. It is also a participant in



*Casa de Pizarro*, official residence of the President.



international organizations such as the Organization of American States and the United Nations. The Peruvian military is composed of an army, a navy and an air force; its primary mission is to safeguard the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. The armed forces are subordinate to the Ministry of Defense and to the President as Commander-in-Chief. Conscription was abolished in 1999 and replaced by voluntary military service.

## Regions



Peru is divided into 25 regions and the province of Lima. Each region has an elected government composed of a president and a council, which serves for a four-year term. These governments plan regional development, execute public investment projects, promote economic activities, and manage public property. The province of Lima is administered by a city council.

### Regions:

- Amazonas
- Ancash
- Apurímac
- Arequipa
- Ayacucho
- Cajamarca
- Callao
- Cusco
- Huancavelica
- Huánuco
- Ica
- Junín
- La Libertad
- Lambayeque
- Lima
- Loreto
- Madre de Dios
- Moquegua
- Pasco
- Piura
- Puno
- San Martín
- Tacna
- Tumbes
- Ucayali

### Province:

- Lima

## Geography



Clickable map of the regions of Peru.



Topographic map of Peru

Peru covers 1,285,220 km<sup>2</sup> (496,193 sq mi), making it approximately two-thirds the size of Mexico. It neighbors Ecuador and Colombia to the north, Brazil to the east, Bolivia to the southeast, Chile to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west.

The Andes mountains run parallel to the Pacific Ocean, dividing the country into three geographic regions. The *costa* (coast), to the west, is a narrow plain, largely arid except for valleys created by seasonal rivers. The *sierra* (highlands) is the region of the Andes; it includes the *Altiplano* plateau as well as the highest peak of the country, the 6,768 m (22,205 ft) Huascarán. The third region is the *selva* (jungle), a wide expanse of flat terrain covered by the Amazon rainforest that extends east. Almost 60% of the country's area is located within this region.

Most Peruvian rivers originate in the Andes and drain into one of three basins. Those that drain toward the Pacific Ocean are steep and short, flowing only intermittently. Tributaries of the Amazon River are longer, have a much larger flow, and are less steep once they exit the *sierra*. Rivers that drain into Lake Titicaca are generally short and have a large flow. Peru's longest rivers are the Ucayali, the Marañón, the Putumayo, the Yavari, the Huallaga, the Urubamba, the Mantaro, and the Amazon.

Peru, unlike other equatorial countries, does not have an exclusively tropical climate; the influence of the Andes and the Humboldt Current causes great climatic diversity within the country. The *costa* has moderate temperatures, low precipitations, and high humidity, except for its warmer, wetter northern reaches. In the *sierra*, rain is frequent during summer, and temperature and humidity diminish with altitude up to the frozen peaks of the Andes. The *selva* is characterized by heavy rainfall and high temperatures, except for its southernmost part, which has cold winters and seasonal rainfall. Because of its varied geography and climate, Peru has a high biodiversity; 21,462 species of plants and animals had been reported as of 2003, 5,855 of them endemic. The Peruvian government has established several protected areas for their preservation.



The peaks of the Andes are the source of many Peruvian rivers.

## Economy



The seaport of Callao is the main outlet for Peruvian exports.

Peru is a developing country with a 2005 Human Development Index score of 0.773. Its 2006 per capita income was US\$3,374; 44.5% of its total population is poor, including 16.1% that is extremely poor. Historically, the country's economic performance has been tied to exports, which provide hard currency to finance imports and external debt payments. Although exports have provided substantial revenue, self-sustained growth and a more egalitarian distribution of income have proven elusive.

Peruvian economic policy has varied widely over the past decades. The 1968–1975 government of Juan Velasco Alvarado introduced radical reforms, which included agrarian reform, the expropriation of foreign companies, the introduction of an economic planning system, and the creation of a large state-owned sector. These measures failed to achieve their objectives of income redistribution and the end of economic dependence on developed nations. Despite these adverse results, most reforms were not reversed until the 1990s, when the liberalizing government of Alberto Fujimori ended price controls, protectionism,



restrictions on foreign direct investment, and most state ownership of companies. Reforms have permitted sustained economic growth since 1993, except for a slump after the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

Services account for 53% of Peruvian gross domestic product, followed by manufacturing (22.3%), extractive industries (15%), and taxes (9.7%). Recent economic growth has been fueled by macroeconomic stability, improved terms of trade, and rising investment and consumption. Trade is expected to increase further after the implementation of a free trade agreement with the United States, which was signed on April 12, 2006. Peru's main exports are copper, gold, zinc, textiles, and fish meal; its major trade partners are the United States, China, Brazil, and Chile.

## Demographics

With about 28 million inhabitants, Peru is the fourth most populous country in South America as of 2007. Its demographic growth rate declined from 2.6% to 1.6% between 1950 and 2000; population is expected to reach approximately 42 million in 2050. As of 2005, 72.6% lived in urban areas and 27.4% in rural areas. Major cities include Lima, Arequipa, Trujillo, Chiclayo, Piura, Iquitos, Chimbote, Cusco, and Huancayo, all of which reported more than 200,000 inhabitants in the 1993 census.

Peru is a multiethnic nation formed by the combination of different groups over five centuries. Amerindians inhabited Peruvian territory for several millennia before Spanish Conquest in the 16th century; mainly due to infectious diseases their population decreased from an estimated 9 million in the 1520s to around 600,000 in 1620. Spaniards and Africans arrived in large numbers under colonial rule, mixing widely with each other and with indigenous peoples. After independence, there has been a gradual European immigration from England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Chinese arrived in the 1850s as a replacement for slave workers and have since become a major influence in Peruvian society. Other immigrant groups include Arabs and Japanese.

Spanish, the first language of 80.3% of Peruvians age 5 and older in 1993, is the primary language of the country. It coexists with several indigenous languages, the most important of which is Quechua, spoken by 16.5% of the population in 1993. Other native and foreign languages were spoken at that time by 3% and 0.2% of Peruvians, respectively. In the 1993 census, 89% of the population over 12 years old described themselves as Catholic, 6.7% as Evangelical, 2.6% as of other denominations, and 1.4% as non-religious; 0.2% did not specify any affiliation. Literacy was estimated at 88.9% in 2005; this rate is lower in rural areas (76.1%) than in urban areas (94.8%). Primary and secondary education are compulsory and free in public schools.

## Culture



Peruvian woman and child of Amerindian ancestry



Peruvian culture is primarily rooted in Amerindian and Spanish traditions, though it has also been influenced by various African, Asian, and European ethnic groups. Peruvian artistic traditions date back to the elaborate pottery, textiles, jewelry, and sculpture of Pre-Inca cultures. The Incas maintained these crafts and made architectural achievements including the construction of Machu Picchu. Baroque dominated colonial art, though modified by native traditions. During this period, most art focused on religious subjects; the numerous churches of the era and the paintings of the Cuzco School are representative. Arts stagnated after independence until the emergence of *Indigenismo* in the early 20th century. Since the 1950s, Peruvian art has been eclectic and shaped by both foreign and local art currents.

Peruvian literature has its roots in the oral traditions of pre-Columbian civilizations. Spaniards introduced writing in the 16th century; colonial literary expression included chronicles and religious literature. After independence, Costumbrism and Romanticism became the most common literary genres, as exemplified in the works of Ricardo Palma. In the early 20th century, the *Indigenismo* movement produced such writers as Ciro Alegría, José María Arguedas, and César Vallejo. During the second half of the century, Peruvian literature became more widely known because of authors such as Mario Vargas Llosa, a leading member of the Latin American Boom.



*Ceviche* is a citrus marinated seafood dish.

Peruvian cuisine is a blend of Amerindian and Spanish food with strong influences from African, Arab, Italian, Chinese, and Japanese cooking. Common dishes include *anticuchos*, *ceviche*, *humitas*, and *pachamanca*. Because of the variety of climates within Peru, a wide range of plants and animals are available for cooking. Peruvian cuisine has recently received acclaim due to its diversity of ingredients and techniques.

Peruvian music has Andean, Spanish and African roots. In pre-Hispanic times, musical expressions varied widely from region to region; the *quena* and the *tinya* were two common instruments. Spanish conquest brought the introduction of new instruments such as the guitar and the harp, as well as the development of crossbred instruments like the *charango*. African contributions to Peruvian music include its rhythms and the *cajón*, a percussion instrument. Peruvian folk dances include *marinera*, *tondero*, *danza de tijeras* and *huayno*.



Roman Catholicism is the most widely spread religion in the country since the seventeenth century. Anonymous Cuzco School painting, 18th century

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# Puerto Rico

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

**Puerto Rico** (IPA: /ˌpɹwɛrtoˈriko/), officially the **Commonwealth of Puerto Rico** (Spanish: *Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico* [literally, English: *Associated Free State of Puerto Rico*]), is a self-governing unincorporated territory of the United States located in the northeastern Caribbean, east of the Dominican Republic and west of the Virgin Islands. The territory is composed of an archipelago that includes the main island of Puerto Rico and a number of smaller islands and keys, the largest of which are Vieques, Culebra, and Mona. The main island of Puerto Rico is the smallest by land area but third largest by population among the four Greater Antilles (Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico).

Puerto Ricans often call the island *Borinquen*, from *Borikén*, its indigenous Taíno name. The terms *boricua* and *borincano* derive from *Borikén* and *Borinquen* respectively, and are commonly used to identify someone of Puerto Rican heritage. The island is also popularly known as "*La Isla del Encanto*", which translated means "The Island of Enchantment."

## History

### Pre-Columbian era

The history of the archipelago of Puerto Rico (Spanish for "Rich Port") before the arrival of Christopher Columbus is not well known. What is known today comes from archaeological findings and early Spanish accounts. The first comprehensive book on the history of Puerto Rico was written by Fray Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra in 1786, 293 years after the first Spaniards arrived on the island.

### *Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico* Commonwealth of Puerto Rico



Flag



Coat of arms

**Motto:** Latin: *Joannes Est Nomen Eius*  
Spanish: *Juan es su nombre*  
English: " John is his name"

**Anthem:** "*La Borinquëña*"



**Capital**  
(and largest city)

San Juan

**Official languages**

Spanish and English

**Demonym**

Puerto Rican



Taíno Village at the Tibes Ceremonial Centre

The first settlers were the Ortoiroid people, an Archaic Period culture of Amerindian hunters and fishermen. An archaeological dig in the island of Vieques in 1990 found the remains of what is believed to be an *Arcaico* (Archaic) man (named Puerto Ferro man) dated to around 2000 BC. Between AD 120 and 400, the Igneri, a tribe from the South American Orinoco region, arrived. Between the 4th and 10th centuries, the Arcaicos and Igneri co-existed (and perhaps clashed) on the island. Between the 7th and 11th centuries the Taíno culture developed on the island, and by approximately 1000 AD had become dominant. This lasted until Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492.

## Spanish colony

When Christopher Columbus arrived in Puerto Rico during his second voyage on November 19, 1493, the island was inhabited by a group of Arawak Indians known as Taínos. They called the island "Borikén" or, in Spanish, "Borinquen". Columbus named the island San Juan Bautista, in honour of Saint John the Baptist. Later the island took the name of Puerto Rico while the capital was named San Juan. In 1508, Spanish *conquistador* Juan Ponce de León became the island's first governor to take office.



Garita at fort San Felipe del Morro

The Spanish soon colonized the island. Taínos were forced into slavery and were decimated by the harsh conditions of work and by diseases brought by the Spaniards. In 1511, the Taínos revolted against the Spanish; cacique Urayoán, as planned by Agüeybaná II, ordered his warriors to drown the Spanish soldier Diego Salcedo to determine whether the Spaniards were immortal. After drowning Salcedo, they kept watch over his body for three days to confirm his death. The revolt was easily crushed by Ponce de León and within a few decades much of the native population had been decimated by disease, violence, and a high occurrence of suicide. African slaves were introduced to replace the Taíno. Puerto Rico soon became an

important stronghold and port for the Spanish Empire. Various forts and walls, such as La Fortaleza, El Castillo San Felipe del Morro and El Castillo de San Cristóbal, were built to protect the port of San Juan from European enemies. France, The Netherlands and England made several attempts to capture Puerto Rico but failed to wrest long-term occupancy. During the late 17th and early 18th centuries colonial emphasis was on the more prosperous mainland territories, leaving the island impoverished of settlers.

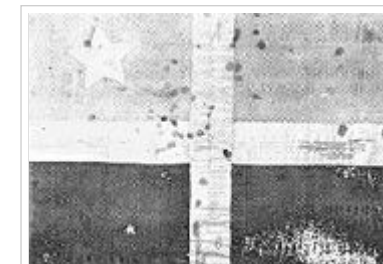
<b>Government</b>	Republican three-branch government
- Head of State	George W. Bush
- Federal Legislative Branch	United States Congress
- Head of Government	Aníbal Acevedo Vilá
<b>Sovereignty</b>	United States sovereignty.
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	9,104 km <sup>2</sup> ( 169th) 3,515 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.6
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2007 estimate	3,994,259 ( 127th in the world; 27th in U.S.)
- 2000 census	3,913,055
- Density	438/km <sup>2</sup> ( 21st in the world; 3rd in U.S.) 1,115/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$77.4 billion ( N/A)
- Per capita	\$19,600 ( N/A)
<b>Currency</b>	United States dollar ( USD)
<b>Time zone</b>	AST ( UTC-4)
- Summer ( DST)	No DST ( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.pr
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 spec. +1-787 and +1-939





In 1809, in the midst of the Peninsular War, the Supreme Central Junta based in Cádiz recognized Puerto Rico as an overseas province of Spain with the right to send representatives to the recently convened Spanish parliament. The representative, Ramon Power y Giralt, died soon after arriving in Spain. These constitutional reforms were reversed soon afterwards when autocratic monarchy was restored. Nineteenth century reforms augmented the population and economy, and expanded the local character of the island. After the rapid gaining of independence by the South and Central American states in the first part of the century, Puerto Rico and Cuba became the sole New World remnants of the large Spanish empire.

Toward the end of the 19th century, poverty and political estrangement with Spain led to a small but significant uprising in 1868 known as "Grito de Lares". It began in the rural town of Lares but was easily and quickly crushed when rebels moved to the neighboring town of San Sebastián. Leaders of this independence movement included Ramón Emeterio Betances, considered the "father" of the Puerto Rican nation, and other political figures such as Segundo Ruiz Belvis. In 1897, Luis Muñoz Rivera and others persuaded the liberal Spanish government to agree to Charters of Autonomy for Cuba and Puerto Rico. In 1898, Puerto Rico's first, but short-lived, autonomous government was organized as an 'overseas province' of Spain. The charter maintained a governor appointed by Spain, which held the power to annul any legislative decision, and a partially elected parliamentary structure. In February, Governor-General Manuel Macías inaugurated the new government under the Autonomous Charter. General elections were held in March and the autonomous government began to function on 17 July 1898.



The Original Lares  
Revolutionary Flag.

## United States colony

On July 25, 1898, during the Spanish–American War, Puerto Rico was invaded by the United States with a landing at Guánica. As an outcome of the war, Spain ceded Puerto Rico, along with Cuba, the Philippines, and Guam to the U.S. under the Treaty of Paris.

The United States and Puerto Rico thus began a long-standing relationship. Puerto Rico began the 20th century under the military rule of the U.S. with officials, including the governor, appointed by the President of the United States. The Foraker Act of 1900 gave Puerto Rico a certain amount of popular government, including a popularly-elected House of Representatives. On 1917, the Jones-Shafroth Act granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship and provided for a popularly-elected Senate to complete a bicameral Legislative Assembly. As a result of their new U.S. citizenship, many Puerto Ricans were drafted into World War I and all subsequent wars with U.S. participation. This new citizenship also saw a large increase of Puerto Rican migrants to the U.S.

Natural disasters, including a major earthquake, a tsunami and several hurricanes, and the Great Depression impoverished the island during the first few decades under American rule. Some political leaders, like Pedro Albizu Campos who led the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, demanded change. On October 30, 1950, Albizu-Campos and other nationalists led a 3-day revolt (known as The Jayuya Uprising) against the United States in the town of Jayuya. The United States declared martial law and attacked Jayuya with infantry, artillery and bombers. On November 1, 1950, Puerto Rican nationalists Griselio Torresola and Oscar Collazo attempted to assassinate President Harry S Truman. Torresola was killed during the attack, but Collazo was captured. Collazo served 29 years in a federal prison, being released in 1979. Don Pedro Albizu Campos also served many years in a federal prison in Atlanta, Georgia, for seditious conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government in Puerto Rico.



The internal governance changed during the latter years of the Roosevelt–Truman administrations, as a form of compromise led by Muñoz Marín and others. It culminated with the appointment by President Truman in 1946 of the first Puerto Rican-born governor, Jesus T. Piñero.

## Commonwealth

In 1947, the U.S. granted Puerto Ricans the right to democratically elect their own governor. Luis Muñoz Marín was elected during the 1948 general elections, becoming the first popularly-elected governor of Puerto Rico. In 1950, the Truman Administration allowed for a democratic referendum in Puerto Rico to determine whether Puerto Ricans desired to draft their own local constitution. A local constitution was approved by a Constitutional Convention on February 6, 1952, ratified by the U.S. Congress, approved by President Truman on July 3 of that year, and proclaimed by Gov. Muñoz Marín on July 25, 1952, the anniversary of the 1898 arrival of U.S. troops. Puerto Rico adopted the name of *Estado Libre Asociado* (literally translated as "Free Associated State"), officially translated into English as Commonwealth, for its body politic.

During the 1950s Puerto Rico experienced rapid industrialization, due in large part to *Operación Manos a la Obra* (" Operation Bootstrap"), an offshoot of FDR's New Deal, which aimed to transform Puerto Rico's economy from agriculture-based to manufacturing-based. Presently, Puerto Rico has become a major tourist destination and a leading pharmaceutical and manufacturing centre. Yet it still struggles to define its political status. Three plebiscites have been held in recent decades to resolve the political status but no changes have been attained. Support for the pro-statehood party, *Partido Nuevo Progresista* (PNP) and the pro-commonwealth party, Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) remains about equal. The only registered pro-independence party, the *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* (PIP), usually receives 3-5% of the electoral votes.

On October 25, 2006, the State Department of Puerto Rico conferred Puerto Rican citizenship to Juan Mari Brás. The Supreme Court of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican Secretary of Justice determined that Puerto Rican citizenship exists and was recognized in the Constitution of Puerto Rico. Since the summer of 2007, the Puerto Rico State Department has developed the protocol to grant Puerto Rican citizenship to Puerto Ricans.

## Government and politics

Puerto Rico has a republican form of government, subject to U.S. jurisdiction and sovereignty. Its current powers are all delegated by the United States Congress and lack full protection under the United States Constitution. Puerto Rico's head of state is the President of the United States. The government of Puerto Rico, based on the formal republican system, is composed of three branches: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. The Executive branch is headed by the Governor, currently Mr. Anibal Acevedo Vila. The Legislative branch consists of a bicameral Legislative Assembly made up of a Senate upper chamber and a House of Representatives lower chamber. The Senate is headed by the President of the Senate, while the House of Representatives is headed by the Speaker of the House. The Judicial branch is headed by the Chief Justice of the Puerto Rico Supreme Court. The legal system is a mix of the civil law and the common law systems. The governor and legislators are elected by popular vote every four years. Members of the Judicial branch are appointed by the governor with the "advice and consent" of the Senate.

Puerto Rico has limited representation in the U.S. Congress in the form of a nonvoting delegate, formally called a Resident Commissioner (currently Luis Fortuño). The current Congress has returned the Commissioner's power to vote in the Committee of the Whole, but not on matters where the vote would

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represent a decisive participation. Puerto Rican elections are governed by the Federal Election Commission; While residing in Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans cannot vote in U.S. presidential elections, but they can vote in primaries. Puerto Ricans who become residents of a U.S. state can vote in presidential elections.

As Puerto Rico is not an independent country, it hosts no embassies. It is host, however, to consulates from 42 countries, mainly from the Americas and Europe. Most consulates are located in San Juan. The Holy See has designated the Papal Nuncio in the Dominican Republic as the ecclesiastical liaison to the Roman Catholic Church in Puerto Rico; the Papal Nuncio in Washington, D.C. serves as the Vatican State's ambassador to the U.S. and the ecclesiastical liaison to the American Roman Catholic Church.

As an unincorporated territory of the United States, Puerto Rico does not have any first-order administrative divisions as defined by the U.S. government, but has 78 municipalities at the second level. Mona Island is not a municipality, but part of the municipality of Mayagüez. Municipalities are subdivided into wards or barrios, and those into sectors. Each municipality has a mayor and a municipal legislature elected for a four year term. The municipality of San Juan (previously called "town"), was founded first, in 1521, San Germán in 1570, Coamo in 1579, Arecibo in 1614, Aguada in 1692 and Ponce in 1692. An increase of settlement saw the founding of 30 municipalities in the 18th century and 34 in the 19th. Six were founded in the 20th century; the last was Florida in 1971.

From 1952 to present, Puerto Rico has had 3 political parties which stand for three distinct future political scenarios. The Popular Democratic Party (PPD) seeks to maintain the island's "association" status as a commonwealth, improved commonwealth and/or seek a true free sovereign-association status or Free Associated Republic, and has won a plurality vote in referendums on the island's status held over six decades after the island was invaded by the U.S. The New Progressive Party (PNP) seeks statehood. The Puerto Rican Independence Party seek independence. In 2007, a fourth party, Puerto Ricans for Puerto Rico Party (PPR), was ratified. The PPR seeks to address the islands problems (including its status) from a status-neutral platform. Non-registered parties include the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, the Socialist Workers Movement (Puerto Rico), the Hostosian National Independence Movement, and others.

## Political status

Puerto Rico is an “unincorporated territory” of the United States which according to the United States Supreme Court is “a territory appurtenant and belonging to the United States, but not a part of the United States.” Puerto Rico is subject to the Congress’ plenary powers under the “territorial clause” of Article IV, sec. 3, of the U.S. Constitution. United States federal law is applicable to Puerto Rico, even though Puerto Rico is not a state of the American Union and has no voting representative in the United States Congress. Due to the establishment of the Federal Relations Act of 1950 all federal laws that are “not locally inapplicable” are automatically the law of the land in Puerto Rico.

### *Estado Libre Asociado*

In 1950, the U.S. Congress granted Puerto Ricans the right to organize a constitutional convention via a referendum. Puerto Ricans expressed their support for this measure in 1951 with a second referendum being held to ratify the constitution. The Constitution of Puerto Rico was formally adopted on July 3, 1952. The Constitutional Convention specified the name by which the body politic would be known. On February 4, 1952, the convention approved Resolution 22 which chose in English the word " Commonwealth", meaning a "politically organized community" or " state," which is simultaneously connected by a compact or treaty to another political system. The convention adopted a translation into Spanish of the term, inspired by the Irish saorstát (Free State) of "Estado Libre



Asociado" (ELA) to represent the agreement. Literally translated into English the phrase *Estado Libre Asociado* means "Associated Free State."

In 1967, the Legislative Assembly tested the political interests of the Puerto Rican people by passing a plebiscite Act that provided for a vote on the status of Puerto Rico. This constituted the first plebiscite by the Legislature for a choice on three status options (continued Commonwealth, statehood, and independence). The Commonwealth option, represented by the PDP, won with a majority of 60.4% of the votes. After the plebiscite, efforts in the 1970s to enact legislation to address the status issue died in Congressional committees. In subsequent plebiscites on 1993 and 1998 the status quo was upheld.

## International status

On November 27, 1953, shortly after the establishment of the Commonwealth, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved Resolution 748, removing Puerto Rico's classification as a non-self-governing territory under article 73(e) of the Charter from UN. But the General Assembly did not apply its full list of criteria to Puerto Rico to determine if it has achieved self-governing status. According to the White House Task Force on Puerto Rico's Political Status in its December 21, 2007 report, the U.S., in its written submission to the UN in 1953, never represented that Congress could not change its relationship with Puerto Rico without the territory's consent. It stated that the U.S. Justice Department in 1959 reiterated that Congress held power over Puerto Rico pursuant to the Territorial Clause of the U.S. Constitution. In a 1996 report on a Puerto Rico status political bill, the " U.S. House Committee on Resources stated that PR's current status does not meet the criteria for any of the options for full self-government". It concluded that PR is still an unincorporated territory of the U.S. under the territorial clause, that the establishment of local self-government with the consent of the people can be unilaterally revoked by the U.S. Congress, and that U.S. Congress can also withdraw the U.S. citizenship of PR residents of PR at any time, for a legitimate Federal purpose. The application of the Constitution to Puerto Rico is limited by the Insular Cases.

## Within the United States

Under the Constitution of Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico is described as a 'Commonwealth' and Puerto Ricans enjoy a degree of administrative autonomy similar to that of a U.S. state. Puerto Ricans are statutory U.S. citizens, but since Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory and not a U.S. state, the U.S. Constitution does not enfranchise U.S. citizens residing in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico does participate in the internal political process of both the Democratic and Republican parties in the U.S., accorded equal-proportional representation in both parties, and delegates from the islands vote in each party's national convention.

Puerto Rico is classified by the U.S. government as an independent taxation authority by mutual agreement with the U.S. Congress. Contrary to common misconception, residents of Puerto Rico pay some U.S. federal taxes: import/export taxes, federal commodity taxes, social security taxes, etc. Most residents do not pay federal income tax but pay federal payroll taxes ( Social Security and Medicare), and Puerto Rico income taxes. But federal employees, or those who do business with the federal government, Puerto Rico-based corporations that intend to send funds to the U.S. and others also pay federal income taxes. Because the cutoff point for income taxation is lower than that of the U.S. IRS code, and because the per-capita income in Puerto Rico is much lower than the average per-capita income on the mainland, more Puerto Rico residents pay income taxes to the local taxation authority than if the IRS code were applied to the island. Residents are eligible for Social Security benefits upon retirement. But Puerto Rico is excluded from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and receives less than 15% of the Medicaid funding it would be allotted as a state, while Medicare providers receive only partial state-like reimbursements for services rendered to beneficiaries in Puerto Rico (even though the latter paid fully into the system).



Puerto Ricans may enlist in the U.S. military. Since becoming statutory United States citizens in 1917, Puerto Ricans have been included in the compulsory draft whenever it has been in effect. Puerto Ricans have participated in all U.S. wars since 1898, most notably World War II, the Korean and Vietnam wars, as well as the current Middle Eastern conflicts.

## Recent developments

The nature of Puerto Rico's political relationship with the U.S. is the subject of ongoing debate in Puerto Rico, the United States Congress, and the United Nations. On 2005 and 2007, two reports were issued by the U.S. President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status. Both reports conclude that Puerto Rico continues to be a territory of U.S. under the plenary powers of the U.S. Congress. Reactions from the two major political parties were mixed. The Popular Democratic Party (PPD) challenged the task force's report and committed to validating the current status in all international forums, including the United Nations. It also rejects any "colonial or territorial status" as a status option, and vows to keep working for the enhanced Commonwealth status that was approved by the PPD in 1998 which included sovereignty, an association based on "respect and dignity between both nations", and common citizenship. The New Progressive Party (PNP) supported the White House Report's conclusions and supported bills to provide for a democratic referendum process among Puerto Rico voters.

## Geography

Puerto Rico consists of the main island of Puerto Rico and various smaller islands, including Vieques, Culebra, Mona, Desecheo, and Caja de Muertos. Of the latter five, only Culebra and Vieques are inhabited year-round. Mona is uninhabited most of the year except for employees of the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources. There are also many other even smaller islands including Monito and "La Isleta de San Juan" which includes Old San Juan and Puerta de Tierra.

Puerto Rico has an area of 5,325 square miles (13,790 km<sup>2</sup>), of which 3,425 square miles (8,870 km<sup>2</sup>) is land and 1,900 square miles (4,900 km<sup>2</sup>) is water. The maximum length from east to west is 110 miles (180 km), and the maximum width from north to south is 40 miles (64 km). Comparing land areas, Puerto Rico is 8/10 the size of Jamaica and 8/100 the size of Cuba, the next smallest and the largest countries in the Greater Antilles, respectively. Compared to U.S. states, it is larger than Delaware and Rhode Island combined, but slightly smaller than Connecticut. The main island is mostly mountainous with large coastal areas in the north and south. The main mountain range is called "La Cordillera Central" (The Central Range). The highest elevation in Puerto Rico, Cerro de Punta (4,390 feet; 1,338 m), is located in this range. Another important peak is El Yunque, one of the highest in the *Sierra de Luquillo* at the El Yunque National Forest, with an elevation of 3,494 feet (1,065 m).



Map of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico has 17 lakes, all man-made, and more than 50 rivers, most originating in the Cordillera Central. Rivers in the northern region of the island are typically longer and of higher water flow rates than those of the south, since the south receives less rain than the central and northern regions.

Puerto Rico is composed of Cretaceous to Eocene volcanic and plutonic rocks, overlain by younger Oligocene and more recent carbonates and other sedimentary rocks. Most of the caverns and karst topography on the island occurs in the northern region in the carbonates. The oldest rocks are approximately 190 million years old (Jurassic) and are located at Sierra Bermeja in the southwest part of the island. They may represent part of the oceanic crust and are believed to come from the Pacific

Ocean realm.

Puerto Rico lies at the boundary between the Caribbean and North American plates and is being deformed by the tectonic stresses caused by their interaction. These stresses may cause earthquakes and tsunamis. These seismic events, along with landslides, represent some of the most dangerous geologic hazards in the island and in the northeastern Caribbean. The most recent major earthquake occurred on October 11, 1918 and had an estimated magnitude of 7.5 on the Richter scale. It originated off the coast of Aguadilla and was accompanied by a tsunami.

The Puerto Rico Trench, the largest and deepest trench in the Atlantic, is located about 75 miles (121 km) north of Puerto Rico in the at the boundary between the Caribbean and North American plates. It is 1,090 miles (1,750 km) long and about 60 miles (97 km) wide. At its deepest point, named the Milwaukee Deep, it is 27,493 feet (8,380 m) deep, or about 5.2 miles (8.4 km).

Located in the tropics, Puerto Rico enjoys an average temperature of 82.4 °F (30 °C) throughout the year. Temperatures do not change drastically throughout the seasons. The temperature in the south is usually a few degrees higher than the north and temperatures in the central interior mountains are always cooler than the rest of the island. The Hurricane season spans from June to November. The all-time low in Puerto Rico has been 40 °F (4 °C), registered in Aibonito.

Species endemic to the archipelago are 239 plants, 16 birds and 39 amphibians/reptiles, recognized as of 1998. Most of these (234, 12 and 33 respectively) are found on the main island. The most recognizable endemic species and a symbol of Puerto Rican pride is the *Coquí*, a small frog easily identified by the sound of its call, and from which it gets its name. Most *Coquí* species (13 of 17) live in the El Yunque National Forest, a tropical rainforest in the northeast of the island previously known as the Caribbean National Forest. El Yunque is home to more than 240 plants, 26 of which are endemic to the island. It is also home to 50 bird species, including one on the top 10 endangered birds in the world, the Puerto Rican Amazon. Across the island in the southwest, the 10,000 acres (40 km<sup>2</sup>) of dry land at the Guánica Dry Forest Reserve contain over 600 uncommon species of plants and animals, including 48 endangered species and 16 endemic to Puerto Rico.

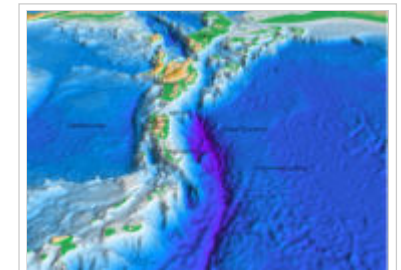


Illustration of the Puerto Rico Trench.

## Economy

In the early 1900s the greatest contributor to Puerto Rico's economy was agriculture and its main crop was sugar. In the late 1940s a series of projects codenamed Operation Bootstrap encouraged a significant shift to manufacture via tax exemptions. Manufacturing quickly replaced agriculture as the main



industry of the island. Puerto Rico is classified as a high income country by the World Bank.

Economic conditions have improved dramatically since the Great Depression due to external investment in capital-intensive industries such as petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and technology. Once the beneficiary of special tax treatment from the U.S. government, today local industries must compete with those in more economically depressed parts of the world where wages are not subject to U.S. minimum wage legislation. In recent years, some U.S. and foreign owned factories have moved to lower wage countries in Latin America and Asia. Puerto Rico is subject to U.S. trade laws and restrictions.

Also, starting around 1950, there was heavy migration from Puerto Rico to the Continental United States, particularly New York City, in search of better economic conditions. Puerto Rican migration to New York displayed an average yearly migration of 1,800 for the years 1930-1940, 31,000 for 1946-1950, 45,000 for 1951-1960, and a peak of 75,000 in 1953. As of 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that more people of Puerto Rican birth or ancestry live in the U.S. than in Puerto Rico.

On May 1, 2006, the Puerto Rican government faced significant shortages in cash flows, which forced the closure of the local Department of Education and 42 other government agencies. All 1,536 public schools closed, and 95,762 people were furloughed in the first-ever partial shutdown of the government in the island's history. On May 10, 2006, the budget crisis was resolved with a new tax reform agreement so that all government employees could return to work. On November 15, 2006 a 5.5% sales tax was implemented. Municipalities are required by law to apply a municipal sales tax of 1.5% bringing the total sales tax to 7%.

Tourism is an important component of Puerto Rican economy supplying an approximate \$1.8 billion. In 1999, an estimated 5 million tourists visited the island, most from the U.S. Nearly a third of these are cruise ship passengers. A steady increase in hotel registrations since 1998 and the construction of new hotels and new tourism projects, such as the Puerto Rico Convention Centre, indicate the current strength of the tourism industry.

Puerto Ricans had a per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$19,600 for 2007, By comparison, the poorest state of the Union, Mississippi, had a per capita GSP (nominal) of \$24,062 in 2006. The United Nation's Human Development Index ranking is not regularly available for Puerto Rico, though the UN Development Program assigned it a .942 score in 1998, which would place it among the top 15 countries in the HDI rankings.

## Demographics

### Population and racial makeup



During the 1800s hundreds of Corsican, French, Lebanese, Chinese, and Portuguese families arrived in Puerto Rico, along with large numbers of immigrants from Spain (mainly from Catalonia, Asturias, Galicia, the Balearic Islands, Andalusia, and the Canary Islands) and numerous Spanish loyalists from Spain's former colonies in South America. Other settlers included Irish, Scots, Germans, Italians and thousands others who were granted land by Spain during the *Real Cedula de Gracias de 1815* ("Royal Decree of Graces of 1815"), which allowed European Catholics to settle in the island with a certain amount of free land. This mass immigration during the 19th century helped the population grow from 155,000 in 1800 to almost a million at the close of the century. A census conducted by royal decree on September 30, 1858, gives the following totals of the Puerto Rican population at this time: 300,430 identified as Whites; 341,015 as Free colored; and 41,736 as Slaves. More recently, Puerto Rico has become the permanent home of over 100,000 legal residents who immigrated from not only Spain, but from Latin America: Argentines, Cubans, Dominicans, Colombians and Venezuelans.



Royal Decree of Graces, 1815

Emigration has been a major part of Puerto Rico's recent history. Starting soon after WWII, poverty, cheap airfare and promotion by the island government caused waves of Puerto Ricans to move to the continental United States, particularly to New York City, New York; Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, and Camden, New Jersey; Chicago, Illinois; Springfield and Boston, Massachusetts; Orlando, Miami and Tampa, Florida; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Hartford, Connecticut; Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles, California. This trend continued even as Puerto Rico's economy improved and its birth rate declined.

**Demographic distribution**  
**Racial distribution** [ Show ]

According to the 2000 U.S. Census there were almost four million inhabitants. Eighty percent of Puerto Ricans described themselves as "white"; 8% as "black"; 12% as "mulatto" and 0.4% as "American Indian or Alaska Native". (The U.S. Census does not consider *Hispanic* a race, and asks if a person considers himself Hispanic in a separate question.)

## Genetics

A 2002 study of Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) of 800 Puerto Ricans found that 61.1% had Amerindian maternal mtDNA, 26.4% African, and 12.5% Caucasian. Conversely, patrilineal input showed that 70% of all Puerto Rican males have inherited Y chromosome DNA from a male European ancestor, 20% from a male African ancestor, and fewer than 10% from a male Amerindian ancestor. This suggests that the largest components of the Puerto Rican genetic pool are European/Caucasian, Amerindian, and African, in descending order.

In a study done on Puerto Rican women born on the island but living in NY in 2004, the ancestry proportions corresponding to the three parental populations were found to be 53.3±2.8% European, 29.1±2.3% West African, and 17.6±2.4% Native American based on autosomal ancestry informative markers. The study also showed 98% of the people sampled had European ancestry markers, 87% had African ancestry markers, 84% had Native American ancestry markers, 5% showed only African and European markers, 4% showed only Native American and European markers, 2% showed only African markers, and 2% showed only European markers.

## Language

The official languages are Spanish and English with Spanish being the primary language. In 2008, it is estimated that 50 percent of Puerto Ricans speak English

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fluently. English is taught as a second language in public and private schools from elementary levels to high school and also in universities. Particularly, the Spanish of Puerto Rico, has evolved into having many idiosyncrasies that differentiates it from the language as spoken in other Spanish-speaking countries. This is mainly due to the influences from ancestral languages, such as those from the Taínos and Africans, and more recently from the English language influence resulting from its relation with the United States.

## Religion

The Roman Catholic Church has been historically the dominant religion in Puerto Rico. The first dioceses in the Americas was erected in Puerto Rico in 1511. All municipalities in Puerto Rico have at least one Catholic church (building), most of which are located at the town centre or "*plaza*". Protestantism which was suppressed under the Spanish regime has been encouraged under American rule making modern Puerto Rico interconfessional. Taíno religious practices have been rediscovered/reinvented to a degree by a handful of advocates. Various African religious practices have been present since the arrival of African slaves. In particular, the Yoruba beliefs of Santería and/or Ifá, and the Kongo-derived Palo Mayombe find adherence among a few individuals who practice some form of African traditional religion.

## Migration to the United States

Puerto Ricans moved to the U.S. in hopes of a better life—particularly more employment and higher wages. Most moved to urban areas, particularly New York City, but also to cities such as Philadelphia, Chicago, Hartford, or Boston. In the 1920s, Puerto Rico still largely retained a rural, agricultural economy that began to decline in the era of growing industrialization and expanded capitalism in the U.S. Both men and women migrated. Families migrated with their children, but widowed women migrated with their children as well.

Puerto Rican women, due to language barriers and racism, often received the lowest ranking jobs. Most Puerto Rican women acquired work in the food service or garment industries. In 1955, Puerto Rican skirtmakers in New York City produced 83 million items. They worked long hours and received the lowest wages. Women who could not find work took jobs in the informal economy, helping to take care of other women's children or helping with other women's domestic chores.

By the 1950s, the Puerto Rican population in the U.S. had increased dramatically. Average yearly migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. was up to 1,800 from 191 in 1940 and increased to 45,000 between 1951 and 1960. Twenty percent of Puerto Rico's population migrated to the U.S. in the 1950s. By 1964, Puerto Ricans made up almost 10% of New York City's population. Today, more Puerto Rican descendants live in the continental U.S. than in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Ricans did not assimilate like other immigrant groups, and retained their culture and language. U.S. policymakers believed Puerto Ricans were having too many children and that they had a poor work ethic. Women were seen as reproducing too much. Because they did not stay in the home as women were expected to, Puerto Rican women were also considered inadequate mothers. Additionally, they were blamed for spreading immorality to their children and their larger community.

Such ideas supported the sterilization of Puerto Rican women. Puerto Rico has a higher rate of female sterilization than any other country in the world, a

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phenomenon that also occurred in the U.S. Beginning in the 1930s, U.S. officials declared an overpopulation of people in Puerto Rico. Instead of educating young women about contraceptives, doctors forced them to be sterilized. Many women had no idea that other options existed for them. The operations women were subjected to were often very dangerous and many women faced serious complications afterwards.

## Culture

Puerto Rican culture is a mix of four cultures, African (from the slaves), Taíno (Amerindians), Spanish, and more recently, North American. From Africans, the Puerto Ricans have obtained the "bomba and plena", a type of music and dance including percussions and maracas. From the Amerindians (Taínos), they kept many names for their municipalities, foods, musical instruments like the güiro and maracas. Many words and other objects have originated from their localized language. From the Spanish they received the Spanish language, the Catholic religion and the vast majority of their cultural and moral values and traditions. From the United States they received the English language, the university system and a variety of hybrid cultural forms that developed between the U.S. mainland and the island of Puerto Rico. The University of Puerto Rico was founded in 1903, five years after the island became part of the U.S.

Much of the Puerto Rican culture centers on the influence of music. Like the country as a whole, Puerto Rican music has been developed by mixing other cultures with its own unique flavor. Early in the history of Puerto Rican music, the influences of African and Spanish traditions were most noticeable. However, the cultural movements across the Caribbean and North America have played a vital role in the more recent musical influences that have reached Puerto Rico.

The official symbols of Puerto Rico are the bird, *Reinita mora* (*Spindalis portoricensis*), the flower, *Flor de Maga* (*Thespesia grandiflora*), and the tree, *Ceiba* or Kapok (*Ceiba pentandra*). The unofficial animal and a symbol of Puerto Rican pride is the Coquí (*Eleutherodactylus coqui*). Other popular symbols of Puerto Rico are the "jíbaro", the "countryman", and the carite.



Kapok tree (*Ceiba*), the national tree of Puerto Rico

## Sports

Baseball is the most popular sport in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico has its own professional baseball league which operates as a winter league. No major league franchise or affiliate plays in Puerto Rico, however, San Juan hosted the Montreal Expos for several series in 2003 and 2004 before they moved to Washington, D.C. and became the Washington Nationals. Puerto Rico has participated in the World Cup of Baseball winning one gold (1951), four silver and four bronze medals and the Caribbean Series, winning fourteen times. Famous Puerto Rican baseball players include Roberto Clemente and Orlando Cepeda, enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973 and 1999, respectively.

Boxing, basketball, and volleyball are considered popular sports as well. Puerto Rico has the third-most boxing world champions and its the global leader in champions per capita. These include Miguel Cotto, Félix Trinidad, Wilfred Benítez, and Wilfredo Gómez. Secondary sports include Professional wrestling,



association football and road running. The World Wrestling Council and International Wrestling Association are the largest wrestling promotions in the main island. The Puerto Rico Islanders Football Club, founded in 2003, plays in the United Soccer Leagues First Division, which constitutes the second tier of football in North America. Puerto Rico is also a member of FIFA and CONCACAF. In 2008 the islands first unified league the Puerto Rico Soccer League was established.

Puerto Rico has representation in all international competitions including the Summer and Winter Olympics, the Pan American Games, the Caribbean World Series, and the Central American and Caribbean Games. Puerto Rican athletes have won 6 medals (1 silver, 5 bronze) in Olympic competition, the first one in 1948 by boxer Juan Evangelista Venegas. August 8, 2004, became a landmark date for the National Basketball Team when it defeated the United States in the 2004 Summer Olympics organized in Athens, Greece. On March 2006 San Juan's Hiram Bithorn Stadium hosted the opening round as well as the second round of the newly formed World Baseball Classic.

## Education

Education in Puerto Rico is divided in three levels — Primary (elementary school grades 1-6), Secondary (intermediate and high school grades 7-12), and Higher Level (undergraduate and graduate studies). As of 2002, the literacy rate of the Puerto Rican population was 94.1%; by gender, it was 93.9% for males and 94.4% for females. According to the 2000 Census, 60.0% of the population attained a high school degree or higher level of education, and 18.3% has a bachelor's degree or higher. This ranks as worst and 6th worst, respectively, among U.S. states, where the national averages are 80.4% and 24.4%.

Instruction at the primary school level is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 18 and is enforced by the state. The Constitution of Puerto Rico grants the right to an education to every citizen on the island. To this end, public schools in Puerto Rico provide free and non-sectarian education at the elementary and secondary levels. At any of the three levels, students may attend either public or private schools. As of 1999, there were 1532 public schools and 569 private schools in the island.

The largest and oldest university system in Puerto Rico is the public University of Puerto Rico (UPR) with 11 campus. The largest private university systems on the island are the Sistema Universitario Ana G. Mendez which operates the Universidad del Turabo, Metropolitan University and Universidad del Este, the multi-campus Inter American University, the Pontifical Catholic University, and the Universidad del Sagrado Corazón. Puerto Rico has four schools of Medicine and four Law Schools.

## Transportation



Cities and towns in Puerto Rico are interconnected by a system of roads, freeways, expressways, and highways maintained by the Highways and Transportation Authority and patrolled by the Police of Puerto Rico. The island's metropolitan area is served by a public bus transit system and a metro system called *Tren Urbano* (in English: Urban Train). Other forms of public transportation include sea-born ferries (that serve Puerto Rico's archipelago) as well as *Carros Públicos* (Mini Bus), similar to jitney service on the United States.

The island's main airport, Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport, is located in Carolina and is a major hub in the Caribbean. The most recently renovated airport in the west of Puerto Rico is that of the former Ramey Military airbase in Aguadilla, Rafael Hernandez Airport, which has made it easier to explore the towns of the newly created tourism area known as "Porta del Sol." The main port of the island is San Juan Port.



Tren Urbano at Bayamón Station

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# Saint Kitts and Nevis

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

The **Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis** (also known as the **Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis**), located in the Leeward Islands, is a federal two-island nation in the West Indies. It is the smallest nation in the Americas, in both area and population.

The capital city and headquarters of government for the federated state is on the larger island of Saint Kitts. The smaller state of Nevis lies about 2 miles (3 km) southeast of Saint Kitts, across a shallow channel called "The Narrows".

Historically, the British dependency of Anguilla was also a part of this union, which was then known collectively as Saint Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla.

Saint Kitts and Nevis are geographically part of the Leeward Islands. To the north-northwest lie the islands of Saint Eustatius, Saba, Saint Barthélemy, and Saint-Martin/Sint Maarten. To the east and northeast are Antigua and Barbuda, and to the southeast is the small uninhabited island of Redonda, and the island of Montserrat, which currently has an active volcano (see Soufrière Hills.)

Saint Kitts and Nevis were amongst the first islands in the Caribbean to be settled by Europeans. Saint Kitts was home to the first British and French colonies in the Caribbean.




Saint Kitts and Nevis is the smallest nation on Earth to ever host a World Cup event; it was one of the host venues of the 2007 Cricket World Cup.

## Etymology

Saint Kitts was named "Liamuiga" by the Kalinago Indians who inhabited the island. This name, roughly translated in English means "fertile land," a testimony to the island's rich volcanic soil and high productivity.

Nevis' pre-Columbian name was "Oualie", which translates to "land of beautiful waters", presumably referred to the island's many freshwater springs and hot volcanic springs.

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<b>Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis</b> <b>Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis<sup>1</sup></b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> "Country Above Self"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>O Land of Beauty!</i> <b>Royal anthem:</b> <i>God Save the Queen</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Basseterre
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Demonym</b>	Kittitian, Nevisian



Christopher Columbus, upon sighting what we now call Nevis in 1498, gave that island the name *San Martin* (Saint Martin). However, the confusion of numerous, poorly-charted small islands in the Leeward Island chain, meant that the name ended up being accidentally transferred to another island, the one which we now know as the French/Dutch island Saint-Martin/Sint Maarten.

The current name "Nevis" is derived from a Spanish name *Nuestra Señora de las Nieves*, by a process of abbreviation and anglicization. This Spanish name means Our Lady of the Snows. It is not known who chose this name for the island, but it is a reference to the story of a 4th century Catholic miracle: a snowfall on a mountain near Rome. Presumably the white clouds which usually wreath the top of Nevis Peak reminded someone of the story of a miraculous snowfall in a hot climate. The island of Nevis, upon first British settlement was referred to as "Dulcina", a name meaning "sweet one". Its original Spanish name, "Nuestra Señora de las Nieves", was eventually kept however, though it was soon shortened to "Nevis".

There is some disagreement over the name which Columbus gave to St. Kitts. For many years it was thought that he named the island *San Cristobal*, after his patron saint Saint Christopher, the saint of travelling. However, new studies suggest that Columbus named the island *Sant Jago* (Saint James). The name "San Cristobal" was apparently given by Columbus to the island we now know as Saba, 20 miles northwest. It seems that "San Cristobal" came to be applied to the island of St. Kitts only as the result of a mapping error. No matter the origin of the name, the island was well documented as "San Cristobal" by the 17th century. The first British colonists kept the English translation of this name, and dubbed it "St. Christopher's island." In the 17th century Kit, or Kitt, was a common abbreviation for the name Christopher, and so the island was often informally referred to as "Saint Kitt's island," which was further shortened to "Saint Kitts."

## History

The islands of Saint Kitts and Nevis are two of the Caribbean's oldest colonised territories. Saint Kitts became the first British colony in the West Indies in 1624 and then became the first French colony in the Caribbean in 1625, when both nations decided to partition the island.

Five thousand years prior to European arrival, the island was settled by Indian peoples. The latest arrivals, the Kalinago peoples, arrived approximately 3 centuries before the Europeans. The Kalinago allowed the Europeans to colonize Saint Kitts, while earlier attempts to settle other islands were met with immediate destruction of the colonies by the Indians. The Kalinago were eventually wiped out in the great Kalinago Genocide of 1626.

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<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and Federal constitutional monarchy
- Monarch	Queen Elizabeth II
- Governor-General	Sir Cuthbert Sebastian
- Prime Minister	Dr. Denzil Douglas
<b>Independence</b>	
- from the United Kingdom	19 September 1983
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	261 km <sup>2</sup> ( 207th) 101 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2005 estimate	42,696 ( 209th)
- Density	164/km <sup>2</sup> ( 64th) 424/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2002 estimate
- Total	\$339 million ( 213th)
- Per capita	\$14,649 ( 47th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: red;">▼</span> 0.825 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 54th)
<b>Currency</b>	East Caribbean dollar ( XCD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.kn
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 869
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Or "Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis".</li> <li>hdr.undp.org</li> </ol>



The island of Nevis was colonized in 1628 by British settlers from Saint Kitts. From there, Saint Kitts became the premier base for British and French expansion, as the islands of Antigua, Montserrat, Anguilla and Tortola for the British, and Martinique, the Guadeloupe archipelago and St. Barths for the French were colonized from it.

Although small in size, and separated by only 2 miles (3 km) of water, the two islands were viewed and governed as different states until the late 19th century, when they were forcefully unified along with the island of Anguilla by the British. To this day relations are strained, with Nevis accusing Saint Kitts of neglecting its needs.

Saint Kitts and Nevis, along with Anguilla, became an associated state with full internal autonomy in 1967. Angullians rebelled, and their island was allowed to separate from the others in 1971. St. Kitts and Nevis achieved independence in 1983. It is the newest sovereign nation in the Americas. In August 1998, a vote in Nevis on a referendum to separate from St. Kitts fell short of the two-thirds majority needed. In late September 1998, Hurricane Georges caused approximately \$445 million in damages and limited GDP growth for the year.

Alexander Hamilton, the first United States Secretary of the Treasury, was born in Nevis; he spent his childhood there and on St. Croix, then belonging to Denmark, and now one of the United States Virgin Islands.

## Politics



Saint Kitts and Nevis is a full member of the Caricom.



Saint Kitts and Nevis is a full member of the OECS.

The country is an independent Commonwealth realm with Queen Elizabeth II as its head of state, represented in St. Kitts and Nevis by a Governor-General, who acts on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party of the House, and the cabinet conducts affairs of state.

St. Kitts and Nevis has a unicameral legislature, known as the National Assembly. It is composed of fourteen members: eleven elected Representatives (three from the island of Nevis) and three Senators who are appointed by the Governor-General. Two of the senators are appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister, and one on the advice of the leader of the opposition. Unlike in other countries, senators do not constitute a separate Senate or upper house of parliament, but sit in the National Assembly, alongside representatives. All members serve five-year terms. The Prime Minister and the Cabinet

are responsible to the Parliament.

Saint Kitts and Nevis is a full and participating member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

## Geography



The country has two main islands, Saint Kitts and Nevis. The highest peak, at 1,156 metres, is Mount Liamuiga.

The islands are of volcanic origin, with large central peaks covered in tropical rainforest; the steeper slopes leading to these peaks are mostly uninhabited. The majority of the population on both islands lives closer to the sea where the terrain flattens out. There are numerous rivers descending from the mountains of both islands, which provide fresh water to the local population. St. Kitts also has one small lake.

## Economy

Saint Kitts and Nevis is very small for a country. It is 1 1/2 times the size of Washington D.C. Saint Kitts and Nevis is a twin-island federation whose economy is characterized by its dominant tourism, agriculture and light manufacturing industries. Sugar was the primary export from the 1640s on, but rising production costs, low world market prices, and the government's efforts to reduce dependence on it have led to a growing diversification of the agricultural sector. In 2005, the government decided to close down the state-owned sugar company, which had caused losses and was a significant contributor to the fiscal deficit. Former sugar plantations still dominate the St. Kitts landscape. The agricultural, tourism, export-oriented manufacturing, and offshore-banking sectors are being developed and are now taking larger roles in the country's economy. The growth of the tourism sector has become the main foreign exchange earner for Saint Kitts and Nevis. The country has also developed a successful apparel assembly industry and one of the largest electronics assembly industries in the Caribbean.

During the 1990s, Saint Kitts and Nevis registered an annual GDP growth of 5.5 percent, but the strong growth was interrupted by devastating hurricanes in 1998 and 1999. Post-hurricane reconstruction led to an economic resumption in 2000 with GDP growing 6.2 percent. The year 2001 began well enough although the post-hurricane construction boom was over and growth was slowing from its 2000 rate. But after September 11, tourism arrivals dropped off precipitously and activity in related sectors of the economy such as road construction and retail sales declined along with tourism. As a result, the GDP growth declined substantially in 2001 and 2002. Economic activity has recovered since 2003, mainly driven by strong growth in tourism. In view of its high level of public debt, the country needs a prudent fiscal policy to ensure sustainable economic growth.

## Education

There are seven publicly administered high/secondary level schools in St Kitts-Nevis, and several private secondary schools. These are:

Public: Cayon High School (CHS) Basseterre High School (BHS) Washington Archibald High School (WAHS) Verchilds High School (VHS) Sandy Point High School (SPHS) Charlestown Secondary School (CSS) Gingerland Secondary School (GSS)



Map of Saint Kitts and Nevis



View of Nevis. Salt pond at right.





Private: St Theresa's Convent, Lyn Jeffers Secondary School

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# Saint Lucia




2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries; Geography

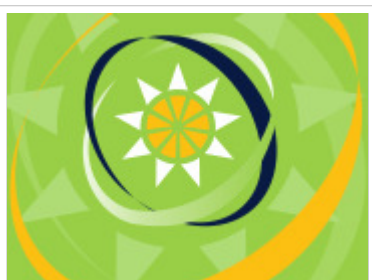
**Saint Lucia** (pronounced /ˌseɪnt ˈluːʃiə/) is an island nation in the eastern Caribbean Sea on the boundary with the Atlantic Ocean. Part of the Lesser Antilles, it is located north of the islands of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, northwest of Barbados and south of Martinique. It is also known as the "Helen of the West Indies" because it switched between British and French control so often it was likened to the mythical Helen of Troy.

Saint Lucia is one of the Windward Islands, named for Saint Lucy of Syracuse. It was first visited by Europeans in about the year 1500 and first colonized successfully by France who signed a treaty with the native Carib peoples in 1660. Great Britain took control of the island from 1663 to 1667 then went to war with France over it fourteen times, and finally took complete control in 1814. Representative government came about in 1924 (with universal adult suffrage from 1953) and from 1958 to 1962 the island was a member of the Federation of the West Indies. Finally, on February 22, 1979, Saint Lucia became an independent state of the Commonwealth of Nations. The island nation celebrates this every year with a public holiday.

## History

## Politics

Saint Lucia	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> "The Land, The People, The Light"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Sons and Daughters of Saint Lucia</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Castries
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Demonym</b>	Saint Lucian
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
- Queen	Elizabeth II
- Governor-General	Dame Pearlette Louisy



Saint Lucia is a full member of the OECS and home to its headquarters

As a Commonwealth Realm, Saint Lucia recognizes Queen Elizabeth II as the Head of State of Saint Lucia, represented on the island by a Governor-General. Executive power, however, is in the hands of the prime minister and his cabinet. The prime minister is normally the head of the party winning the elections for the House of Assembly, which has 17 seats. The other chamber of Parliament, the Senate, has 11 appointed members.

Saint Lucia is a full and participating member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

## Quarters

- Prime Minister	Stephenson King
<b>Independence</b>	
- from the United Kingdom	22 February 1979
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	620 km <sup>2</sup> ( 193rd) 239 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.6
<b>Population</b>	
- 2005 census	160,765
- Density	298/km <sup>2</sup> ( 41st) 672/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2002 estimate
- Total	\$866 million ( 197th)
- Per capita	\$5,950 ( 98th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.795 (medium) ( 72nd)
<b>Currency</b>	East Caribbean dollar ( XCD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.lc
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 758



Saint Lucia is divided into 11 quarters:

1. Anse la Raye
2. Canaries
3. Castries
4. Choiseul
5. Dennery
6. Forest
7. Gros Islet
8. Laborie
9. Micoud
10. Soufrière
11. Vieux Fort



## Geography

The volcanic island of Saint Lucia is more mountainous than many other Caribbean islands, with the highest point being Mount Gimie, at 950 metres (3,120 ft) above sea level. Two other mountains, the Pitons, form the island's most famous landmark. They are located between Soufrière and Choiseul on the western side of the island. Saint Lucia is also one of the few islands in the world that boasts a drive-in volcano.

The capital city of Saint Lucia is Castries, where about one third of the population lives. Major towns include Gros Islet, Soufrière and Vieux Fort. The local climate is tropical, moderated by northeast trade winds, with a dry season from January to April and a rainy season from May to December.

## Economy

The recent change in the European Union import preference regime and the increased competition from Latin American bananas have made economic diversification increasingly important in Saint Lucia. The island nation has been able to attract foreign business and investment, especially in its offshore banking and tourism industries, which is the island's main source of revenue. The manufacturing sector is the most diverse in the Eastern Caribbean area, and the government is trying to revitalize the banana industry. Despite negative growth in 2001, economic fundamentals remain solid, and GDP growth should recover in the future.

## Demographics



The population of Saint Lucia is of mostly African descent (82.5% of the population). There is a significant Mixed minority representing 11.9%, and with a Indo-Caribbean or East Indian groups at 2.4% and the small European origin minority (descendants of French, British, and Irish colonists). Other or unspecified ethnicity accounts for 3.1%. There are small numbers of Lebanese, Syrians and Asians.

The official language is English, but a creole language called Kwéyòlaka is spoken by 80% of the population. It evolved from French, Carib and elements of African languages. Saint Lucia is a member of *La Francophonie*.

St. Lucia boasts the highest ratio in the world for number of Nobel laureates produced with respect to the total population of the nation. Two winners have come from St. Lucia: Sir Arthur Lewis won the Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel ("Nobel Prize in Economics") in 1979, and Derek Walcott received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992. Both were born on January 23rd, but in different years.

About 70% of the population is Roman Catholic. The rest are Seventh-day Adventists (7%), Pentecostals (6%), Anglicans (2%), Evangelicals (2%) and Rastafari (2%).

## Tourism

Tourism is vital to St. Lucia's economy and the economic importance of such is expected to continue to increase as the market for bananas becomes more competitive. Tourism tends to be more substantial during the dry season (January to April). St Lucia tends to be popular due to its tropical weather and scenery and its large number of beaches and resorts.

Other tourist attractions include the world's only drive-in volcano, Sulfur Springs (at Soufriere), the Botanical Gardens, the rain forests and Pigeon Island National Park, which is home to Fort Rodney, an old British military base.

The majority of tourists visit St. Lucia as part of a cruise. Most of their time tends to be spent in Castries, although Soufriere, Marigot Bay and Gros Islet are popular locations to visit. Marigot Bay is where second homes to some stars like George Foreman and Mick Jagger are situated.

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# Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

**Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** is an island nation in the Lesser Antilles chain of the Caribbean Sea. Its 389- square-kilometre (150 sq mi) territory consists of the main island of Saint Vincent and the northern two-thirds of the Grenadines. The country has a French and British colonial history and is now part of the Commonwealth of Nations and CARICOM.

## History

Carib Indians aggressively prevented European settlement on St. Vincent until the 18th century. Enslaved Africans - whether shipwrecked or escaped from Barbados, St. Lucia and Grenada and seeking refuge in mainland St. Vincent, or Hairouna as it was originally named by the Caribs - intermarried with the Caribs and became known as Garifuna or *Black Caribs*. Beginning in 1719, French settlers cultivated coffee, tobacco, indigo, cotton, and sugar on plantations worked by enslaved Africans. In 1763, St. Vincent was ceded to Britain. Restored to French rule in 1779, St. Vincent was regained by the British under the Treaty of Paris (1783) in which Great Britain officially recognized the end of the American Revolution. Ancillary treaties were also signed with France and Spain, known as the Treaties of Versailles of 1783, part of which put St. Vincent back under British control. Conflict between the British and the Black Caribs, led by defiant Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer, continued until 1796, when General Sir Ralph Abercromby crushed a revolt fomented by the French radical Victor Hugues. More than 5,000 Black Caribs were eventually deported to Roatán, an island off the coast of Honduras.

Slavery was abolished in 1834. After the apprenticeship period, which ended prematurely in 1838, labour shortages on the plantations resulted in the immigration of indentured servants. The Portuguese came from Madeira starting in the 1840s and shiploads of East Indian labourers arrived between 1861-1880. Conditions remained harsh for both former slaves and immigrant agricultural workers, as depressed world sugar prices kept the economy stagnant until the turn of the century.

From 1763 until independence, St. Vincent passed through various stages of colonial status under the British. A representative assembly was authorized in 1776, Crown Colony government installed in 1877, a legislative council created in 1925, and universal adult suffrage granted in 1951.

## Saint Vincent and the Grenadines



Flag

Coat of arms

**Motto:** *Pax et justitia*" (Latin)  
"Peace and justice"

**Anthem:** *St Vincent Land So Beautiful*



**Capital**  
(and largest city)

Kingstown

**Official languages**

English

**Demonym**

Vincentian

**Government**

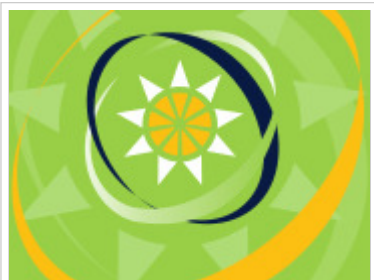
Parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy



During this period, the British made several unsuccessful attempts to affiliate St. Vincent with other Windward Islands in order to govern the region through a unified administration. The colonies themselves, desirous of freedom from British rule, made a notable attempt at unification called West Indies Federation, which collapsed in 1962. St. Vincent was granted associate statehood status on October 27th, 1969, giving it complete control over its internal affairs. Following a referendum in 1979, under Milton Cato St. Vincent and the Grenadines became the last of the Windward Islands to gain independence on the 10th anniversary of its associate statehood status, October 27th, 1979.

Natural disasters have featured in the country's history. In 1902, La Soufrière volcano erupted, killing 2,000 people. Much farmland was damaged, and the economy deteriorated. In April 1979, La Soufrière erupted again. Although no one was killed, thousands had to be evacuated, and there was extensive agricultural damage. In 1980 and 1987, hurricanes compromised banana and coconut plantations; 1998 and 1999 also saw very active hurricane seasons, with Hurricane Lenny in 1999 causing extensive damage to the west coast of the island.

## Politics



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a full member of the OECS.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth of Nations. Queen Elizabeth II is head of state and is represented on the island by a governor general, an office with mostly ceremonial functions. Control of the government rests with the prime minister and the cabinet. There is a parliamentary opposition made of the largest minority stakeholder in general elections, headed by the leader of the opposition. The current Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is the Honourable Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, affectionately called "Comrade."

The country has no formal armed forces, though Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force includes a Special Service Unit.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are a full & participating member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

## Geography

- Monarch	Queen Elizabeth II
- Governor-General	Sir Frederick Ballantyne
- Prime Minister	Ralph Gonsalves
<b>Independence</b>	
- from the United Kingdom	27 October 1979
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	389 km <sup>2</sup> ( 201st) 150 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- 2008 estimate	120,000 ( 182nd)
- Density	307/km <sup>2</sup> ( 39th) 792/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	
- Total	2002 estimate \$342 million ( 212nd)
- Per capita	\$7,493 ( 82nd)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.761 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 93rd)
<b>Currency</b>	East Caribbean dollar ( XCD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.vc
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 784



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines lies between Saint Lucia and Grenada in the Windward Islands of the Lesser Antilles, an island arc of the Caribbean Sea. The islands of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines include the main island of Saint Vincent (344 km<sup>2</sup>/133 sq mi) and the northern two-thirds of the Grenadines (45 km<sup>2</sup>/17 sq mi), a chain of small islands stretching south from Saint Vincent to Grenada.

Image:Vc-map.png  
Map of Saint Vincent and the  
Grenadines

## Administrative divisions

Administratively, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is divided into six parishes, with five on Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines together comprising the sixth. Kingstown is located in the Parish of St. George and is the capital city and central administrative centre of the nation.

- Charlotte
- Grenadines
- Saint Andrew
- Saint David
- Saint George
- Saint Patrick

## Economy

Agriculture, dominated by banana production, is the most important sector of this lower-middle-income economy. The services sector, based mostly on a growing tourist industry, is also important. The government has been relatively unsuccessful at introducing new industries, and a high unemployment rate of 22% continues. The continuing dependence on a single crop represents the biggest obstacle to the islands' development; tropical storms wiped out substantial portions of crops in both 1994 and 1995. The tourism sector has considerable potential for development over the next decade. The recent filming of the Pirates of the Caribbean movies on the island has also helped to increase tourism and expose the country to the wider world. Recent growth has been stimulated by strong activity in the construction sector and an improvement in tourism. There is a small manufacturing sector and a small offshore financial sector whose particularly restrictive secrecy laws have caused some international concern. In addition, the natives of Bequia are permitted to hunt up to four Humpback Whales per year under IWC subsistence quotas.

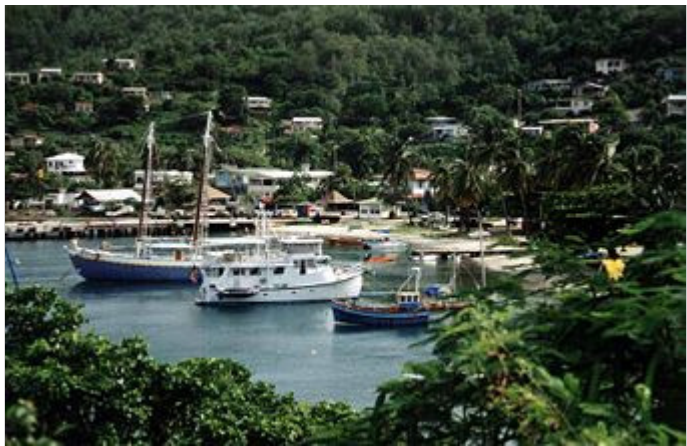
## Demographics

Population: 118,149 (July 2007 est). Ethnic groups: Black 56%, Mixed 16%, East Indian 16%, Carib Amerindian 2%, Other 7%. Most Vincentians are the descendants of African people brought to the island to work on plantations. There are other ethnic groups such as Portuguese, East Indian, Pakistani and Syrians living on the island. There is also a growing Chinese population and a sizable minority of mixed race.

St. Vincent has a high rate of emigration. With extremely high unemployment and under-employment, population growth remains a major problem.

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Port Elizabeth, Bequia

## Languages

While the official language is English, many of the locals speak a dialect called Vincentian Creole. English is used in education, government, religion, and other formal domains, while Creole (or 'dialect' as it is referred to by locals) is used in informal situations such as in the home and among friends.

## Communications

In 2005, St. Vincent and the Grenadines had 22,500 telephone land lines. Its land telephone system is fully automatic and covers the entire island and all of the inhabited Grenadine islands. In 2004, there were 57,000 mobile phones. There is mobile phone coverage for most of St. Vincent as well as the Grenadines.

The country has only nine FM radio stations, one of which also operates on an AM frequency. It has

one television broadcast station and one cable television provider.

- NBC
- Star FM

The country has two ISPs: Cable and Wireless and Karib Kable.

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# Suriname

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

**Suriname** (*Dutch*: *Suriname*; Sranan Tongo: *Sranan*), officially the **Republic of Suriname** (traditionally spelled *Surinam* by the English who founded the first colony at Marshall's Creek, along the Suriname River, but the Dutch spelling is more widely accepted), is a country in northern South America.

Suriname was formerly known as *Nederlands Guyana*, *Netherlands Guiana* or *Dutch Guiana*. Suriname is situated between French Guiana to the east and Guyana to the west. The southern border is shared with Brazil and the northern border is the Atlantic coast. The southernmost border with French Guiana is disputed along the Marowijne river; while the once-disputed boundary with Guyana was arbitrated by the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea on September 20, 2007. The country is the smallest sovereign state in terms of area and population in South America.

## History

European exploration of the area began in the 16th century by Dutch, French, Spanish and English explorers. In the 17th century, plantation colonies were established by the Dutch and English along the many rivers in the fertile Guyana plains. The earliest documented colony in Guiana was by an Englishman named Marshall called Marshall's Creek, along the Suriname River. At the Treaty of Breda, in 1667, the Dutch decided to keep the nascent plantation colony of Suriname conquered from the British, while leaving the small trading post of New Amsterdam in North America, now New York City, in the hands of the British.

The Dutch planters relied heavily on African slaves to cultivate the coffee, cocoa, sugar cane and cotton plantations along the rivers. Treatment of the slaves by their owners was notoriously bad, and many slaves escaped the plantations. With the help of the native South Americans living in the adjoining rain forests, these runaway slaves established a new and unique culture that was highly successful in its own right. Known collectively in English as the Maroons, and in Dutch as "Bosnegers," (literally meaning "Bush negroes"), they actually established several independent tribes, among them the Saramaka, the Paramaka, the Ndyuka or Aukan, the Kwinti, the Aluku or Boni and the Matawai.

<i><b>Republiek Suriname</b></i> <b>Republic of Suriname</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Justitia - Pietas - Fides</i> (Latin) "Justice - Duty - Loyalty"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>God zij met ons Suriname</i> (Dutch) ( <i>God be with us Suriname</i> )	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Paramaribo
<b>Official languages</b>	Dutch
Recognised regional languages	Sranan Tongo, Hindi, English, Hindustani, Javanese, Marathi, Bhojpuri, Hakka, Cantonese,



The Maroons would often raid the plantations to recruit new members, acquire women, weapons, food and supplies. These attacks were often deadly for the planters and their families, and after several unsuccessful campaigns against the Maroons, the European authorities signed several peace treaties with them in the 19th century, granting the Maroons sovereign status and trade rights.

Slavery was abolished by the Netherlands in Suriname in 1863, but the slaves in Suriname were not fully released until 1873, after a mandatory 10 year transition period during which time they were required to work on the plantations for minimal pay and without state sanctioned torture. As soon as they became truly free, the slaves largely abandoned the plantations where they had suffered for several generations, in favour of the city, Paramaribo. As a plantation colony, Suriname was still heavily dependent on manual labor, and to make up for the shortfall, the Dutch brought in contract laborers from the Dutch East Indies (modern Indonesia) and India (through an arrangement with the British). In addition, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, small numbers of mostly men were brought in from China and the Middle East. Although Suriname's population remains relatively small, because of this history it is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse in the world.

In 1954, the Dutch placed Suriname under a system of limited self-government, with the Netherlands retaining control of defense and foreign affairs. In 1973, the local government, led by the NPK (a largely Creole, meaning ethnically African or mixed African-European, party) started negotiations with the Dutch government leading towards full independence, which was granted on 25 November 1975. The severance package was very substantial, and a large part of Suriname's economy for the first decade following independence was fueled by foreign aid provided by the Dutch government.

The first President of the country was Johan Ferrier, the former governor, with Henck Arron (leader of the Suriname National Party) as Prime Minister. Nearly one third of the population of Suriname at that time emigrated to the Netherlands in the years leading up to independence, as many people feared that the new country would fare worse under independence than it did as an overseas colony of the Netherlands. Suriname's diaspora therefore includes more than a quarter of one million people of Suriname origin living in the Netherlands today, including several recent members of the Dutch national football (soccer) team.

On February 25, 1980, a military coup sidelined the democratic government, and with it began a period of economic and social hardship for the country. On 8 December 1982, the military, then under the leadership of Desi Bouterse, rounded up several prominent citizens who were accused of plotting against the government. They were allegedly tortured and certainly killed during the night, and the Netherlands quickly suspended all foreign aid to Suriname after this event. (Desi Bouterse is scheduled to stand trial

	Boni, Saramaccan, Paramakan, Ndyuka, Kwinti, Matawai, Cariban, Arawakan, Aluku, Kalina
<b>Demonym</b>	Surinamese
<b>Government</b> - President	Constitutional democracy Ronald Venetiaan
<b>Independence</b> - Date	From the Netherlands November 25, 1975
<b>Area</b> - Total - Water (%)	163,821 km <sup>2</sup> ( 91st) 63,251 sq mi 1.1
<b>Population</b> - July 2005 estimate - 2004 census - Density	470,784 ( 170th) 487,024 2.7/km <sup>2</sup> ( 223rd) 7.0/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP )</b> - Total - Per capita	2005 estimate \$2.898 billion ( 160st) \$5,683 ( 96th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.774 ( <span style="color: orange;">medium</span> ) ( 85th)
<b>Currency</b>	Surinamese dollar ( <span style="font-variant: small-caps;">SRD</span> )
<b>Time zone</b> - Summer ( DST)	ART ( UTC-3) <i>not observed</i> ( UTC-3)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.sr
<b>Calling code</b>	+597



in Suriname in the fall of 2007 for his role in these killings.)

Elections were held in 1987 and a new constitution was adopted, which among other things allowed the dictator to remain in charge of the army. Dissatisfied with the government, Bouterse summarily dismissed them in 1990, by telephone. This event became popularly known as "the telephone coup". Bouterse's power began to wane after the 1991 elections however, and a brutal civil war between the Suriname army and the Maroons, loyal to the rebel leader Ronnie Brunswijk, further weakened his position during the 1990s.

Suriname's democracy gained some strength after the turbulent 1990s, and its economy became more diversified and less dependent on Dutch financial assistance. Bauxite (Aluminium ore) mining continues to be a strong revenue source, but the discovery and exploitation of oil and gold has added substantially to Suriname's economic independence. Agriculture, especially of rice and bananas, remains a strong component of the economy, and ecotourism is providing new economic opportunities. More than 80% of Suriname's land-mass consists of unspoiled rain forest, and with the establishment of the Central Suriname Nature Reserve in 1998, Suriname signaled its commitment to conservation of this precious resource. The Central Suriname Nature Reserve became a World Heritage Site in 2000.

## Districts and resorts

Suriname is divided into ten districts:

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Brokopondo | 6. Para       |
| 2. Commewijne | 7. Paramaribo |
| 3. Coronie    | 8. Saramacca  |
| 4. Marowijne  | 9. Sipaliwini |
| 5. Nickerie   | 10. Wanica    |

Suriname is further subdivided into 62 resorts (*ressorten*).

## Geography



A map of Suriname with the disputed area (with Guyana) included



Map of Suriname.



Tailor's shop, Paramaribo, 1955.



Suriname is the smallest independent country in South America. Situated on the Guiana Shield, the country can be divided into two main geographic regions. The northern, lowland coastal area (roughly above the line Albina-Paranam-Wageningen) has been cultivated, and most of the population lives here. The southern part consists of tropical rainforest and sparsely inhabited savanna along the border with Brazil, covering about 80% of Suriname's land surface.

There are two main mountain ranges in Suriname: the Bakuys Mountains and the Van Asch Van Wijck Mountains. Julianatop is the highest mountain in the country at 1,286 metres (4,219 ft) above sea level. Other mountains include Tafelberg (1,026 m; 3,366 ft), Mount Kasikasima (718 m; 2,356 ft), Goliathberg (358 m; 1,174 ft) and Voltzberg (240 m; 787 ft).

## Climate

Lying on the equator, Suriname has a very hot tropical climate, and temperatures do not vary a lot throughout the year. The year has two wet seasons, from April to August and from November to February. It also has two dry seasons, from August to November and February to April.

Located in the northeast portion of the country is the Brokopondo Reservoir, one of the largest reservoir lakes in the world. It was created in 1964 by the Afobakka dam (the Brokopondo Project), built to provide hydropower for the bauxite industry (which consumes about 75% of the output) and for domestic consumption.

## Nature Reserves

In the upper Coppename River watershed, the Central Suriname Nature Reserve is a UNESCO World Heritage Site cited for its unspoiled rainforest biodiversity. There are many national parks in the country: Galibi National Reserve, Coppename Manding National Park and Wia Wia NR along the coast, Brownsberg NR, Raleighvallen/Voltzeberg NR, Tafelberg NR and Eilerts de Haan NP in the centre and the Sipaliwani NR on the Brazilian border. In all, 12% of the country's land area are national parks and lakes.

## Tourism

In recent years this sector has flourished. By the end of 2006, tourism had grown by 400% compared with 2005. In the last years big hotels have been built all over the country to satisfy the needs of the growing tourism sector. In December 2007 the first five star hotel- the Royal Torarica- was opened in the night district of Paramaribo on the Suriname River. This hotel has approximately 300 rooms with a Presidential suite on the top floor. Other major hotels- of four stars- in Suriname are the Krasnapolsky, Residence Inn, Torarica, Queens Hotel, Princess Hotel, Ambassador hotel and casino, Stardust hotel, Ecoressort, Hotel Ameerli and the Spanhoek Hotel. The rental of apartments, or the rent-a-house phenomenon is also popular in Suriname.

The majority of tourists visit Suriname for the outstanding biodiversity of the pristine Amazonian rainforests in the south of the country which are noted for the

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The Suriname River, near the city of Paramaribo



incredible profusion of flora and fauna. The Central Suriname Nature Reserve is the biggest and one of the most popular reserves, along with the Brownsberg Nature Park which overlooks the Brokopondo Reservoir- one of the largest man-made lakes in the world. Tonka Island in the reservoir is home to a rustic eco-tourism project run by the Saramaccaner Maroons. There are also many waterfalls throughout the country: Raleighvallen, or Raleigh Falls, is a 56,000 hectare nature reserve on the Coppename River, rich in bird life. Also are the Blanche Marie Falls on the Nickerie River and the Wonotobo Falls. Tafelberg Mountain in the centre of the country is surrounded by its own reserve- the Tafelberg Nature Reserve- around the source of the Saramacca River, as is the Voltzberg Nature Reserve further north on the Coppename River at Raleighvallen. In the interior are many Maroon and Amerindian villages- usually surrounded by their own reserves- which are open visitors.

Suriname is one of the only countries in the world where at least one of each different biome that the state possesses has been declared a wildlife reserve. Around 30% of the total land area of Suriname is protected by law as reserves.

Also amazing are some of the plantations like Laarwijk, which is situated along the Suriname River. This plantation can only be reached by boat via Domburg, in the north central Wanica District of Suriname.

## Economy

The economy of Suriname is dominated by the bauxite industry, which accounts for more than 15% of GDP and 70% of export earnings. Other main export products include rice, bananas and shrimp. Suriname has recently started exploiting some of its sizeable oil and gold reserves. About a quarter of the people work in the agricultural sector. The Surinamese economy is very dependent on other countries, with its main trade partners being the Netherlands, the United States, Canada and countries in the Caribbean.

After assuming power in the fall of 1996, the Wijdenbosch government ended the structural adjustment program of the previous government, claiming it was unfair to the poorer elements of society. Tax revenues fell as old taxes lapsed and the government failed to implement new tax alternatives. By the end of 1997, the allocation of new Dutch development funds was frozen as Surinamese Government relations with the Netherlands deteriorated. Economic growth slowed in 1998, with decline in the mining, construction, and utility sectors. Rampant government expenditures, poor tax collection, a bloated civil service, and reduced foreign aid in 1999 contributed to the fiscal deficit, estimated at 11% of GDP. The government sought to cover this deficit through monetary expansion, which led to a dramatic increase in inflation.

GDP (2006 est.): U.S. \$2.11 billion. Annual growth rate real GDP (2006 est.): 5.8%. Per capita GDP (2006 est.): U.S. \$4,000. Inflation (2006): 5.6%. Natural resources: Bauxite, gold, oil, iron ore, other minerals; forests; hydroelectric potential; fish and shrimp. Agriculture: Products--rice, bananas, timber, and citrus fruits. Industry: Types--alumina, oil, gold, fish, shrimp, lumber. Trade (2005): Exports--U.S. \$929.1 million: alumina, gold, crude oil, wood and wood products, rice, bananas, fish, and shrimp. Major markets--Norway (23.9%), U.S. (16.8%), Canada (16.4%), France (8.1%), Iceland (2.9%). Imports--\$1.1 billion: capital equipment, petroleum, iron and steel products, agricultural products, and consumer goods. Major suppliers--U.S. (24.4%), Netherlands (14.5%), Trinidad and Tobago (10.5%), Japan (4.3%), China (5.4%), Brazil (3.6%).



Ministry of Finance



## Politics

The Republic of Suriname is a constitutional democracy based on the 1987 constitution.

The legislative branch of government consists of a 51-member unicameral National Assembly, simultaneously and popularly elected for a five-year term.

The president, who is elected for a five-year term by a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly or, failing that, by a majority of the People's Assembly, heads the executive branch. If at least two-thirds of the National Assembly cannot agree to vote for one presidential candidate, a People's Assembly is formed from all National Assembly delegates and regional and municipal representatives who were elected by popular vote in the most recent national election. As head of government, the president appoints a 16-minister cabinet. There is no constitutional provision for removal or replacement of the president unless he resigns.

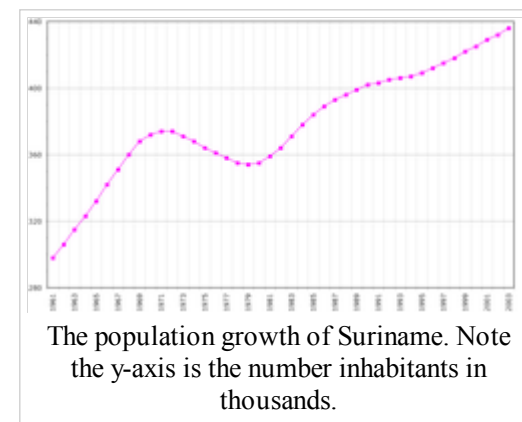
The judiciary is headed by the Court of Justice (Supreme Court). This court supervises the magistrate courts. Members are appointed for life by the president in consultation with the National Assembly, the State Advisory Council and the National Order of Private Attorneys. In April 2005, the regional Caribbean Court of Justice, based in Trinidad, was inaugurated. As the final court of appeal, it was intended to replace the London-based Privy Council.

The country is divided into 10 administrative districts, each headed by a district commissioner appointed by the president. The commissioner is similar to the governor of a United States-type state but is appointed and removed by the president.

## Demographics

Suriname's population of 438,144 (July 2005 estimate) is made up of several distinct ethnic groups. And in November 2007 the population was estimated at 494,347.

- Hindoestanen form the largest major group at 37% of the population. They are descendants of nineteenth-century contract workers from India. They are from the Indian states of Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, in Northern India, along the Nepali border.
- The Surinamese Creoles form the middle group 31% of the population. They are the descendants of West African slaves.
- The Javanese (descendants of contract workers from the former Dutch East Indies on the island of Java, Indonesia) make up 15%.
- Surinamese Maroons (descendants of escaped West African slaves) make up 10% and are divided into five main groups: Aucans, Kwinti, Matawai, Saramaccans and Paramaccans.
- Amerindians form 3% of the population (some say as low as 1%), the main groups being the Akuriyo, Arawak, Carib/ Kaliña, Trío and Wayana.
- Chinese are mainly descendants of the earliest nineteenth-century contract workers.
- Boeroes (derived from *boer*, the Dutch word for *farmer*) are descendants of Dutch nineteenth-century immigrant farmers.







- Jews, both Sephardic and East European ( Ashkenazi).
- Brazilians have migrated to Suriname in the later years of the 20th century. In a wave, similar to the Yukon Gold Rush, they have formed a new society in the forested areas where they mine gold. Locally they are known as *garimpeiros* (from portuguese "garimpo", meaning open-air mine). They trade with the local Maroon and Indian populations. In the small towns they have created the currency is gold bullion. Their population size has been estimated at 40,000. There are no official records to be more certain.

There is no predominant religion in the country. Christianity, both in the form of Roman Catholicism and variations of Protestantism, is dominant among Creoles and Maroons. Most of the Hindustani are Hindu, but some practice Islam or Christianity instead. Also the Javanese practice either Islam or Christianity. With 20% of the population, Suriname has the largest Muslim community by percentage in the New World.. Despite the religious diversity, the makeup of Suriname's population is very similar to that of neighboring Guyana, with the exception of the Indonesian population (which Guyana lacks). French Guiana, which is a part of France, does not collect ethnic statistics.

The vast majority of people (about 90%) live in Paramaribo or on the coast. There is also a significant Surinamese population in the Netherlands. In 2005 there were 328,300 Surinamese people living in the Netherlands, which is about 2% of the total population of the Netherlands (compared to 438,144 in Suriname).

## Languages

An exceptional variety of languages is spoken in Suriname. Sranan Tongo, a local creole language, is the most widely used language. Dutch is the official language and the mother tongue of about 60% of the Surinamese. It is used mainly in education, government and the media, often interchangeably with Sranan depending on the formality of the setting. Surinamese Hindi, a dialect of Bhojpuri, is the third-most used language, spoken by the descendants of British Asian contract workers. Javanese is spoken by the descendants of Javanese contract workers. The Maroon languages, somewhat intelligible with Sranan Tongo, include Saramaka, Paramakan, Ndyuka, *Aukan*, Kwinti and Matawai. Amerindian languages, spoken by Amerindians, include Carib and Arawak. Hakka Chinese and Cantonese is spoken by the descendants of the Chinese contract (*koelie*, coolie) workers. Mandarin is spoken by more recent Chinese immigrants. English, Spanish and Portuguese are also used.

The public discourse about Suriname's languages is a part of ongoing debates about the country's national identity. While Dutch is perceived as a remnant of colonialism by some, the use of the popular Sranan became associated with nationalist politics after its public use by former dictator Dési Bouterse in the 1980s, and groups descended from runaway slaves like the Maroons resent it. There are frequent proposals in Parliament to change the national language to English, so as to improve links to the Caribbean and North America, or to Spanish, as a nod to Suriname's geography.

## National Celebrations

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Synagogue in Paramaribo



January 1- New Year's Day  
May 1 - Labour Day  
June 5 - Immigration of the Indians  
July 1 - Emancipation Day (end of slavery)  
August 8 - Day of the indigenous people  
August 9 - Immigration of the Javanese  
November 25 - Independence Day  
December 25 - Christmas Day  
December 26 - Second Christmas Day

There are several Hindu and Islamic national holidays like Divali (deepavali), Phagwa and Eid-ul-fitre and Eid-ul-adha. These holidays do not have specific dates on the gregorian calendar as they are based on the Islamic and Hindu calendar respectively. Aside from these holidays that are celebrated across the world in Hindu and Islamic countries, there are several holidays which are unique to Suriname. These include the Indian, Javanese and Chinese arrival days. They celebrate the arrival of the first ships with their respective immigrants.

## New Year's Eve

New year's eve in Suriname is called Oud jaar which means old year. It is during this period that the Surinamese population goes to the city's commercial district to watch demonstrational fireworks. This is however, a spectacle based on the famous red-firecracker-ribbons. The bigger stores invest in these firecrackers and display them out in the streets. Every year the length of them is compared, and high praises are held for the company that has managed to import the largest ribbon. These celebrations start at 10 in the morning and finish the next day. The day is usually filled with laughter, dance, music, and drinking. When the night starts, the big street parties are already at full capacity. The most popular fiesta is the one that is held at café 't Vat in the main tourist district. The parties there stop between 10 and 11 at night. After which the people go home to light their pagaras (red-firecracker-ribbons) at midnight. After 12, the parties continue and the streets fill again until daybreak.



Pagara (Red-firecracker-ribbons)

## Landmarks



The Jules Wijdenboschbrug is a bridge over the river Suriname between Paramaribo and Meerzorg in the Commewijne district. The bridge was built during the tenure of President Jules Albert Wijdenbosch (1996-2000) and was completed in 2000. The bridge is 52 metres high, and 1504 metres long. It connects Paramaribo with Commewijne, a connection which previously could only be made by ferry. The purpose of the bridge was to facilitate and promote the development of the eastern part of **Suriname**. The bridge consists of two lanes and is not accessible to pedestrians.



Jules Albert Wijdenbosch Brug



The Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul in Paramaribo

The Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul is 114 years old. Before it became a cathedral it was a theatre and was owned by La Parra. The theatre was built in 1809 and burned down in 1820. The construction of the Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral started on 13 January 1883.

### Measurements

161 feet long (51 meters)

48 feet high in the main hall (17 meters)

54 feet wide (18 meters)

162 feet high in the tower up until the bronze cross (53 meters)

This makes the cathedral the biggest and tallest wooden structure on the western hemisphere. the cathedral has space for 340 people and was initially built for free slaves and contract labourers.

### Pipe Organ

The pipe organ was constructed in Germany and initially contained 1550 pipes. Many of the pipes have been stolen over the years, leaving the organ with a value of 400 euros. After renovation it is expected to have a value of around 10 million euros.

Suriname is one of the few countries in the world where you can find a Synagogue next to a Mosque. The two buildings are located next to each other in the centre of Paramaribo and have been known to share a parking facility during their respective religious rites, should they happen to coincide with one another.



Synagogue next to a Mosque

## Sports

Some of the greatest football players to represent the Netherlands, such as Frank Rijkaard, Ruud Gullit, Patrick Kluivert, Edgar Davids, Clarence Seedorf, Aron Winter, Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, Stanley Menzo, and Ryan Babel are of Surinamese descent. Davids in particular has written of his passionate pride in his Surinamese heritage and his love of attending football matches there. There are a number of local heroes in other sports as well, like Primraj Binda, best known as the athlete who dominated the 10 km for nearly a decade, Steven Vismale and Letitia Vriesde. Another notable track athlete from Suriname was Tommy Asinga.

Anthony Nesty is the only person to win a medal (for swimming) for Suriname at the Olympics. Originally from Trinidad, not Suriname, he now lives in Miami, Florida, USA.



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# The Bahamas

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries**

The **Commonwealth of the Bahamas** is an independent, sovereign, English-speaking country consisting of two thousand cays and seven hundred islands that form an archipelago. It is located in the Atlantic Ocean southeast of the United States; north of Cuba, Hispaniola (Dominican Republic & Haiti) and the Caribbean Sea; and northwest of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

## History

The seafaring Taino people moved into the uninhabited southern Bahamas from Hispaniola and Cuba around the 7th century AD. These people came to be known as the Lucayans. There were an estimated 30,000+ Lucayans at the time of Columbus' arrival in 1492.

Christopher Columbus's first landfall in the New World was on an island he named *San Salvador* (known to the Lucayans as Guanahani) which is generally accepted to be present-day San Salvador Island (also known as Watling Island) in the southeastern Bahamas. Here, Columbus made first contact with the Lucayans and exchanged goods with them.




Parts of the Bahamas as seen from an aircraft

The Spaniards who followed Columbus depopulated the islands and they were deserted until the arrival of the Eleutherian Adventurers from Bermuda in the mid 1600s. The Adventurers (who were English) established the first permanent European settlements on an island which they named Eleuthera - the name derives from the Greek word for freedom. They later discovered New Providence and named it Sayle's Island. To survive, the settlers looted passing ships.

In 1670 King Charles II granted the islands to the Lord Proprietors of the Carolinas, who rented the islands from the king with rights of trading, tax, appointing governors, and administering the country.

During proprietary rule, the Bahamas became a haven for pirates, including the infamous Blackbeard. To

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The Bahamas The Commonwealth of The Bahamas	
	
Flag	
<b>Motto:</b> "Forward, Upward, Onward Together"	
<b>Anthem:</b> " March On, Bahamaland" <b>Royal anthem:</b> " God Save the Queen"	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Nassau
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Demonym</b>	Bahamian
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and



restore orderly government, the Bahamas was made a British crown colony in 1718 under the royal governorship of Woodes Rogers, who cracked down on piracy.

During the American Revolutionary War, the islands were a target for American naval forces under the command of Commodore Ezekial Hopkins. The capital of Nassau on the island of New Providence was occupied by US Marines for a fortnight.

In 1782, after the British defeat at Yorktown, a Spanish fleet appeared off Nassau, which surrendered without a fight. But the 1783 Treaty of Versailles - which ended the global conflict between Britain, France and Spain - returned the Bahamas to British sovereignty.

After the American Revolution, some 8,000 loyalists and black loyalists moved to the Bahamas from New York, Florida and the Carolinas. The Americans established plantations on several out islands and became a political force in the capital. The small population became mostly African from this point on.

The British abolished the slave trade in 1807, which led to the forced settlement on Bahamian islands of thousands of Africans liberated from slave ships by the Royal Navy. Slavery was finally abolished in the British Empire on August 1, 1834.

Modern political development began after the Second World War. The first political parties were formed in the 1950s and the British made the islands internally self-governing in 1964. In 1973, the Bahamas became fully independent, but retained membership in the Commonwealth of Nations.

In 1967, Lynden Pindling became the first black premier of the colony, and in 1968 the title was changed to prime minister. Another black Bahamian, Sir Milo Butler, was appointed governor-general upon independence.

Based on the twin pillars of tourism and offshore finance, the Bahamian economy has prospered since the 1950s. However, there remain significant challenges in areas such as education, health care, international narcotics trafficking and illegal immigration from Haiti.

The origin of the name "Bahamas" is unclear. It may derive from the Spanish *baja mar*, meaning "shallow seas"; or the Lucayan word for Grand Bahama Island, *ba-ha-ma* "large upper middle land".

## Geography

	Constitutional monarchy
- Monarch	Queen Elizabeth II
- Governor-General	Arthur Dion Hanna
- Prime Minister	Hubert Ingraham
<b>Independence</b>	from the United Kingdom
- Self-governing	1964
- Full independence	July 10, 1973
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	13,878 km <sup>2</sup> ( 160th) 5,358 sq mi
- Water (%)	28%
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	330,549 ( 177th)
- 1990 census	254,685
- Density	23.27/km <sup>2</sup> ( 181st) 60/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$6.524 billion ( 145th)
- Per capita	\$17,843 ( 38th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.845 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 49th)
<b>Currency</b>	Dollar ( <span style="font-family: monospace;">_</span> BSD)
<b>Time zone</b>	EST ( UTC−5)
- Summer ( DST)	EDT ( UTC−4)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.bs
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 242



Map of the Bahamas

The closest island to the United States is Bimini, which is also known as the gateway to the Bahamas. The island of Abaco is to the east of Grand Bahama. The southeasternmost island is Great Inagua. Other notable islands include the Bahamas' largest island, Andros Island, and Eleuthera, Cat Island, Long Island, San Salvador Island, Acklins, Crooked Island, Exuma and Mayaguana. Nassau, the Bahamas capital city, lies on the island of New Providence.

All the islands are low and flat, with ridges that usually rise no more than 15 to 20 m (49 to 66 ft). The highest point in the country is Mount Alvernia, or Como Hill, which has an altitude of 63 metres (210 ft). To the southeast, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and three more extensive submarine features called Mouchoir Bank, Silver Bank, and Navidad Bank, are geographically a continuation of the Bahamas, but not part of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas..

The climate of the Bahamas is subtropical to tropical, and is moderated significantly by the waters of the Gulf Stream, particularly in winter. Conversely, this often proves very dangerous in the summer and autumn, when hurricanes pass

near or through the islands. Hurricane Andrew hit the northern islands during the 1992 Atlantic hurricane season, and Hurricane Floyd hit most of the islands during the 1999 Atlantic hurricane season. Hurricane Frances hit in 2004; the Atlantic hurricane season of 2004 was expected to be the worst ever for the islands. Also in 2004, the northern Bahamas were hit by a less potent Hurricane Jeanne. In 2005 the northern islands were once again struck, this time by Hurricane Wilma. In Grand Bahama, tidal surges and high winds destroyed homes and schools, floated graves and made roughly 1,000 people homeless, most of whom lived on the west coast of the island.

## Districts

The districts of the Bahamas provide a system of local government everywhere in The Bahamas except New Providence, whose affairs are handled directly by the central government. The districts other than New Providence are:



Andros Island, south side



1. Acklins
2. Berry Islands
3. Bimini
4. Black Point, Exuma
5. Cat Island
6. Central Abaco
7. Central Andros
8. Central Eleuthera
9. City of Freeport, Grand Bahama
10. Crooked Island
11. East Grand Bahama
12. Exuma
13. Grand Cay, Abaco
14. Harbour Island, Eleuthera
15. Hope Town, Abaco
16. Inagua
17. Long Island
18. Mangrove Cay, Andros
19. Mayaguana
20. Moore's Island, Abaco
21. North Abaco
22. North Andros
23. North Eleuthera
24. Ragged Island
25. Rum Cay
26. San Salvador
27. South Abaco
28. South Andros
29. South Eleuthera
30. Spanish Wells, Eleuthera
31. West Grand Bahama



Districts of the Bahamas

## Government and politics

The Bahamas is an independent country and a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Political and legal traditions closely follow those of the United Kingdom.

Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of State, represented by a Bahamian governor-general. The prime minister is the head of government and is the leader of the party with the most seats in the elected House of Assembly. The current governor-general is Arthur Dion Hanna and the current prime minister is Hubert Alexander Ingraham. The upper house (the Senate) is appointed. Executive power is exercised by the cabinet. Legislative power is vested in the two chambers of parliament.

The party system is dominated by the centre-left Progressive Liberal Party and the centre-right Free National Movement. A handful of splinter parties have been unable to win election to parliament. These parties have included the Bahamas Democratic Movement, the Coalition for Democratic Reform and the Bahamian Nationalist Party.

Constitutional safeguards include freedom of speech, press, worship, movement, and association. Although

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Club Med beach





The Bahamas is not geographically located in the Caribbean, it is a member of the Caribbean Community. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. Jurisprudence is based on English common law.

## Demographics

Blacks 85%, Whites 12%, Asian and Hispanic 3% according to the last census completed about the races on the island, which was recorded in 1953.

### 1953 census results by island

Region	European	%	Mixed	%	African	%	Total
New Providence	6,758	14.80%	6,804	14.90%	32,108	70.30%	45,670
Andros and Berry Islands	97	1.30%	299	4.01%	7,065	94.69%	7,461
Grand Bahama and Bimini	450	8.30%	721	13.31%	4,248	78.39%	5,419
Abaco	1,146	33.63%	225	6.60%	2,037	59.77%	3,408
Harbour Island	861	56.42%	53	3.47%	612	40.10%	1,526
Eleuthera	662	10.93%	1,062	17.54%	4,332	71.53%	6,056
Cat Island	12	0.37%	86	2.69%	3,103	96.94%	3,201
Exuma	59	2.02%	61	2.09%	2,799	95.89%	2,919
San Salvador and Rum Cay	46	5.56%	51	6.17%	730	88.27%	827
Long Island and Ragged Island	564	13.84%	2,072	50.83%	1,440	35.33%	4,076
Crooked Islands, Acklins and Long Cay	7	0.32%	513	23.44%	1,669	76.24%	2,189
Mayaguana and Inagua	60	3.74%	95	5.93%	1,448	90.33%	1,603
<b>BAHAMAS</b>	<b>10,722</b>	<b>12.71%</b>	<b>12,042</b>	<b>14.28%</b>	<b>61,591</b>	<b>73.01%</b>	<b>84,355</b>

Source:

Population: 300,529 (July 2002 est.) Age structure: 0-14 years: 29% (male 43,964; female 43,250) 15-64 years: 64.7% (male 95,508; female 98,859) 65 years and over: 6.3% (male 7,948; female 11,000) (2002 est.) Population growth rate: 0.86% (2002 est.) Birth rate: 18.69 births/1,000 population (2002 est.) Death rate: 7.49 deaths/1,000 population (2002 est.) Net migration rate: -2.63 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2002 est.) Sex ratio: at birth: 1.02 male(s)/female under 15 years: 1.02 male(s)/female 15-64 years: 0.97 male(s)/female 65 years and over: 0.72 male(s)/female total population: 0.96 male(s)/female (2002 est.) Infant mortality rate: 17.08 deaths/1,000 live births (2002 est.) Life expectancy at birth: total population: 69.87 years female: 73.49 years (2002 est.) male: 66.32 years



Total fertility rate: 2.28 children born/woman (2002 est.) Nationality: noun: Bahamian(s) adjective: Bahamian Ethnic groups: black 85%, white 12%, Asian and Hispanic 3% Religions: Baptist 32%, Anglican 20%, Roman Catholic 19%, Methodist 6%, Church of God 6%, other Protestant 12%, none or unknown 3%, other 2% Languages: English, Creole (among Haitian immigrants) Literacy (age 15+): total population: 98.2% male: 98.5% female: 98% (1995 est.)

Source: The Bahamas guide

## Culture

In the less developed outer islands, handicrafts include basketry made from palm fronds. This material, commonly called "straw", is plaited into hats and bags that are popular tourist items.



Atlantic Spotted Dolphins

Regattas are important social events in many family island settlements. They usually feature one or more days of sailing by old-fashioned work boats, as well as an onshore festival.

Some settlements have festivals associated with the traditional crop or food of that area, such as the "Pineapple Fest" in Gregory Town, Eleuthera or the "Crab Fest" on Andros. Other significant traditions include story telling.

The islands are overwhelmingly Christian; the largest denominations being Baptist, Anglican and Roman Catholic. A few people, especially in the southern and eastern islands, practice Obeah, a spiritistic religion similar to Voodoo. Voodoo is also practiced by a large number of people in neighboring Haiti.

Sailing and Track and field athletics are popular sports in the country. Football and rugby also have strong followings while American sports such as basketball, softball, baseball and American football are gaining in popularity.

Bahamians have won Olympic gold medals in sailing (Sir Durwood Knowles and Cecile Cooke in 1964) and track and field ( Tonique Williams-Darling in the 400 m in 2004 and the women's relay team in the 4×100m in 2000). They are also very active in the world of karting; the current Bahamian champion is Genevieve Siddons.

## Economy



The Bahamian dollar is pegged to the US dollar, and US notes and coins are used interchangeably with Bahamian currency for most practical purposes. However, government exchange controls still apply for the purchase of foreign currency.

The Bahamas is classified as an upper middle-income developing country and has the third highest per capita income in the western hemisphere (after the United States and Canada). Tourism is the primary economic activity, accounting for about two thirds of the gross domestic product (GDP). Offshore finance is the second largest industry, accounting for about 15 per cent of GDP.

The government continues to promote tourism and financial services while aiming for greater diversification through agriculture, fishing, manufacturing and e-commerce.

In the 1960s, the country enjoyed robust growth averaging 9 per cent annually as direct foreign investment spurred the development of tourism. A global economic downturn after the 1973 oil price shock coincided with Bahamian independence and led to a drop in foreign investment.

Toward the end of that decade economic performance improved, led by growth in tourism; and international narcotics trafficking. Real GDP growth in the 1980-84 period averaged 3 per cent, but declined in the late 1980s. GDP growth was 0.3 per cent in 1995 and accelerated to 6 per cent in 1999. After 9/11 the economy slumped temporarily due to travel fears, but began growing again in 2002.

Historically, most development has occurred on New Providence and Grand Bahama, causing significant migration from the Family Islands to these two urban centers and straining their infrastructure. The government is also faced with the burden of duplicating facilities and services throughout the archipelago.

There is no income, corporate or capital gains tax. Government revenues are derived from import tariffs, excise taxes, property taxes, business licenses and fees.

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Tourism plays an important part in the economy of the Bahamas.



# Trinidad and Tobago

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries**

The **Republic of Trinidad and Tobago** (pronounced /'trɪnɪdæd ən tə'berɡoʊ/) is an archipelagic state in the southern Caribbean, lying northeast of the South American nation of Venezuela and south of Grenada in the Lesser Antilles. It also shares maritime boundaries with Barbados to the northeast and Guyana to the southeast. The country covers an area of 5,128 square kilometers (1,979 sq mi) and consists of two main islands, **Trinidad** and **Tobago**, and 21 smaller islands. Trinidad is the larger and more populous of the main islands; Tobago is much smaller, comprising about 6% of the total area and 4% of the population. The nation lies outside the hurricane belt.

Officially Trinidadians or Tobagonians, the people from Trinidad and Tobago are often informally referred to as *Trinbagonians* or *Trinis* (for Trinidadians). Unlike most of the English-speaking Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago is a primarily industrialised country whose economy is based on petroleum and petrochemicals. Trinidad and Tobago is famous for its pre- Lenten Carnival and as the birthplace of steelpan, calypso, soca, and limbo.

## History

Tobago's cigar-like shape gave it its Spanish name (cabaco, tavaco, tobacco) and possibly its Amerindian names of Aloubaéra (black conch) and Urupaina (big snail) (Boomert, 2000). Historian E.L. Joseph claimed that Trinidad's Amerindian name was Iere derived from the Amerindian name for hummingbird ierèttê or yerèttê. However, Boomert claims that Cairi or Caeri does not mean hummingbird and tukusi or tucuchi does. Others have reported that Kairi or Iere simply meant island.

Both Trinidad and Tobago were originally settled by Amerindians of South American origin. Trinidad was first settled by pre-agricultural Archaic people at least 7,000 years ago, making it the earliest-settled part of the Caribbean. Ceramic-using agriculturalists settled Trinidad around 250 BCE and then moved further up the Lesser Antillean chain. At the time of European contact Trinidad was occupied by various Arawakan-speaking groups including the Nepoya and Suppoya, and Cariban-speaking groups such as the Yao, while Tobago was occupied by the Island Caribs and Galibi. The Amerindian name for Trinidad was Kairi or Iere which is usually translated as *The Land of the Hummingbird*, although others have reported

### Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



Flag

Coat of arms

**Motto:** "Together we aspire, together we achieve"

**Anthem:** *Forged from the Love of Liberty*



**Capital**

Port of Spain

**Largest city**

San Fernando



that it simply meant *island*. Christopher Columbus encountered the island of Trinidad on July 31, 1498 and named it after the Holy Trinity. Columbus reported seeing Tobago, which he named *Bella Forma*, but did not land on the island. The name Tobago is probably derived from tobacco, although the English pronunciation is /təˈbeɪɡoʊ/, rhyming with plumbago and sago.

Antonio de Sedeño first settled Trinidad in the 1530s as a means of controlling the Orinoco and subduing the Warao (Whitehead, 1997). Cacique Wannawanare (Guanaguanare) granted the St Joseph area to Domingo de Vera e Iburgüen in 1592 and then withdrew to another part of the island (Boomert, 2000). San José de Oruña (St Joseph) was established by Antonio de Berrío on this land. Walter Raleigh arrived in Trinedado on March 22 1595, casting anchor at Curiapan/Punta de Gallos and described the pitch lake (Piche or Tierra de Brea) and the Annaperima hill. This hill was known to the Warao as the home of the sea god Na'barima (Whitehead, 1997; 131). Raleigh soon attacked San José and captured and interrogated de Berrío obtaining much information from him and from the cacique Topiawari (Whitehead, 1997). In the 1700s, Trinidad belonged as an island province to the viceroyalty of New Spain along with modern Mexico and Central America (Besson, 2000). The Dutch and the Courlanders had established themselves in Tobago in the 16th and 17th centuries and produced tobacco and cotton. However Trinidad in this period was still mostly forest, populated by a few Spaniards with their handful of slaves and a few thousand Amerindians (Besson, 2000). Spanish colonisation in Trinidad remained tenuous. In 1762, after three hundred years of Spanish rule San José de Oruña and Puerto de España (Port of Spain) were hamlets rather than towns. Because Trinidad was considered underpopulated, Roume de St. Laurent, a Frenchman living in Grenada, was able to obtain a Cédula de Población from the Spanish King Charles III on the 4th November, 1783. This Cédula de Población was more generous than the first of 1776 and granted free lands to Roman Catholic foreign settlers and their slaves in Trinidad willing to swear allegiance to the Spanish king. The land grant was thirty two acres for each man, woman and child and half of that for each slave brought. As a result, Scots, Irish, German, Italian and English families arrived. The Protestants among them profited from Governor Don José Maria Chacon's generous interpretation of the law. The French Revolution (1789) also had an impact on Trinidad's culture since it resulted in the emigration of Martiniquan planters and their slaves to Trinidad who established an agriculture-based economy (sugar and cocoa) for the island (Besson, 2000).

The population of Puerto de España (Port of Spain) increased from under 3,000 to 10,422 in five years and the inhabitants in 1797 consisted of mixed-races, Spaniards, Africans, French republican soldiers, retired pirates and French nobility (Besson, 2000). The total population of Trinidad in 1797 was 17,718; 2,151 of which were "white", 4,476 were "free blacks and people of colour", 10,009 were slaves and 1,082 Amerindians. In 1797, General Sir Ralph Abercromby and his squadron sailed through the Bocas and anchored off the coast of Chaguaramas. The Spanish Governor Chacon decided to capitulate without

<b>Official languages</b>	English (Official), Spanish (Special Status)
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	Indians, Africans, Venezuelans, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Chinese, British, Lebanese, Syrians, Caribs.
<b>Demonym</b>	Trinidadian, Tobagonian
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary republic
- President	George Maxwell Richards
- Prime Minister	Patrick Manning
<b>Independence</b>	
- from the United Kingdom	31 August 1962
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	5,128 km <sup>2</sup> ( 172nd) 1,979 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2005 estimate	1,305,000 ( 152nd)
- Density	207.8/km <sup>2</sup> ( 47th) 538.6/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$18.352 billion ( 113th)
- Per capita	\$19,700 ( 46th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.814 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 59th)
<b>Currency</b>	Trinidad and Tobago dollar (TTD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC-4)



fighting. Trinidad became a British crown colony, with a French-speaking population and Spanish laws (Besson, 2000). The conquest and formal ceding of Trinidad in 1802 led to an influx of settlers from England or the British colonies of the Eastern Caribbean. After the abolition of slavery and the collapse of the French planters' cane economy, the 'French Creole' planters and the peasant population of mixed Spanish-Amerindians turned to cocoa cultivation. Although originally a sugar colony, cacao (cocoa) dominated the economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. After the collapse of the cacao crop (due to disease and the Great Depression) petroleum increasingly came to dominate the economy. The Depression and the rise of the oil economy led to changes in the social structure. By the 1950s cocoa had become a staple in Trinidad's export market and was responsible for a growing middle-class. Originally settled by Amerindians of South American origin at least 7,000 years ago, This varied history has left the country with a mixture of African, Indian, European, Middle Eastern and Chinese people. All these groups have left an imprint on the national culture, and there is an increasingly high percentage of mixed-race people. Trinidad and Tobago became an independent nation (from the United Kingdom) in 1962 and a republic in 1976.

- Summer ( DST)	( UTCn/a)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.tt
<b>Calling code</b>	+1-868

Meanwhile, Tobago changed hands between British, French, Dutch and Courlanders from modern-day Latvia. Britain consolidated its hold on both islands during the Napoleonic Wars, and they were combined into the colony of Trinidad and Tobago in 1889. As a result of these colonial struggles, Amerindian, Spanish, French and English place names are all common in the country. African slaves and Chinese, Indian, and free African indentured labourers, as well as Portuguese from Madeira, arrived to supply labour in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Emigration from Barbados and the other Lesser Antilles, Venezuela, Syria, and Lebanon also impacted on the ethnic make-up of the country.

The presence of American military bases in Chaguaramas and Cumuto in Trinidad during World War II profoundly changed the character of society. In the post-war period, the wave of decolonisation that swept the British Empire led to the formation of the West Indies Federation in 1958 as a vehicle for independence. Chaguaramas was the proposed site for the federal capital. The Federation dissolved after the withdrawal of Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago elected for independence in 1962.

In 1976, the country severed its links with the British monarchy and became a republic within the Commonwealth, though it retained the British Privy Council as its final Court of Appeal.

Between the years 1972 and 1983, the Republic profited greatly from the rising price of oil, as the oil-rich country increased its living standards greatly.

In 1990, 114 members of the Jamaat al Muslimeen, led by Yasin Abu Bakr, formerly known as Lennox Phillip, stormed the Red House (the seat of Parliament), and Trinidad and Tobago Television, the only television station in the country at the time, and held the country's government hostage for six days before surrendering.

Since 2003, the country has entered a second oil boom, a driving force which the government hopes to use to turn the country's main export back to sugar and agriculture. Great concern was raised in August 2007 when it was predicted that this boom would last only until 2018.

Petroleum, petrochemicals and natural gas continue to be the backbone of the economy. Tourism is the mainstay of the economy of Tobago, and the island remains a favourite destination for many European tourists. Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most prosperous and stable democratic nations in the Caribbean.



## Politics

Trinidad and Tobago is a liberal democracy with a two-party system and a bicameral parliamentary system based on the Westminster System. The Head of State of Trinidad and Tobago is the President, currently George Richards. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister. The President is elected by an Electoral College consisting of the full membership of both houses of Parliament. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President. The President is required to appoint the leader of the party who in his opinion has the most support of the members of the House of Representatives to this post; this has generally been the leader of the party which won the most seats in the previous election (except in the case of the 2001 General Elections).

The Parliament consists of two chambers, the Senate (31 seats) and the House of Representatives (41 seats). The members of the Senate are appointed by the president. Sixteen Government Senators are appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister, six Opposition Senators are appointed on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and nine Independent Senators are appointed by the President to represent other sectors of civil society. The 41 members of the House of Representatives are elected by the people for a maximum term of five years in a "first past the post" system.

Since December 24, 2001, the governing party has been the People's National Movement led by Patrick Manning; the Opposition party is the United National Congress led by Basdeo Panday. Another recent party is the Congress of the People, or COP, led by Winston Dookeran. Support for these parties appears to fall along ethnic lines with the PNM consistently obtaining a majority Afro-Trinbagonian vote, and the UNC gaining a majority of Indo-Trinbagonian support. COP gained 23% of the vote but failed to win a single seat. At present the PNM holds 26 seats in the House of Representatives and the UNC Alliance (UNC-A) holds 15 seats, following elections held on the 5th November 2007.

Voter turnout in General Elections averages between 60-70%.

There are 14 Municipal Corporations,(2 Cities, 3 Boroughs and 9 Regions) which have a limited level of autonomy. The various councils are made up of a mixture of elected and appointed members. Elections are due to be held every 3 years, but have not been held since 2002, 2 extensions having been sought by the government. Local Government elections are next due in July 2008

Trinidad and Tobago is a leading member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), of which only the Caribbean Single Market (CSM) is in force. It is also the seat of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), which was inaugurated on 16th April 2005. The CCJ is intended to replace the British Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as the final Appellate Court for the member states of the CARICOM. Since its inauguration, only two states, Barbados and Guyana, have acceded to the appellate jurisdiction of the CCJ. The CCJ also serves has an original jurisdiction in the interpretation of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, to which all members of CARICOM have acceded. However, to date, only one matter has been filed under the original jurisdiction.

## Geography



Trinidad and Tobago are southeasterly islands of the Antilles or West Indies, situated between 10° 2' and 11° 12' N latitude and 60° 30' and 61° 56' W longitude. At the closest point, Trinidad is just 11 kilometres (7 miles) off the Venezuelan coast. Covering an area of 5,128 square kilometres (1,979 sq mi), the country consists of the two main islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and 21 smaller islands – including Chacachacare, Monos, Huevos, Gaspar Grande (or Gasparee), Little Tobago, and St. Giles Island. Trinidad is 4,768 square kilometres (1,841 sq mi) in area (comprising 93.0% of the country's total area) with an average length of 80 kilometres (50 mi) and an average width of 59 kilometres (37 mi). Tobago has an area of about 300 square kilometres (115 sq mi), or 5.8% of the country's area, is 41 kilometres (25.5 mi) long and 12 kilometres (7.5 mi) at its greatest width.



Map of Trinidad and Tobago



Hillside along Diego Martin

The terrain of the islands is a mixture of mountains and plains. The highest point in the country is found on the Northern Range at El Cerro del Aripo which is situated at 940 metres (3,085 ft) above sea level. The climate is tropical. There are two seasons annually: the dry season for the first six months of the year, and the wet season in the second half of the year. Winds are predominantly from the northeast and are dominated by the northeast trade winds. Unlike most of the other Caribbean islands, both Trinidad and Tobago have frequently escaped the wrath of major devastating hurricanes including Hurricane Ivan, the most powerful storm to pass close to the islands in recent history in September 2004.

As the majority of the population live in Trinidad, this is the location of most major towns and cities. There are three major municipalities in Trinidad: Port of Spain, the capital, San Fernando, and Chaguanas. Of these, Chaguanas is the fastest growing. The main town in Tobago is Scarborough.

Trinidad is made up of a variety of soil types, the majority being fine sands and heavy clays. The alluvial valleys of the Northern Range and the soils of the *East-West Corridor* being the most fertile.

The Northern Range consists mainly of Upper Jurassic and Cretaceous rocks, mostly andesites and schists. The Northern Lowlands ( East-West Corridor and Caroni Plains) consist of Pleistocene or younger soft sands and clays with superficial gravel terraces and river and swamp alluvia. South of this, the Central Range is a folded anticlinal uplift consisting of Cretaceous and Eocene rocks, with Miocene formations along the southern and eastern flanks. The Naparima Plains and the Nariva Swamp form the southern shoulder of this uplift. The Southern Lowlands consist of Miocene and Pliocene sands, clays, and gravels. These overlie oil and natural gas deposits, especially north of the Los Bajos Fault. The Southern Range forms the third anticlinal uplift. It consists of several chains of hills, most famous being the Trinity Hills. The rocks consist of sandstones, shales and siltstones and clays formed in the Miocene and uplifted in the Pleistocene. Oil sands and mud volcanoes are especially common in this area.

Although it is located just off-shore from South America, Trinidad and Tobago is not considered to be part of the South American continent by virtue of its geographical and historical heritage. *See Bicontinental countries.*



The Chaconia (*Warszewiczia coccinea*) flower is the national flower of Trinidad and Tobago.





## Economy



Port of Spain Cityscape 2008

Trinidad's economy is strongly influenced by the petroleum industry. Tourism and manufacturing are also important to the local economy. Tourism is a growing sector, although not proportionately as important as in many other Caribbean islands. The economy benefits from good management and a large trade surplus. Agricultural products include citrus, cocoa, and other products. Sugar cane was once a prominent crop of Trinidad but commercial production has ceased since 2007

Trinidad and Tobago has earned a reputation as an excellent investment site for international businesses and has one of the highest growth rates and per capita incomes in Latin America. Recent growth has been fueled by investments in liquefied natural gas (LNG), petrochemicals, and steel. Additional petrochemical, aluminum, and plastics projects are in various stages of planning. Trinidad and Tobago is the leading Caribbean producer of oil and gas, and its economy is heavily dependent upon these resources but it also supplies manufactured goods, notably food and beverages, as well as cement to the Caribbean region. Oil and gas account for about 40% of GDP and 80% of exports, but only 5% of employment. The country is also a regional financial centre, and tourism is a growing sector, although it is not proportionately as important as in many other Caribbean islands. The economy benefits from a growing trade surplus. The expansion of Atlantic LNG over the past six years created the largest-single sustained phase of economic growth in Trinidad and Tobago. It has become the leading exporter of LNG to the United States, and now supplies some 70% of U.S. LNG imports.

Trinidad and Tobago has transitioned from an oil-based economy to a natural gas based economy. In 2007, natural gas production averaged 4 billion standard cubic feet per day (mmscf/d), compared with 3.2 bcf/d in 2005. In December 2005, the Atlantic LNG fourth production module or "train" for liquefied natural gas (LNG) began production. Train 4 has increased Atlantic LNG's overall output capacity by almost 50% and is the largest LNG train in the world at 5.2 million tons/year of LNG.

Reductions in subsidies to state enterprises have contributed to fiscal soundness and lent credibility to the government's ongoing divestment program. Companies all or partially divested since 1987 include the National Fisheries Company, BWIA West Indies Airways (now Caribbean Airlines), National Flour Mills (NFM), the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, TT Methanol Company, Trinidad Cement, the Iron and Steel Company of Trinidad and Tobago (ISCOTT), and the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA). BWIA was dissolved by the government and replaced by a new carrier. In May 1997, the government sold its remaining 69% interest in the Trinidad and Tobago Methanol Company to a consortium consisting of the local firm CL Financial and Germany's Ferrostaal and Helm. NFM was divested by an additional 14% in 1997, bringing the government's holding down to 51%. The government has created a holding company to bring its remaining shares in several formerly wholly government-owned enterprises to market.

Trinidad and Tobago's infrastructure is good by regional standards. The international airport in Trinidad was expanded in 2001. There is an extensive network of paved roads with several good four and six lane highways including one controlled access expressway. Emergency services are reliable, but may suffer delays in rural districts. Medical Care at public hospitals is modern, with high investment in equipment, but suffers from emigration of personnel. Private hospitals are available and reliable. Utilities are fairly reliable in the cities. Some areas, however, especially rural districts, still suffer from water shortages. The government is addressing this problem with the construction of additional desalinization plants. Infrastructure improvement, especially rural roads and telephone service,



drainage and sewerage, are among the government's budget priorities.

Telephone service is relatively modern and reliable. Cellular service is widespread and has been the major area of growth for several years. Digicel and Laqtel were granted cellular licenses in 2005, breaking TSTT's monopoly. The Internet has come into widespread use, although service can be slow at peak times. The government has been slow to open up this market to competition as well.

Trinidad and Tobago does not import or export any electricity. Conferences are being held by the government to find alternative energy sources, with a heavy focus on renewable energy.

The government's economic strategy is based on fiscal and monetary discipline, private sector investment, and export-led growth.

## Demographics

Of the country's 1.3 million inhabitants (as of 2005), most (96%) reside on the island of Trinidad with most of the remainder (4%) in Tobago. The ethnic composition of Trinidad and Tobago reflects a history of conquest and immigration. Two major ethnic groups - Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians - account for almost 80% of the population, while people of Mixed-race, Euro-Trinidadian/ European, Chinese Trinidadian/ Chinese and Arab-Trinidadian/Syrian-Lebanese descent make up most of the rest of the population. According to the 1990 census, Indo-Trinidadians make up 40.3% of the population, Afro-Trinidadians 39.5%, Mixed-race people 18.4%, Euro-Trinidadian 0.6% and Chinese,Lebanese, Syrians and others 1.2%. Euro-Trinidadians, especially those descendants of the former plantocracy, are often referred to as French Creoles, even if they are descended from Spanish, British, or German settlers. The mixed-race Cocoa Payols are descendant of the original Spanish settlers and later immigrants from Venezuela. Today, the Trinidadian Portuguese population includes both whites and mixed people. The small Amerindian population is largely mixed-race. The Carib population, which is descendant of the indigenous inhabitants, is primarily organised around the Santa Rosa Carib Community.

Emigration from Trinidad and Tobago, as with other Caribbean nations, has historically been high; most emigrants go to the United States, Canada and Britain. Emigration has continued, albeit at a lower rate, even as the birth-rate sharply dropped to levels typical of industrialised countries. Largely because of this phenomenon, as of 2007, Trinidad and Tobago has a low population growth rate (0.37%).

English is the country's only official language, but Bhojpuri, locally known as Hindi, is also spoken by a few Indo-Trinidadians and widely used in popular music such as chutney and chutney soca. The main spoken language is a dialect or a creole which reflects the African and European heritage of the nation. The major spoken language in Tobago is English. Both languages contain elements from a number and variety of African languages; Trinidadian English, however, is also largely influenced by French and French Creole, Spanish (still spoken in the south as well as other parts of the island), and by Bhojpuri/Hindi. The creole languages and other vernaculars are normally spoken in informal situations, and there is no formalized system of writing (as in standard English). Although Patois (a variety of French Creole) was once the most widely spoken language in Trinidad (and also on the Venezuelan Paria coast), there are various remnants of the language in everyday vernacular. Due to Trinidad's location on the coast of South America, the country has been slowly redeveloping a connection with the Spanish-speaking peoples, but has been impeded by the fact that in 2004, only 1,500 inhabitants spoke Spanish. In 2004 the government initiated the *Spanish as a First Foreign Language (SAFFL)* initiative , with a public launch in March 2005. Government regulations now require Spanish to be taught to all



beginning at the primary school level, while thirty percent of public employees are to be linguistically competent within five years. The government also announced that Spanish is to become the second official language of the country by 2020 alongside English. Venezuelans often come to Trinidad and Tobago to learn English, and many English schools have expanded to feature both English and Spanish.

Because of the country's colonial heritage, the names of towns in Trinidad are in roughly equal proportions of English (Chatham, Brighton, Green Hill, St. Mary's), French (Blanchisseuse, Sans Souci, Pointe-à-Pierre, Basse Terre), Spanish (Puerto España, San Fernando, Sangre Grande, Rio Claro, San Juan,) East Indian (Fyzabad, Barrackpore, Indian Walk, Madras Settlement) and Amerindian languages (Tunapuna, Guayaguayare, Carapichaima, Mucurapo, Chaguaramas). In Tobago, English names predominate. However, there are several names however which suggest its colonial past: Belle Garden, Bon Accord, Charlotteville, Les Coteaux Palatuvier (French), Auchenskeoch, Blenheim (Dutch).

## Religion

Many different religions are present in Trinidad and Tobago. The largest two are the Roman Catholics (26%) and Hindus (22%); the Anglicans (8%), Muslims (5%), Seventh-day Adventists (4%), Presbyterians, Jehovah's Witnesses and Methodists are among the smaller faiths. Two African syncretic faiths, the Shouter or Spiritual Baptists and the Orisha faith (formerly called Shangos, a less than complimentary term) are among the fastest growing religious groups, as are a host of evangelical and fundamentalist churches usually lumped as " Pentecostal" by most Trinidadians (although this designation is often inaccurate).

## Human rights

The Cat o' nine tails is still used to flog prisoners. On 11 March, 2005 the Government of Trinidad & Tobago was ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to pay US\$ 50,000 for "moral damages" to a prisoner who had received 15 strokes of the "Cat" plus expenses for his medical and psychological care ( <http://www.worldlii.org/int/cases/IACHR/2005/4.html>). { {Caesar vs. Trinidad and Tobago - Series C No. 123 [2005] IACHR 4 (11 March 2005) } } It is unclear whether the Court's decisions were met. However, the "Cat" has not been used for several years, and the use of the birch has also fallen into disuse. Prisoners sentenced to death for capital crimes used to be hanged, but recent attempts to execute persons sentenced to death have been blocked by the Privy Council, with sentences being commuted to life imprisonment.

Homosexual acts are illegal in Trinidad and Tobago (see Gay rights in Trinidad and Tobago) and under Article 8 (18/1) of the Immigration Act, homosexuals are not allowed to enter the country. However, homosexuals have not been actively targeted under current law.

## Culture



It is also the birthplace of calypso music and the steelpan, which is widely claimed to be the only acoustic musical instrument invented during the 20th century. The diverse cultural and religious background allows for many festivities and ceremonies throughout the year. Other indigenous art forms include soca (a derivative of calypso), Parang (Venezuelan-influenced Christmas music), chutney, Rapso music, which was made famous by Cheryl Byron and pichakaree (musical forms which blend the music of the Caribbean and India) and the famous Limbo dance.

The artistic scene is vibrant. Trinidad and Tobago claims two Nobel Prize-winning authors, V.S. Naipaul and St Lucian-born Derek Walcott. Mas' designer Peter Minshall is renowned not only for his Carnival costumes, but also for his role in opening ceremonies of the Barcelona Olympics, the 1994 Football World Cup, the 1996 Summer Olympics and the 2002 Winter Olympics, for which he won an Emmy Award. Hasely Crawford was the first Trinidadian to win the Olympic Gold Medal in the men's 100 m dash.

## Sport

### Olympic Games:

Hasely Crawford won the first Olympic gold medal for Trinidad and Tobago in the men's 100 m dash in the 1976 Summer Olympics. Nine different athletes from Trinidad and Tobago have won twelve medals at the Olympics, beginning with a silver medal in weightlifting, won by Rodney Wilkes in 1948, and most recently, a bronze medal by George Bovell III in 2004. Ato Boldon has won the most Olympic and World Championship medals for Trinidad and Tobago in athletics with eight in total - four from the Olympics and four from the World Championships. Boldon is also the only world champion Trinidad and Tobago has ever had in athletics competition. He won the 1997 200 m World Championship in Athens, Greece.

### Cricket:

Cricket is one of the most popular sports of Trinidad and Tobago, with intense inter-island rivalry with its Caribbean neighbours. Trinidad and Tobago plays both One Day International and Test cricket as a member of the West Indies team. The national team plays at the first-class level in regional competitions. Trinidad and Tobago along with other islands from the Caribbean co-hosted the 2007 Cricket World Cup. Brian Lara, world record holder for the most runs scored both in a Test and in a First Class innings, is from Trinidad and Tobago and is often known as the Prince of Port of Spain and as one of the best cricketers in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Football:** The national football team qualified for the 2006 FIFA World Cup for the first time by beating Bahrain in Manama on 16 November 2005, making them the smallest country ever (in terms of population) to qualify. The team, coached by Dutchman Leo Beenhakker, and led by Tobagonian-born captain Dwight Yorke, drew their first group game - against Sweden in Dortmund - 0-0, but lost the second game to England on late goals, 0-2. They were eliminated after losing 2-0 to Paraguay in the last game of the Group Stage. Prior to the 2006 World Cup qualification, T&T came agonisingly close to qualifying in a controversial 1974 campaign and again for the 1990 competition needing only a draw at home against the United States but losing 1-0. Trinidad and Tobago



Members of a Costume band parade on the streets of Port of Spain during its pre-Lenten Carnival



hosted the 2001 FIFA U-17 World Championship.

**Horse Racing:** Trinidad has Santa Rosa Park, a horse racing track. There is also goat racing and crab racing in Tobago.

**Sailing:** As Trinidad and Tobago is just south of the hurricane belt it is very popular with international cruising yachtsmen, especially from August to October. Consequently there have been a number of repair centres and other facilities developed, the majority of these are situated in Chaguaramas. This international community is also part of the tourism industry along with eco tours and carnival sports can also pertain to culture.

## Holidays

The following holidays are observed in Trinidad and Tobago.

- Calendar of Events - Official Trinidad & Tobago

Date	English Name	Remarks
January 1	New Year's Day	
February-March	Carnival	Monday and Tuesday immediately preceding Ash Wednesday (These are not public holidays, but government offices, banks and other businesses are closed on these days).
Variable	Easter	Good Friday and Easter Sunday (both Christian days marking the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ respectively) are both public holidays. When holidays fall on a Sunday, the Monday is given as a public holiday. Therefore "Easter Monday", the Monday following Easter Sunday, is a public holiday.
March 30	Spiritual Baptist/Shouter Liberation Day	First country in the world to recognise the Spiritual Baptist faith with a national holiday
Variable	Corpus Christi	Christian feast in honour of the Holy Eucharist
May 30	Indian Arrival Day	The first country in the world to recognise East-Indian Indentureship.
June 19	Labour Day	Marks the labour uprising on 19th June 1937 which is generally recognised as the start of the modern trade union movement in Trinidad and Tobago.
August 1	Emancipation Day	First country in the world to recognise emancipation from slavery.
August 31	Independence Day	The day T&T declared independence from the United Kingdom



September 24	Republic Day	Celebrating the day T&T became a Republic.
Variable	Eid-ul-Fitr	End of Ramadan. It is the only public holiday in Trinidad and Tobago that recognizes Islam. It is the most important holiday on the Islamic calendar and the most widely and publicly celebrated Muslim holiday in the country.
Variable	Divali	The Hindu festival of lights and the only holiday given in recognition of the Hindu faith.
December 25	Christmas	The Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.
December 26	Boxing Day	A Commonwealth gift-giving traditional holiday.

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# Turks and Caicos Islands

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries**




The **Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)** (pronounced /'tɜːks ænd 'keɪkəs/) are a British Overseas Territory consisting of two groups of tropical islands in the West Indies at .

## History

The islands of the Turks and Caicos were first populated by Carib Amerindians.

Though many nations controlled the islands, official settlement did not occur right away. For several decades around the turn of the 18th century they became popular pirate hideouts. Bermudian salt collectors were the first to settle the Turk Islands in 1678 or 1681. In 1765–1783 they were under French occupation. After the American Revolution (1775–1783) many loyalists fled to British Caribbean colonies, including (in 1783) the first settlers on the Caicos Islands; cotton became an important crop briefly. In 1799 both island groups were annexed by Britain as part of the Bahamas.

There was a great deal of political turmoil surrounding the ownership of the Turks and Caicos even within the British empire: Bermuda had been in effective possession of them for a century, though, under British law they were the common wealth of all British citizens. Spanish and French forces seized the Turks in 1706, but Bermudian forces expelled them four years later in what was probably Bermuda's only independent military operation. For many years, the Bahamas (itself originally settled by Bermudian puritans in 1647) and Bermuda fought for control of the archipelago. The struggle began in 1766, when the King's representative in the Bahamas, Mr Symmer, on his own authority, wrote a constitution which legislated for and taxed the Bermudians on the Turks. The Secretary of State, Lord Hillsborough, for the Crown, issued orders that the Bermudian activities on the Turks should not be obstructed or restrained in any way. As a result of this order, Symmer's constitution was dissolved. The Bermudians on the Turks appointed commissioners to govern themselves, with the assent of the King's local agent. They drew up regulations for good government, but the Bahamian governor Shirley drew up his own regulations for the Turks and ordered that no one might work at salt raking who had not signed assent to his regulations. Following this, a raker was arrested and the salt pans were seized and divided by force. The Bahamas government attempted to appoint judicial authorities for the Turks in 1768, but these were refused by the

Turks and Caicos Islands	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> " God Save the Queen"	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Cockburn Town
<b>Largest city</b>	Providenciales
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Government</b>	British Overseas Territory
- Queen	Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom
- Governor	Richard Tauwhare
- Premier	Michael Misick
<b>Area</b>	



## Bermudians.

In 1773 the Bahamian government passed an act attempting to tax the salt produced in the Turks, but the Bermudians refused to pay it. In 1774, the Bahamians passed another, similar act, and this they submitted for the Crown's assent. The Crown passed this act on to the Bermudian government which objected to it, and which rejected Bahamian jurisdiction over the Turks. The Crown, as a consequence, refused assent of the Act as applied to include the Turks, and, in the form in which it finally passed, the Bahamas, but not the Turks, were included. The Bermudians on the Turks continued to be governed under their own regulations, with the assent of the royal agent, until 1780, when a more formal version of those regulations was submitted for the assent of the Crown, which was given. Those regulations, issued as a royal order, stated that all British subjects had the right ("free liberty") to rake and gather salt on the Turks, providing that they conformed to the regulations, which expressly rejected Bahamian jurisdiction over the Turks. Despite this refutation by a higher authority of their right to impinge upon Bermudian activities on the Turks, the Bahamian government continued to harass the Bermudians (unsurprisingly, given the lucrateness of the Turks salt trade). Although the salt industry on the Turks had largely been a Bermudian preserve, it had been seen throughout the 17th century as the right of all British subjects to rake there, and small numbers of Bahamians had been involved.

In 1783, the French had landed a force on Grand Turk which a British force of 100 men, under then-Captain Horatio Nelson, had been unable to dislodge, but which was soon withdrawn. Following this, the Bahamians were slow to return to the Turks, while the Bermudians quickly resumed salt production, sending sixty to seventy-five ships to the Turks each year, during the six months that salt could be raked. Nearly a thousand Bermudians spent part of the year on the Turks engaged in salt production, and the industry became more productive. The Bahamas, meanwhile, was incurring considerable expense in absorbing loyalist refugees from the now-independent American colonies, and returned to the idea of taxing Turks salt for the needed funds. The Bahamian government ordered that all ships bound for the Turk Islands obtain a license at Nassau first. The Bermudians refused to do this. Following this, Bahamian authorities seized the Bermuda sloops *Friendship* and *Fanny* in 1786. Shortly after, three Bermudian vessels were seized at Grand Caicos, with \$35,000 worth of goods salvaged from a French ship. French privateers were becoming a menace to Bermudian operations in the area, at the time, but the Bahamians were their primary concern. The Bahamian government re-introduced a tax on salt from the Turks, annexed them to the Bahamas, and created a seat in the Bahamian parliament to represent them. The Bermudians refused these efforts also, but the continual pressure from the Bahamaians had a negative effect on the salt industry.

- Total	417 km <sup>2</sup> ( 199th) 161 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- 2008 estimate	30,600 ( 208th)
- Density	52/km <sup>2</sup> ( n/a) 135/sq mi
<b>HDI</b> (n/a)	n/a (n/a) ( n/a)
<b>Currency</b>	U.S. dollar ( USD)
<b>Time zone</b>	UTC-5
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.tc
<b>Calling code</b>	+1 649





Sunset viewed from Turtle Cove

In 1806, the Bermudian customs authorities went some way toward acknowledging the Bahamian annexation when it ceased to allow free exchange between the Turks and Bermuda (this affected many enslaved Bermudians, who, like the free ones, had occupied the Turks only seasonally, returning to their homes in Bermuda after the year's raking had finished). That same year, French privateers attacked the Turks, burning ships and absconding with a large sloop. The Bahamians refused to help, and the Admiralty in Jamaica claimed the Turks were beyond its jurisdiction. Two hurricanes, the first in August, 1813, the second in October, 1815, destroyed more than two-hundred buildings, significant salt stores, and sank many vessels. By 1815, the United States, the primary client for Turks salt, had been at war with Britain (and hence Bermuda) for three years, and had established other sources of salt. With the destruction wrought by the storm, and the loss of market, many Bermudians abandoned the Turks, and those remaining were so distraught that they welcomed the visit of the Bahamian governor in 1819. The British government eventually assigned political control to the Bahamas, which the Turks and Caicos remained a part of until the 1840s.

In 1848 they were declared a separate colony under a Council President. The last incumbent was maintained in 1873 when the islands were made part of Jamaica colony; in 1894 the chief colonial official was restyled Commissioner. In 1917, Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden suggested that the Turks and Caicos join Canada, but this suggestion was shot down by British prime minister Lloyd George.

On 4 July 1959 they were again a separate colony (Turks and Caicos), the last Commissioner being restyled Administrator, but until 31 May 1962 they were one of the constitutive parts of the Federation of the West Indies (see Trinidad and Tobago). By 1973 they had gained independence and their own governor (the last Administrator was restyled). In 1974 Canadian New Democratic Party Leader Max Saltzman tried to use his Private Member's Bill to create legislation to annex the islands to Canada, but it didn't pass in the Canadian House of Commons. They have had their own government head by a Chief minister since August 1976. In 1979 independence was agreed upon in principle for 1982, but a change in government caused a policy reversal, and they instead approached the Canadian Government to discuss a possible union, but at the time the Canadian Government was embroiled in a debate over free trade with the U.S., and little attention was paid to the suggestion. Their political troubles in recent years have resulted in a rewritten constitution. The Canadian Government still shows an interest in annexing the islands however, and in 2004 Conservative Party of Canada MP travelled to the Turks and Caicos to explore the possibility. He drafted a motion asking the Canadian Government to look into the issue, but his party declined, citing immigration, tourism, and economic issues. However, the Canadian government does not dismiss the possibility of a future union. In 2004 the Provincial Legislature of Nova Scotia passed a motion inviting the Turks and Caicos to join that province in the event of a future union, which is hoped for by many sun-loving Nova Scotians.

## Districts



The two island groups are in the North Atlantic Ocean, southeast of the Bahamas, north of Hispaniola, and 914 kilometres (494 nmi) from Miami, at . The territory is geographically contiguous to the Bahamas, but is politically a separate entity. The Caicos Islands are separated by the Caicos Passage from the closest Bahamian islands, Mayaguana and Great Inagua.

The eight main islands and more than 20 smaller islands have a total land area of 616.3 square kilometres (238.0 sq mi), primarily of low, flat limestone with extensive marshes and mangrove swamps and 370 kilometres (230 mi) of beach front. The weather is usually sunny and relatively dry, but suffers frequent hurricanes. The islands have limited natural fresh water resources; private cisterns collect rainwater for drinking. The primary natural resources are spiny lobster, conch and other shellfish. The United Nations Committee on Decolonisation includes the Turks and Caicos Islands on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The two distinct island groups are separated by the Turks Passage.

## Caicos Islands

The Caicos Islands are the larger group, with almost 96 percent of the land area (589.5 km<sup>2</sup>) and 82 percent of the population (26,584 out of a total of 33,302 in 2006). The spatial arrangement of the islands around the large Caicos Bank (with an area of 7,680 km<sup>2</sup>) resembles an Atoll, with the six large islands in the west, north and east, and a few tiny reefs and cays in the south. The unofficial capital of the Caicos Islands is the village of Kew on North Caicos. There is no official capital because the island group is not an administrative unit. The Caicos Islands encompass four of the six administrative districts of the territory. Four of the six main islands are inhabited, plus two of the smaller islands:

Main islands, from West to East, with population estimates of 2006:

- West Caicos (uninhabited since the early 1900s)
- Providenciales (main urban centre, with most of the population: 22 542)
- North Caicos (population 1 895)
- Middle Caicos (population 468)
- East Caicos (uninhabited since the early 1900s)
- South Caicos (population 1 579)
- Ambergris Cay (uninhabited up until 1997)

Inhabited smaller islands, in the Caicos Cays between Providenciales and North Caicos:

- Pine Cay (tourist resort, population 30)
- Parrot Cay (tourist resort, population 100)



Map of Turks and Caicos Islands



A view of Cockburn Town



The Caicos Islands make up four of the six districts of the territory.

## Turks Islands

The Turks Islands, separated from the Caicos Islands by Turks Island Passage (more than 2,200 m deep), are a chain that stretches north-south. The total area is 26.7 square kilometres (10.3 sq mi), with an estimated population of 5,753. There are two main islands, which are the only inhabited ones of the group:

- Grand Turk (with the capital of the territory, population 5 567)
- Salt Cay (population 186)

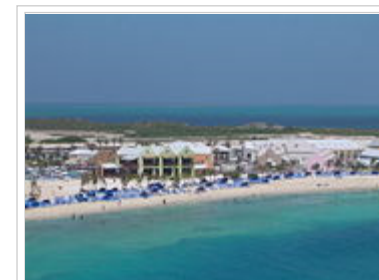
Together with nearby islands, all on Turks Bank, those two main islands form the two of the six administrative districts of the territory that fall within the Turks Islands. Turks Bank has a total area of about 450 km<sup>2</sup>.

## Mouchoir Bank

25 kilometres (16 mi) east of the Turks Islands and separated from them by Mouchoir Passage, is Mouchoir Bank. Although it is submerged with a least depth of 1.8 metres (6 ft), and has no emergent cays or islets, it is part of the Turks and Caicos Islands and falls within its EEZ. Mouchoir Bank measures 960 km<sup>2</sup> in area. Two banks further east, Silver Bank and Navidad Bank, are geographically a continuation, but belong politically to the Dominican Republic

## Climate

The Turks and Caicos Islands are arid compared to many other islands in the Caribbean. In the winter the weather is generally in the 20-25 degrees Celcius range. The temperatures easily climb to 30 degrees Celcius during the summer. The island gets less than 130 cm of rainfall per year. Most rainfall occurs during the hurricane months of summer. Sunshine and breezy cooling winds are the norm in the Turks and Caicos Islands.



A view of the southwestern beach at Grand Turk Island



Satellite Image of Salt Cay (lower left) and neighboring islets

Weather averages for Turks & Caicos												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Average high °C (°F)</b>	26 (79)	26 (79)	27 (81)	28 (82)	29 (84)	30 (86)	30 (86)	31 (88)	31 (88)	30 (86)	28 (82)	27 (81)
<b>Average low °C (°F)</b>	22 (72)	22 (72)	23 (73)	23 (73)	25 (77)	26 (79)	26 (79)	26 (79)	26 (79)	26 (79)	24 (75)	23 (73)
<b>Precipitation mm (inches)</b>	36 (1.42)	33 (1.3)	25 (0.98)	36 (1.42)	30 (1.18)	56 (2.2)	30 (1.18)	41 (1.61)	66 (2.6)	76 (2.99)	94 (3.7)	86 (3.39)



Source: Weatherbase 2008

## Politics

Grand Turk is the administrative and political capital of the Turks and Caicos Islands and Cockburn Town has been the seat of government since 1766. The islands were under Jamaican jurisdiction until 1962, when they assumed the status of a British crown colony. The governor of the Bahamas oversaw affairs from 1965 to 1973. With Bahamian independence, the islands received a separate governor in 1973. Although independence was agreed upon for 1982, the policy was reversed and the islands are presently a British overseas territory. The islands adopted a constitution on August 30, 1976, which is Constitution Day, the national holiday. The constitution was suspended in 1986, but restored and revised March 5, 1988. A new constitution came into force on August 9, 2006. The territory's legal system is based on English common law, with a small number of laws adopted from Jamaica and the Bahamas. Suffrage is universal for those over 18 years of age. English is the official language.

As a British territory, Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom is the sovereign, represented by a governor. The head of government is the premier. The cabinet consists of three *ex officio* members and five appointed by the governor from among the members of the House of Assembly. The monarch is hereditary, the governor is appointed by the monarch, and the premier appointed by the governor.

The unicameral House of Assembly consists of 19 seats, of which 15 are popularly elected; members serve four-year terms. Elections were held in 2003 and again on February 9th 2007. The Progressive National Party, led by Hon. Michael Misick holds thirteen seats, and the People's Democratic Movement, led by Floyd Seymour, holds two seats.

The judicial branch of government is headed by a Supreme Court and appeals are heard by the court of appeals and final appeals by the privy council of the UK.

Turks and Caicos participates in the Caribbean Development Bank, is an associate in CARICOM, and maintains an Interpol sub-bureau. Defence is the responsibility of the United Kingdom. In December of 2004 the Turks and Caicos Islands sought to become a new associate member to the Association of Caribbean States article.

## Demographics

Eight of the thirty islands in the territory are inhabited, with a total population in mid-2006 of about 32,000. One-third of the population is under 15 years old, and only 4% are 65 or older. In 2000 the population was growing at a rate of 3.55% per year, with 14.46 migrants per 1,000 population and 25.65 births per 1,000 population, offset by 4.57 deaths per 1,000 population. The infant mortality rate was 18.66 deaths per 1,000 live births and the life expectancy at birth was 73.28 years (71.15 years for males, 75.51 years for females). The total fertility rate was 3.25 children born per woman. The annual population growth rate is 2.82%.

Ethnically, the vast majority of inhabitants are black and Protestant Christian. Two-fifths are Baptist, one-fifth Methodist, one-fifth Anglican, and less than 2%



Seventh-day Adventist.

## Economy

The economy of the Turks and Caicos Islands is based on tourism, fishing, and offshore financial services. Most capital goods and food for domestic consumption are imported. The United States was the leading source of tourists in 1996, accounting for more than half of the 87,000 visitors; another major source of tourists is Canada. Tourist arrivals had risen to approximately 200,000 in 2006.

The government is pursuing a two-prong strategy to increase tourism. Upscale resorts are aimed at the wealthy, while a large new cruise ship port and recreation centre has been built for the masses visiting Grand Turk.

Major sources of government revenue include fees from offshore financial activities and customs receipts. The territory's gross domestic product as of late 2006 is approximately \$400 million (per capita \$12 500), with a real growth rate of about 4,9% (2000) and an inflation rate of about 4%. The labour force totalled 12000 workers in 2006. The labour force distribution is as follows:

Skill Level	Percentage
Unskilled/Manual	53%
Skilled	20%
Semi-Skilled	12%
Professional	15%

The unemployment rate is about 10%. The territory takes in revenues of \$47 million against expenditures of \$33.6 million and receives economic aid, \$5.7 million in 1995. The territory's currency is the United States dollar, with a few government fines (such as airport infractions) being payable in British Pounds. Most commemorative coin issues are denominated in crowns.

The primary agricultural products include limited amounts of maize, beans, cassava ( tapioca) and citrus fruits. Fish and conch are the only significant export, with some \$169.2 million of lobster, dried and fresh conch, and conch shells exported in 2000, primarily to the United States and the United Kingdom. In recent years, however, the catch has been declining. The territory used to be an important trans-shipment point for South American narcotics destined for the United States, but due to the ongoing pressure of a combined American, Bahamian and Turks and Caicos effort has this trade been greatly reduced.

The islands import food and beverages, tobacco, clothing, manufactures and construction materials, primarily from the United States and the United Kingdom. Imports totalled \$175.6 million in 2000.

The islands produce and consume about 5 GWh of electricity, all from fossil fuel.

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 589 of 637



## Transportation

Providenciales International Airport is the main entry point for the Turks and Caicos Islands. Altogether, there are seven airports, located on each of the inhabited islands. Five have paved runways (three of which are approximately 2000 metres long and one is approximately 1000 metres long), and the remaining two have unpaved runways (one of which is approximately 1000 metres long and the other is significantly shorter).

The islands have 121 kilometres of highway, 24 km paved and 97 km unpaved.

The territory's main international ports and harbours are on Grand Turk and Providenciales.

The islands have no significant railways.

## Proposed union with Canada

A great many of the tourists who visit the islands are Canadian. Owing to this, the islands' status as a British colony, and historic trade links, some politicians in Canada and the Turks and Caicos have suggested some form of union between Canada (a Commonwealth realm, so they already share the British Monarch as Head of state) and the British territory.

In 1917, the Prime Minister of Canada, Robert Borden first suggested that Canada annex Turks and Caicos Islands.

In 1974, Canadian New Democratic Party Member of Parliament Max Saltsman introduced a failed attempt at consolidating the islands.

The idea was brought up again in 1986 by Progressive Conservative MP Dan McKenzie, but it was rejected by his party's caucus committee on external affairs in 1987. The committee, chaired by MP David Daubney, looked at immigration, banking, health care and tourism issues in making its decision.

In 2004, Conservative MP Peter Goldring visited the Turks and Caicos to explore the possibility once more.

For the islands to join Canada as a full province would require amending the Canadian constitution, unlikely because it could provoke provinces to reopen debate on other aspects of Canada's constitution. On the other hand, small changes to the Constitution, such as renaming Newfoundland to Newfoundland and Labrador, have passed intact since 1949. The last new province, Newfoundland and Labrador, was brought into the country in 1949 by an act of the British Parliament. Joining as a territory would be easier, as territories can be created by an act of Parliament. In addition, its population of 21,746 (est. 2007) people is considered insufficient for provincial status. However, this attitude might change should the territories of Yukon or Nunavut, with about 30,000 people each, ever become provinces.



In 1917, Canadian Prime Minister, Robert Borden suggested Canada annex the Turks and Caicos



In 2004, the province of Nova Scotia voted to invite Turks and Caicos to join the province, should the islands ever become part of Canada. This would bypass the problems with admitting Turks and Caicos as a separate province.

## Note

1. ^ " Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Seventh Report" (in English). Retrieved on 2008- 07-06.
2. ^ " Monthly Averages for Grand Turk, PRT". Weatherbase. Retrieved on 2008- 06-25.
3. ^ " N.S. votes to invite Turks and Caicos to join it", CBC (2004- 04-22). Retrieved on 2007- 01-28.
4. ^ " The Turks and Caicos Welcomes The Indy Racing League" ( 2008- 02-01). Retrieved on 2008- 06-27.

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# United States

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; North American Geography

The **United States of America** is a constitutional federal republic comprising fifty states and a federal district, as well as several territories, or insular areas, scattered around the Caribbean and Pacific. The country is situated mostly in central North America, where its forty-eight contiguous states and Washington, D.C., the capital district, lie between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, bordered by Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. The state of Alaska is in the northwest of the continent, with Canada to its east and Russia to the west across the Bering Strait, and the state of Hawaii is an archipelago in the mid-Pacific.

At 3.79 million square miles (9.83 million km<sup>2</sup>) and with more than 300 million people, the United States is the third or fourth largest country by total area, and third largest by land area and by population. The United States is one of the world's most ethnically diverse nations, the product of large-scale immigration from many countries. The U.S. economy is the largest national economy in the world, with a nominal 2006 gross domestic product (GDP) of more than US\$13 trillion (over 19% of the world total based on purchasing power parity).

The nation was founded by thirteen colonies of Great Britain located along the Atlantic seaboard. Proclaiming themselves "states," they issued the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The rebellious states defeated Great Britain in the American Revolutionary War, the first successful colonial war of independence. A federal convention adopted the current United States Constitution on September 17, 1787; its ratification the following year made the states part of a single republic. The Bill of Rights, comprising ten constitutional amendments, was ratified in 1791.

In the nineteenth century, the United States acquired land from France, Spain, the United Kingdom, Mexico, and Russia, and annexed the Republic of Texas and the Republic of Hawaii. Disputes between the agrarian South and industrial North over states' rights and the expansion of the institution of slavery provoked the American Civil War of the 1860s. The North's victory prevented a permanent split of the country and led to the end of slavery in the United States. The Spanish-American War and World War I confirmed the nation's status as a military power. In 1945, the United States emerged from World War II as the first country with nuclear weapons, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and a founding member of NATO. In the post-Cold War era, the United States is the only remaining

United States of America	
	
Flag	Great Seal
<p><b>Motto:</b> In God We Trust (official)  <i>E Pluribus Unum</i> (From Many, One; Latin, traditional)</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> " The Star-Spangled Banner"</p>	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Washington, D.C.
<b>Largest city</b>	New York City
<b>Official languages</b>	None at federal level <sup>1</sup>
<b>National language</b>	English ( <i>de facto</i> ) <sup>2</sup>
<b>Demonym</b>	American





superpower—accounting for approximately 50% of global military spending—and a dominant economic, political, and cultural force in the world.

## Etymology

The term *America*, for the lands of the western hemisphere, was coined in 1507 after Amerigo Vespucci, an Italian explorer and cartographer (presumably named after St. Emeric). The full name of the country was first used officially in the Declaration of Independence, which was the "unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America" adopted by the "Representatives of the united States of America" on July 4, 1776. The current name was finalized on November 15, 1777, when the Second Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation, the first of which states, "The Stile of this Confederacy shall be 'The United States of America.'" Common short forms and abbreviations of the United States of America include the *United States*, the *U.S.*, the *U.S.A.*, and *America*. Colloquial names for the country include the *U.S. of A.* and *the States*. *Columbia*, a once popular name for the Americas and the United States, was derived from Christopher Columbus. It appears in the name "District of Columbia". A female personification of Columbia appears on some official documents, including certain prints of U.S. currency.

The standard way to refer to a citizen of the United States is as an *American*. Though *United States* is the formal adjective, *American* and *U.S.* are the most common adjectives used to refer to the country ("American values," "U.S. forces"). *American* is rarely used in English to refer to people not connected to the United States.

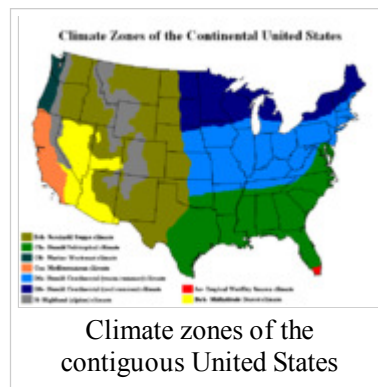
The phrase "the United States" was originally treated as plural—e.g. "the United States are"—including in the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1865. However, it became increasingly common to treat the name as singular—e.g. "the United States is"—after the end of the Civil War. The singular form is now standard, while the plural form is retained in the set idiom "these United States."

## Geography

<b>Government</b>	Constitutional federal presidential republic
- President	George W. Bush ( R)
- Vice President	Dick Cheney ( R)
- Speaker of the House	Nancy Pelosi ( D)
- Chief Justice	John Roberts
<b>Independence</b> from the Kingdom of Great Britain	
- Declared	July 4, 1776
- Recognized	September 3, 1783
- Current constitution	June 21, 1788
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	9,826,630 km <sup>2</sup> ( 3rd/4th <sup>3</sup> ) 3,794,066 sq mi
- Water (%)	6.76
<b>Population</b>	
- 2008 estimate	304,832,000 ( 3rd <sup>4</sup> )
- 2000 census	281,421,906
- Density	31/km <sup>2</sup> ( 180th) 80/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$13.543 trillion ( 1st)
- Per capita	\$43,444 ( 4th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$13.794 trillion ( 1st)
- Per capita	\$43,594 ( 9th)
<b>Gini</b> (2006)	47.0 (high)
<b>HDI</b> (2005)	0.951 (high) ( 12th)
<b>Currency</b>	United States dollar (\$)



Topographic map of the contiguous United States



Climate zones of the contiguous United States

The United States is situated almost entirely in the western hemisphere: the contiguous United States stretches from the Pacific on the west to the Atlantic on the east, with the Gulf of Mexico to the southeast, and bordered by Canada on the north and Mexico on the south. Alaska is the largest state in area; separated from the contiguous U.S. by Canada, it touches the Pacific on the south and Arctic Ocean on the

north. Hawaii occupies an archipelago in the central Pacific, southwest of North America. The United States is the world's third or fourth largest nation by total area, before or after China. The ranking varies depending on (a) how two territories disputed by China and India are counted and (b) how the total size of the United States is calculated: the CIA *World Factbook* gives 9,826,630 km<sup>2</sup> (3,794,083 sq mi), the United Nations Statistics Division gives 9,629,091 km<sup>2</sup> (3,717,813 sq mi), and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* gives 9,522,055 km<sup>2</sup> (3,676,486 sq mi). Including only land area, the United States is third in size behind Russia and China, just ahead of Canada. The United States also possesses several insular territories scattered around the West Indies (e.g., the commonwealth of Puerto Rico) and the Pacific (e.g., Guam).

The coastal plain of the Atlantic seaboard gives way further inland to deciduous forests and the rolling hills of the Piedmont. The Appalachian Mountains divide the eastern seaboard from the Great Lakes and the grasslands of the Midwest. The Mississippi–Missouri River, the world's fourth longest river system, runs mainly north-south through the heart of the country. The flat, fertile prairie land of the Great Plains stretches to the west, interrupted by a highland region along its southeastern portion. The Rocky Mountains, at the western edge of the Great Plains, extend north to south across the continental United States, reaching altitudes higher than 14,000 feet (4,300 m) in Colorado. The area to the west of the Rocky Mountains is dominated by the rocky Great Basin and deserts such as the Mojave. The Sierra Nevada range runs parallel to the Rockies, relatively close to the Pacific coast. At 20,320 feet (6,194 m), Alaska's Mount McKinley is the country's tallest peak. Active volcanoes are common throughout the Alexander and Aleutian Islands, and the entire state of Hawaii is built upon tropical volcanic islands. The supervolcano underlying Yellowstone National Park in the Rockies is the continent's largest volcanic feature.

Because of the United States' large size and wide range of geographic features, nearly every type of climate is represented. The climate is temperate in most areas, tropical in Hawaii and southern Florida, polar in Alaska, semi-arid in the Great Plains west of the 100th meridian, desert in the Southwest, Mediterranean in Coastal California, and arid in the Great Basin. Extreme weather is not uncommon—the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico are prone to hurricanes, and

	( USD "\$")
<b>Time zone</b> - Summer ( DST)	( UTC-5 to -10) ( UTC-4 to -10)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.us .gov .mil .edu
<b>Calling code</b>	+1
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 English is the official language of at least 28 states—some sources give a higher figure, based on differing definitions of "official." English and Hawaiian are both official languages in the state of Hawaii.</li> <li>2 English is the <i>de facto</i> language of American government and the sole language spoken at home by 82% of Americans age five and older. Spanish is the second most commonly spoken language.</li> <li>3 Whether the United States or the People's Republic of China is larger is disputed. The figure given is per the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's <i>World Factbook</i>. Other sources give smaller figures. All authoritative calculations of the country's size include only the fifty states and the District of Columbia, not the territories.</li> <li>4 The population estimate includes people whose usual residence is in the fifty states and the District of Columbia, including noncitizens. It does not include either those living in the territories, amounting to more than four million U.S. citizens (most in Puerto Rico), or U.S. citizens living outside the United States.</li> </ol>	



most of the world's tornadoes occur within the continental United States, primarily in the Midwest's Tornado Alley.

## Environment

U.S. plant life is very diverse; the country has more than 17,000 identified native species of flora. More than 400 mammal, 700 bird, 500 reptile and amphibian, and 90,000 insect species have been documented. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 protects threatened and endangered species and their habitats, which are monitored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The U.S. has fifty-eight national parks and hundreds of other federally managed parks, forests, and wilderness areas. Altogether, the U.S. government regulates 28.8% of the country's total land area. Most such public land comprises protected parks and forestland, though some federal land is leased for oil and gas drilling, mining, or cattle ranching.

The energy policy of the United States is widely debated; many call on the country to take a leading role in fighting global warming. The United States is currently the second largest emitter, after the People's Republic of China, of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels.

## History

### Native Americans and European settlers

The indigenous peoples of the U.S. mainland, including Alaska Natives, are thought to have migrated from Asia. They began arriving at least 12,000 and as many as 40,000 years ago. Several indigenous communities in the pre-Columbian era developed advanced agriculture, grand architecture, and state-level societies. In 1492, Genoese explorer Christopher Columbus, under contract to the Spanish crown, reached several Caribbean islands, making first contact with the indigenous population. In the years that followed, the majority of the indigenous American peoples were killed by epidemics of Eurasian diseases.



The bald eagle has been the national bird of the United States since 1782



The *Mayflower* transported Pilgrims to the New World in 1620, as depicted in William Halsall's *The Mayflower in Plymouth Harbour*, 1882

On April 2, 1513, Spanish conquistador Juan Ponce de León landed on what he called "La Florida"—the first documented European arrival on what would become the U.S. mainland. Of the colonies Spain established in the region, only St. Augustine, founded in 1565, remains. Later Spanish settlements in the present-day southwestern United States drew thousands through Mexico. French fur traders established outposts of New France around the Great Lakes; France eventually claimed much of the North American interior as far south as the Gulf of Mexico. The first successful English settlements were the Virginia Colony in Jamestown in 1607 and the Pilgrims' Plymouth Colony in 1620. The 1628 chartering of the Massachusetts Bay Colony resulted in a wave of migration; by 1634, New England had been settled by some 10,000 Puritans. Between the late 1610s and the American Revolution, an estimated 50,000 convicts were shipped to England's, and later Great Britain's, American colonies. Beginning in 1614, the Dutch established settlements along the lower Hudson River, including New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island. The small settlement of New Sweden, founded along the Delaware River in 1638, was taken over by the Dutch in 1655.

By 1674, English forces had won the former Dutch colonies in the Anglo-Dutch Wars; the province of New Netherland was renamed New York. Many new immigrants, especially to the South, were indentured servants—some two-thirds of all Virginia immigrants between 1630 and 1680. By the turn of the century, African slaves were becoming the primary source of bonded labor. With the 1729 division of the Carolinas and the 1732 colonization of Georgia, the thirteen British colonies that would become the United States of America were established. All had active local and colonial governments with elections open to most free men, with a growing devotion to the ancient rights of Englishmen and a sense of self government that stimulated support for republicanism. All had legalized the African slave trade. With high birth rates, low death rates, and steady immigration, the colonies doubled in population every twenty-five years. The Christian revivalist movement of the 1730s and 1740s known as the Great Awakening fueled interest in both religion and religious liberty. In the French and Indian War, British forces seized Canada from the French, but the francophone population remained politically isolated from the southern colonies. By 1770, those thirteen colonies had an increasingly Anglicized population of three million, approximately half that of Britain. Though subject to British taxation, they were given no representation in the Parliament of Great Britain.

## Independence and expansion

Tensions between American colonials and the British during the revolutionary period of the 1760s and early 1770s led to the American Revolutionary War, fought from 1775 through 1781. On June 14, 1775, the Continental Congress, convening in Philadelphia, established a Continental Army under the command of George Washington. Proclaiming that "all men are created equal" and endowed with "certain unalienable Rights," the Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The Declaration, drafted largely by Thomas Jefferson, pronounced the colonies sovereign "states." In 1777, the Articles of Confederation were adopted, uniting the states under a weak federal government that operated until 1788. Some 70,000–80,000 loyalists to the British Crown fled the rebellious states, many to Nova Scotia and the new British holdings in Canada. Native Americans, with divided allegiances, fought on both sides of the war's western front.

After the defeat of the British army by American forces who were assisted by the French, Great Britain recognized the sovereignty of the thirteen states in 1783. A constitutional convention was organized in 1787 by those who wished to establish



*Declaration of Independence*, by John Trumbull, 1817–18



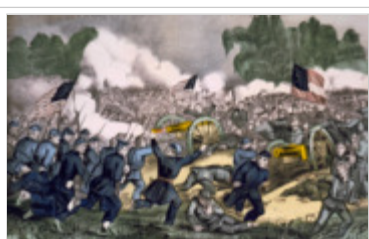
a strong national government with power over the states. By June 1788, nine states had ratified the United States Constitution, sufficient to establish the new government; the republic's first Senate, House of Representatives, and president—George Washington—took office in 1789. New York City was the federal capital for a year, before the government relocated to Philadelphia. In 1791, the states ratified the Bill of Rights, ten amendments to the Constitution forbidding federal restriction of personal freedoms and guaranteeing a range of legal protections. Attitudes toward slavery were shifting; a clause in the Constitution protected the African slave trade only until 1808. The Northern states abolished slavery between 1780 and 1804, leaving the slave states of the South as defenders of the "peculiar institution." In 1800, the federal government moved to the newly founded Washington, D.C. The Second Great Awakening made evangelicalism a force behind various social reform movements.

Americans' eagerness to expand westward began a cycle of Indian Wars that stretched to the end of the nineteenth century, as Native Americans were stripped of their land. The Louisiana Purchase of French-claimed territory under President Thomas Jefferson in 1803 virtually doubled the nation's size. The War of 1812, declared against Britain over various grievances and fought to a draw, strengthened American nationalism. A series of U.S. military incursions into Florida led Spain to cede it and other Gulf Coast territory in 1819. The country annexed the Republic of Texas in 1845. The concept of Manifest Destiny was popularized during this time. The 1846 Oregon Treaty with Britain led to U.S. control of the present-day American Northwest. The U.S. victory in the Mexican-American War resulted in the 1848 cession of California and much of the present-day American Southwest. The California Gold Rush of 1848–49 further spurred western migration. New railways made relocation much less arduous for settlers and increased conflicts with Native Americans. Over a half-century, up to 40 million American bison, commonly called buffalo, were slaughtered for skins and meat and to ease the railways' spread. The loss of the bison, a primary economic resource for the plains Indians, was an existential blow to many native cultures.



Territorial acquisitions by date

## Civil War and industrialization



*Battle of Gettysburg,*  
lithograph by Currier & Ives,  
ca. 1863

Tensions between slave and free states mounted with increasing disagreements over the relationship between the state and federal governments and violent conflicts over the expansion of slavery into new states. Abraham Lincoln, candidate of the largely antislavery Republican Party, was elected president in 1860. Before he took office, seven slave states declared their secession from the United States, forming the Confederate States of America. The federal government maintained secession was illegal, and with the Confederate attack upon Fort Sumter, the American Civil War began and four more slave states joined the Confederacy. The Union freed Confederate slaves as its army advanced through the South. Following the Union victory in 1865, three amendments to the U.S. Constitution ensured freedom for the nearly four million African Americans who had been slaves, made them citizens, and gave them voting rights. The war and its resolution led to a substantial increase in federal power.



After the war, the assassination of President Lincoln radicalized Republican Reconstruction policies aimed at reintegrating and rebuilding the Southern states while ensuring the rights of the newly freed slaves. The resolution of the disputed 1876 presidential election by the Compromise of 1877 ended Reconstruction; Jim Crow laws soon disenfranchised many African Americans. In the North, urbanization and an unprecedented influx of immigrants hastened the country's industrialization. The wave of immigration, which lasted until 1929, provided labor for U.S. businesses and transformed American culture. High tariff protections, national infrastructure building, and new banking regulations encouraged industrial growth. The 1867 Alaska purchase from Russia completed the country's mainland expansion. The Wounded Knee massacre in 1890 was the last major armed conflict of the Indian Wars. In 1893, the indigenous monarchy of the Pacific Kingdom of Hawaii was overthrown in a coup led by American residents; the archipelago was annexed by the United States in 1898. Victory in the Spanish-American War that same year demonstrated that the United States was a major world power and resulted in the annexation of Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The Philippines gained independence a half-century later; Puerto Rico remains a commonwealth of the United States.



Immigrants landing at Ellis Island, New York, 1902

## World War I, Great Depression, and World War II



An abandoned farm in South Dakota during the Dust Bowl, 1936

At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the United States remained neutral. Americans sympathized with the British and French, although many citizens, mostly Irish and German, opposed intervention. In 1917, the United States joined the Allies, turning the tide against the Central Powers. Reluctant to be involved in European affairs, the Senate did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles, which established the League of Nations. The country pursued a policy of unilateralism, verging on isolationism. In 1920, the women's rights movement won passage of a constitutional amendment granting women's suffrage. Partly because of the service of many in the war, Native Americans gained U.S. citizenship in the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.

During most of the 1920s, the United States enjoyed a period of unbalanced prosperity as farm profits fell while industrial profits grew. A rise in debt and an inflated stock market culminated in the 1929 crash that triggered the Great Depression. After his election as president in 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt responded with the New Deal, a range of policies increasing government intervention in the economy. The Dust Bowl of the mid-1930s impoverished many farming communities and spurred a new wave of western migration. The nation would not fully recover from the economic depression until the

industrial mobilization spurred by its entrance into World War II. The United States, effectively neutral during the war's early stages after the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, began supplying materiel to the Allies in March 1941 through the Lend-Lease program.

On December 7, 1941, the United States joined the Allies against the Axis powers after a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour by Japan. World War II cost far more money than any other war in American history, but it boosted the economy by providing capital investment and jobs, while bringing many women into the labor market. Among the major combatants, the United States was the only nation to become richer—indeed, far richer—instead of poorer because of the war. Allied conferences at Bretton Woods and Yalta outlined a new system of international organizations that placed the United States and Soviet Union at the centre of world affairs. As victory was achieved in Europe, a 1945 international conference held in San Francisco produced the United Nations Charter, which became active after the war. The United States, having developed the first nuclear weapons, used them on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August.



Japan surrendered on September 2, ending the war.

## Cold War and civil rights

The United States and Soviet Union jockeyed for power after World War II during the Cold War, dominating the military affairs of Europe through NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The United States promoted liberal democracy and capitalism, while the Soviet Union promoted communism and a centrally planned economy. Both the United States and the Soviet Union supported dictatorships, and both engaged in proxy wars. United States troops fought Communist Chinese forces in the Korean War of 1950–53. The House Un-American Activities Committee pursued a series of investigations into suspected leftist subversion, while Senator Joseph McCarthy became the figurehead of anticommunist sentiment.

The Soviet Union launched the first manned spacecraft in 1961, prompting U.S. efforts to raise proficiency in mathematics and science and President John F. Kennedy's call for the country to be first to land "a man on the moon," achieved in 1969. Kennedy also faced a tense nuclear showdown with Soviet forces in Cuba. Meanwhile, America experienced sustained economic expansion. A growing civil rights movement headed by prominent African Americans, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., fought segregation and discrimination, leading to the abolition of Jim Crow laws. Following Kennedy's assassination in 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed under President Lyndon B. Johnson. Johnson and his successor, Richard Nixon, expanded a proxy war in Southeast Asia into the unsuccessful Vietnam War.

As a result of the Watergate scandal, in 1974 Nixon became the first U.S. president to resign, rather than be impeached on charges including obstruction of justice and abuse of power; he was succeeded by Vice President Gerald Ford. During the Jimmy Carter administration in the late 1970s, the U.S. economy experienced stagflation. The election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980 marked a significant rightward shift in American politics, reflected in major changes in taxation and spending priorities. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the Soviet Union's power diminished, leading to its collapse and effectively ending the Cold War.

## Contemporary era

The leadership role taken by the United States and its allies in the United Nations–sanctioned Gulf War, under President George H. W. Bush, and later the Yugoslav wars helped to preserve its position as the world's last remaining superpower. The longest economic expansion in modern U.S. history—from March 1991 to March 2001—encompassed the administrations of Presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. In 1998, Clinton was impeached by the House on charges relating to a civil lawsuit and a sexual scandal, but he was acquitted by the Senate and remained in office.

The 1990's also saw a rise in Islamic Terrorism against Americans from al-Qaeda and other groups, including an attack on the World Trade Centre in 1993, an attack on U.S. forces in Somalia, the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, the 1998 United States embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya, the 2000 millennium attack plots, and the USS Cole bombing in Yemen in October 2000. In Iraq, the regime of Saddam Hussein proved a continuing problem for the UN and its neighbors, prompting a variety of UN sanctions, Anglo-American patrolling of Iraqi no-fly zones, Operation Desert Fox, and the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998



Martin Luther King, Jr. delivering his "I Have a Dream" speech, 1963



which called for the removal of the Hussein regime and its replacement by a democratic system.

The presidential election of 2000 was one of the closest in U.S. history and saw George W. Bush become President of the United States. On September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda terrorists struck the World Trade Centre in New York City and The Pentagon near Washington, D.C., killing nearly three thousand people. In the aftermath, President Bush urged support from the international community for what was dubbed the War on Terrorism. In late 2001, U.S. forces launched Operation Enduring Freedom removing the Taliban government and al-Qaeda training camps. Taliban insurgents continue to fight a guerrilla war against a NATO-led force. Controversies arose regarding the conduct of the War on Terror.

Using language from the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act and the Clinton Administration, in 2002 the Bush Administration began to press for regime change in Iraq. With broad bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress, Bush formed an international Coalition of the Willing and in March 2003 ordered Operation Iraqi Freedom, removing Saddam Hussein from power. Although facing pressure to withdraw, the U.S.-led coalition maintains a presence in Iraq and continues to train and mentor a new Iraqi military as well as lead economic and infrastructure development.

In the upcoming 2008 presidential election, the Republican Party candidate, four-term Senator John McCain of Arizona – a former U.S. prisoner of war who served in the Vietnam War – will face the Democratic Party candidate, freshman Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, the first African American to head a major political party's presidential ticket.

## Government and elections

The United States is the world's oldest surviving federation. It is a constitutional republic, "in which majority rule is tempered by minority rights protected by law." It is fundamentally structured as a representative democracy, though U.S. citizens residing in the territories are excluded from voting for federal officials. The government is regulated by a system of checks and balances defined by the United States Constitution, which serves as the country's supreme legal document and as a social contract for the people of the United States. In the American federalist system, citizens are usually subject to three levels of government, federal, state, and local; the local government's duties are commonly split between county and municipal governments. In almost all cases, executive and legislative officials are elected by a plurality vote of citizens by district. There is no proportional representation at the federal level, and it is very rare at lower levels. Federal and state judicial and cabinet officials are typically nominated by the executive branch and approved by the legislature, although some state judges and officials are elected by popular vote.



The World Trade Centre on the morning of September 11, 2001



The west front of the United States Capitol, which houses the United States Congress





The South Portico of the White House, home and work place of the U.S. president

The federal government is composed of three branches:

- **Legislative:** The bicameral Congress, made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives, makes federal law, declares war, approves treaties, has the power of the purse, and has the power of impeachment, by which it can remove sitting members of the government.
- **Executive:** The president is the commander-in-chief of the military, can veto legislative bills before they become law, and appoints the Cabinet and other officers, who administer and enforce federal laws and policies.
- **Judicial:** The Supreme Court and lower federal courts, whose judges are appointed by the president with Senate approval, interpret laws and can overturn laws they deem unconstitutional.

The House of Representatives has 435 members, each representing a congressional district for a two-year term. House seats are apportioned among the fifty states by population every tenth year. As of the 2000 census, seven states have the minimum of one representative, while California, the most populous state, has fifty-three. Each state has two senators, elected at-large

to six-year terms; one third of Senate seats are up for election every second year. The president serves a four-year term and may be elected to the office no more than twice. The president is not elected by direct vote, but by an indirect electoral college system in which the determining votes are apportioned by state. The Supreme Court, led by the Chief Justice of the United States, has nine members, who serve for life.

All laws and procedures of both state and federal governments are subject to review, and any law ruled in violation of the Constitution by the judicial branch is overturned. The original text of the Constitution establishes the structure and responsibilities of the federal government, the relationship between it and the individual states, and essential matters of military and economic authority. Article One protects the right to the "great writ" of habeas corpus, and Article Three guarantees the right to a jury trial in all criminal cases. Amendments to the Constitution require the approval of three-fourths of the states. The Constitution has been amended twenty-seven times; the first ten amendments, which make up the Bill of Rights, and the Fourteenth Amendment form the central basis of individual rights in the United States.



The front of the United States Supreme Court building

## Parties and politics

Politics in the United States have operated under a two-party system for virtually all of the country's history. For elective offices at all levels, state-administered primary elections are held to choose the major party nominees for subsequent general elections. Since the general election of 1856, the two dominant parties have been the Democratic Party, founded in 1824 (though its roots trace back to 1792), and the Republican Party, founded in 1854. Since the Civil War, only one third-party presidential candidate—former president Theodore Roosevelt, running as a Progressive in 1912—has won as much as 20% of the popular vote.

The incumbent president, Republican George W. Bush, is the 43rd president in the country's history. All U.S. presidents to date have been white men. If Democrat Barack Obama wins the forthcoming presidential election, he will become the first African-American president. Following the 2006 midterm elections, the Democratic Party controls both the House and the Senate. Every member of the U.S. Congress is a Democrat or a Republican except two independent members of the Senate—one a former Democratic incumbent, the other a self-described socialist. An overwhelming majority of state and local



officials are also either Democrats or Republicans.

Within American political culture, the Republican Party is considered "centre-right" or conservative and the Democratic Party is considered "centre-left" or liberal, but members of both parties have a wide range of views. In a May 2008 poll, 44% of Americans described themselves as "conservative," 27% as "moderate," and 21% as "liberal." On the other hand, that same month a plurality of adults, 41.7%, identified as Democrats, 31.6% as Republicans, and 26.6% as independents. The states of the Northeast and West Coast and some of the Great Lakes states are relatively liberal-leaning—they are known in political parlance as "blue states." The "red states" of the South and the Rocky Mountains lean conservative.

## States

The United States is a federal union of fifty states. The original thirteen states were the successors of the thirteen colonies that rebelled against British rule. Most of the rest have been carved from territory obtained through war or purchase by the U.S. government. The exceptions are Vermont, Texas, and Hawaii; each was an independent republic before joining the union. Early in the country's history, three states were created out of the territory of existing ones: Kentucky from Virginia; Tennessee from North Carolina; and Maine from Massachusetts. West Virginia broke away from Virginia during the American Civil War. The most recent state—Hawaii—achieved statehood on August 21, 1959. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the states do not have the right to secede from the union.

The states compose the vast bulk of the U.S. land mass; the only other areas considered integral parts of the country are the District of Columbia, the federal district where the capital, Washington, is located; and Palmyra Atoll, an uninhabited but incorporated territory in the Pacific Ocean. The United States possesses five major territories with indigenous populations: Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands in the Caribbean; and American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands in the Pacific. Those born in the territories (except for American Samoa) possess U.S. citizenship.



## Foreign relations and military

The United States has vast economic, political, and military influence on a global scale, which makes its foreign policy a subject of great interest around the world. Almost all countries have embassies in Washington, D.C., and many host consulates around the country. Likewise, nearly all nations host American diplomatic missions. However, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Bhutan, Sudan, and the Republic of China (Taiwan) do not have formal diplomatic relations with the United States.

American isolationists have often been at odds with internationalists, as anti-imperialists have been with promoters of Manifest Destiny and American Empire. American imperialism in the Philippines drew sharp rebukes from Mark Twain, philosopher William James, and many others. Later, President Woodrow Wilson played a key role in creating the League of Nations, but the Senate prohibited American membership in it. Isolationism became a thing of the past when the United States took a lead role in founding the United Nations, becoming a permanent member of the Security Council and host to the United Nations Headquarters. The United States enjoys a special relationship with the United Kingdom and strong ties with Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel, and fellow NATO members. It also works closely with its neighbors through the Organization of American States and free trade agreements such as the trilateral North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico. In 2005, the United States spent \$27.3 billion on official development assistance, the most in the world; however, as a share of gross national income (GNI), the U.S. contribution of 0.22%



President George W. Bush (right) with British prime minister Gordon Brown



ranked twentieth of twenty-two donor states. On the other hand, nongovernmental sources such as private foundations, corporations, and educational and religious institutions donated \$95.5 billion. The total of \$122.8 billion is again the most in the world and seventh in terms of GNI percentage.



The USS *Ronald Reagan* aircraft carrier

The president holds the title of commander-in-chief of the nation's armed forces and appoints its leaders, the secretary of defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The United States Department of Defense administers the armed forces, including the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Air Force. The Coast Guard falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security in peacetime and the Department of the Navy in times of war. In 2005, the military had 1.38 million personnel on active duty, along with several hundred thousand each in the Reserves and the National Guard for a total of 2.3 million troops. The Department of Defense also employs approximately 700,000 civilians, disregarding contractors. Military service is voluntary, though conscription may occur in wartime through the Selective Service System. The rapid deployment of American forces is facilitated by the Air Force's large fleet of transportation aircraft and aerial refueling tankers, the Navy's fleet of eleven active aircraft carriers, and Marine Expeditionary Units at sea in the Navy's Atlantic and Pacific fleets. Outside of the American homeland, the U.S. military is deployed to 770 bases and facilities, on every continent except Antarctica. Because of the extent of its global military presence, scholars describe the United States as maintaining an "empire of bases."

Total U.S. military spending in 2006, over \$528 billion, was 46% of the entire military spending in the world and greater than the next fourteen largest national military expenditures combined. (In purchasing power parity terms, it was larger than the next six such expenditures combined.) The per capita spending of \$1,756 was approximately ten times the world average. At 4.06% of GDP, U.S. military spending is ranked 27th out of 172 nations. The proposed base Department of Defense budget for 2009, \$515.4 billion, is a 7% increase over 2008 and a nearly 74% increase over 2001. The estimated total cost of the Iraq War to the United States through 2016 is \$2.267 trillion. As of June 6, 2008, the United States had suffered 4,092 military fatalities during the war and nearly 30,000 wounded.

## Economy

The United States has a capitalist mixed economy, which is fueled by abundant natural resources, a well-developed infrastructure, and high productivity. According to the International Monetary Fund, the United States GDP of more than \$13 trillion constitutes over 25.5% of the gross world product at market exchange rates and over 19% of the gross world product at purchasing power parity (PPP). The largest national GDP in the world, it was slightly less than the combined GDP of the European Union at PPP in 2006. The country ranks eighth in the world in nominal GDP per capita and fourth in GDP per capita at PPP. The United States is the largest importer of goods and third largest exporter, though exports per capita are relatively low. Canada, China, Mexico, Japan, and Germany are its top trading partners. The leading export commodity is electrical machinery, while vehicles constitute the leading import.

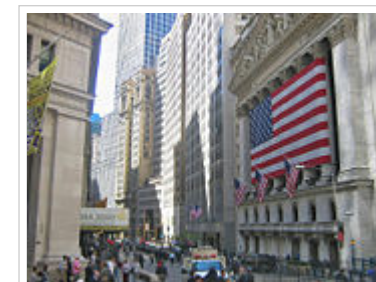
The private sector constitutes the bulk of the economy, with government activity accounting for 12.4% of GDP. The economy is postindustrial, with the service sector contributing 67.8% of GDP. The leading business field by gross business receipts is wholesale and retail

National economic indicators	
Unemployment	5.5% <sup>May 2008</sup>
GDP growth	0.9% <sup>1Q 2008</sup> (2.2%) <sup>2007</sup>
CPI inflation	3.9% <sup>April 2007–April 2008</sup>
National debt	\$9.502 trillion <sup>July 10, 2008</sup>
Poverty	12.3% or 13.3% <sup>2006</sup>



trade; by net income it is finance and insurance. The United States remains an industrial power, with chemical products the leading manufacturing field. The United States is the third largest producer of oil in the world. It is the world's number one producer of electrical and nuclear energy, as well as liquid natural gas, sulfur, phosphates, and salt. While agriculture accounts for just under 1% of GDP, the United States is the world's top producer of corn and soybeans. The country's leading cash crop is marijuana, despite federal laws making its cultivation and sale illegal. The New York Stock Exchange is the world's largest by dollar volume. Coca-Cola and McDonald's are the two most recognized brands in the world.

In 2005, 155 million persons were employed with earnings, of whom 80% worked in full-time jobs. The majority, 79%, were employed in the service sector. With approximately 15.5 million people, health care and social assistance is the leading field of employment. About 12% of American workers are unionized, compared to 30% in Western Europe. The U.S. ranks number one in the ease of hiring and firing workers, according to the World Bank. Between 1973 and 2003, a year's work for the average American grew by 199 hours. Partly as a result, the United States maintains the highest labor productivity in the world. However, it no longer leads the world in productivity per hour as it did from the 1950s through the early 1990s; workers in Norway, France, Belgium, and Luxembourg are now more productive per hour. The United States ranks third in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index. Compared to Europe, U.S. property and corporate income taxes are generally higher, while labor and, particularly, consumption taxes are lower.

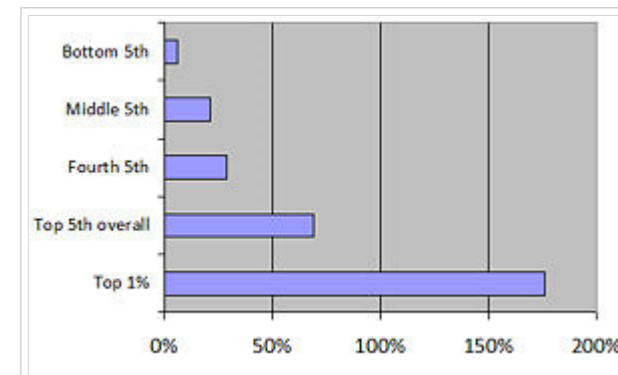


Wall Street is home to the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE)

## Income and human development

According to the Census Bureau, the pretax median household income in 2006 was \$48,201. The two-year average ranged from \$66,752 in New Jersey to \$34,343 in Mississippi. Using purchasing power parity exchange rates, these income levels are similar to those found in other postindustrial nations. Depending on the method of analysis, 12.3% or 13.3% of Americans were below the federally designated poverty line. The number of poor Americans, at least 36.5 million, was actually 3.5 million more than in 2001, the bottom year of the most recent U.S. recession. Spending on the social safety net is relatively low: the United States redistributes between 8 and 9% of GDP through social protection programs, slightly under the Japanese rate and less than half the estimated 19% of the European Union. The United States was ranked twelfth in the world in the UNDP's 2008 Human Development Report. A 2007 UNICEF study of children's well-being in twenty-one industrialized nations, covering a broad range of factors, ranked the U.S. next to last.

Between 1967 and 2006, median household income rose 30.8% in constant dollars, largely because of the growing number of dual-earner households. Though the standard of living has improved for nearly all classes since the late 1970s, income inequality has grown substantially. The share of income received by the top 1% has risen considerably while the share of income of the bottom 90% has fallen, with the gap between the two groups being roughly as large in 2005 as in 1928. According to the standard Gini index, income inequality in the United States is higher than in any European nation. Some economists, such as Alan Greenspan, see rising income inequality as a cause for concern. Wealth is highly concentrated: The richest 10% of the adult population possesses 69.8% of the country's household wealth, the second-highest share of



Inflation adjusted percentage increase in after-tax household income for the top 1% and four quintiles, between 1979 and 2005 (gains by top 1% are reflected by bottom bar; bottom quintile by top bar)



any democratic developed nation. The top 1% possesses 33.4% of net wealth.

## Science and technology



Astronaut Buzz Aldrin during the first human landing on the Moon, 1969

The United States has been a leader in scientific research and technological innovation since the late nineteenth century. In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell was awarded the first U.S. patent for the telephone. The laboratory of Thomas Edison developed the phonograph, the first long-lasting light bulb, and the first viable movie camera. In the early twentieth century, the automobile companies of Ransom E. Olds and Henry Ford pioneered assembly line manufacturing. The Wright brothers, in 1903, made what is recognized as the "first sustained and controlled heavier-than-air powered flight." The rise of Nazism in the 1930s led many important European scientists, including Albert Einstein and Enrico Fermi, to immigrate to the United States. During World War II, the U.S.-based Manhattan Project developed nuclear weapons, ushering in the Atomic Age. The Space Race produced rapid advances in rocketry, materials science, and computers. The United States largely developed the ARPANET and its successor, the Internet. Today, the bulk of research and development funding, 64%, comes from the private sector. The United States leads the world in scientific research papers and impact factor. Americans enjoy high levels of access to technological consumer goods, and almost half of U.S. households have broadband Internet service. The country is the primary developer and grower of genetically modified food; more than half of the world's land planted with biotech crops is in the United States.

## Transportation

As of 2003, there were 759 automobiles per 1,000 Americans, compared to 472 per 1,000 inhabitants of the European Union the following year. Approximately 39% of personal vehicles are vans, SUVs, or light trucks. The average American adult (accounting for all drivers and nondrivers) spends 55 minutes behind the wheel every day, driving 29 miles (47 km). The U.S. intercity passenger rail system is relatively weak. Only 9% of total U.S. work trips employ mass transit, compared to 38.8% in Europe. Bicycle usage is minimal, well below European levels. The civil airline industry is entirely privatized, while most major airports are publicly owned. The five largest airlines in the world by passengers carried are all American; American Airlines is number one. Of the world's thirty busiest passenger airports, sixteen are in the United States, including the busiest, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL).



Interstate 80, the second-longest U.S. Interstate highway, runs from California to New Jersey

## Energy

The United States energy market is 29,000 terawatt hours per year. Energy consumption per capita is 7.8 tons of oil equivalent per year, compared to Germany's 4.2 tons and Canada's 8.3 tons. In 2005, 40% of the nation's energy came from petroleum, 23% from coal, and 22% from natural gas. The remainder was supplied by nuclear power and various renewable energy sources. The United States is the world's largest consumer of petroleum. For decades, nuclear power has played a limited role relative to many other developed countries. Recently, applications for new nuclear plants have been filed.

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 606 of 637



## Demographics

As of 2008, the United States population was estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau to be 304,516,000. The U.S. population included an estimated 12 million unauthorized migrants, of whom an estimated 1 million were uncounted by the Census Bureau. The overall growth rate is 0.89%, compared to 0.16% in the European Union. The birth rate of 14.16 per 1,000 is 30% below the world average, while higher than any European country except for Albania and Ireland. In 2006, 1.27 million immigrants were granted legal residence. Mexico has been the leading source of new U.S. residents for over two decades; since 1998, China, India, and the Philippines have been in the top four sending countries every year. The United States is the only industrialized nation in which large population increases are projected.

The United States has a very diverse population—thirty-one ancestry groups have more than a million members. Whites are the largest racial group, with German Americans, Irish Americans, and English Americans constituting three of the country's four largest ancestry groups. African Americans constitute the nation's largest racial minority and third largest ancestry group. Asian Americans are the country's second largest racial minority; the two largest Asian American ancestry groups are Chinese and Filipino. In 2006, the U.S. population included an estimated 4.5 million people with some American Indian or Alaskan native ancestry (2.9 million exclusively of such ancestry) and over 1 million with some native Hawaiian or Pacific island ancestry (0.5 million exclusively).

The population growth of Hispanic and Latino Americans has been a major demographic trend. Approximately 44 million Americans are of Hispanic descent, with about 64% possessing Mexican ancestry. Between 2000 and 2006, the country's Hispanic population increased 25.5% while the non-Hispanic population rose just 3.5%. Much of this growth is from immigration; as of 2004, 12% of the U.S. population was foreign-born, over half that number from Latin America. Fertility is also a factor; the average Hispanic woman gives birth to three children in her lifetime. The comparable fertility rate is 2.2 for non-Hispanic black women and 1.8 for non-Hispanic white women (below the replacement rate of 2.1). Hispanics and Latinos accounted for nearly half of the national population growth of 2.9 million between July 2005 and July 2006.

About 83% of the population lives in one of the country's 363 metropolitan areas. In 2006, 254 incorporated places in the United States had populations over 100,000, nine cities had more than 1 million residents, and four global cities had over 2 million (New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston). The United States has fifty metropolitan areas with populations greater than 1 million. Of the fifty fastest-growing metro areas, twenty-three are in the West and twenty-five in the South. Among the country's twenty most populous metro areas, those of Dallas (the fourth largest), Houston (sixth), and Atlanta (ninth) saw the largest numerical gains between 2000 and 2006, while that of Phoenix (thirteenth) grew the largest in percentage terms.



Race/Ethnicity (2006)	
White	80.1%
African American	12.8%
Asian	4.4%
Native American and Alaskan Native	1.0%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0.2%
Multiracial	1.6%
Hispanic or Latino ( <i>of any race</i> )	14.8%

### Leading population centers



Rank	Core city	State	Pop.	Metro area rank	Metro area pop.	Region
1	<b>New York City</b>	New York	8,250,567	1	18,818,536	Northeast
2	<b>Los Angeles</b>	California	3,849,378	2	12,950,129	West
3	<b>Chicago</b>	Illinois	2,833,321	3	9,505,748	Midwest
4	<b>Houston</b>	Texas	2,169,248	6	5,539,949	South
5	<b>Phoenix</b>	Arizona	1,512,986	13	4,039,182	West
6	<b>Philadelphia</b>	Pennsylvania	1,448,394	5	5,826,742	Northeast
7	<b>San Antonio</b>	Texas	1,296,682	29	1,942,217	South
8	<b>San Diego</b>	California	1,256,951	17	2,941,454	West
9	<b>Dallas</b>	Texas	1,232,940	4	6,003,967	South
10	<b>San Jose</b>	California	929,936	30	1,787,123	West

2006 U.S. Census Bureau estimates



**New York City**



**Los Angeles**

## Language

English is the de facto national language. Although there is no official language at the federal level, some laws—such as U.S. naturalization requirements—standardize English. In 2003, about 215 million, or 82% of the population aged five years and older, spoke only English at home. Spanish, spoken by over 10% of the population at home, is the second most common language and the most widely taught foreign language. Some Americans advocate making English the country's official language, as it is in at least twenty-eight states. Both Hawaiian and English are official languages in Hawaii by state law. While neither has an official language, New Mexico has laws providing for the use of both English and Spanish, as Louisiana does for English and French. Other states, such as California, mandate the publication of Spanish versions of certain government documents including court forms. Several insular territories grant official recognition to their native languages, along with English: Samoan and Chamorro are recognized by Samoa and Guam, respectively; Carolinian and Chamorro are recognized by the Northern Mariana Islands; Spanish is an official language of Puerto Rico.

<b>Languages (2003)</b>	
English ( <i>only</i> )	214.8 million
Spanish, incl. Creole	29.7 million
Chinese	2.2 million
French, incl. Creole	1.9 million
Tagalog	1.3 million
Vietnamese	1.1 million
German	1.1 million

## Religion





A church in the largely Protestant Bible Belt

The United States government does not audit Americans' religious beliefs. In a private survey conducted in 2001, 76.5% of American adults identified themselves as Christian, down from 86.4% in 1990. Protestant denominations accounted for 52% of adult Americans, while Roman Catholics, at 24.5%, were the largest individual denomination. A different study describes white evangelicals, 26.3% of the population, as the country's largest religious cohort; evangelicals of all races are estimated at 30–35%. The total reporting non-Christian religions in 2001 was 3.7%, up from 3.3% in 1990. The leading non-Christian faiths were Judaism (1.4%), Islam (0.5%), Buddhism (0.5%), Hinduism (0.4%), and Unitarian Universalism (0.3%). Between 1990 and 2001, the number of Muslims and Buddhists more than doubled. From 8.2% in 1990, 14.1% in 2001 described themselves as agnostic, atheist, or simply having no religion, still significantly less than in other postindustrial countries such as Britain (2005:44%) and Sweden (2001:69%, 2005:85%).

## Education

American public education is operated by state and local governments, regulated by the United States Department of Education through restrictions on federal grants. Children are required in most states to attend school from the age of six or seven (generally, kindergarten or first grade) until they turn eighteen (generally bringing them through 12th grade, the end of high school); some states allow students to leave school at sixteen or seventeen. About 12% of children are enrolled in parochial or nonsectarian private schools. Just over 2% of children are homeschooled. The United States has many competitive private and public institutions of higher education, as well as local community colleges of varying quality with open admission policies. Of Americans twenty-five and older, 84.6% graduated from high school, 52.6% attended some college, 27.2% earned a bachelor's degree, and 9.6% earned graduate degrees. The basic literacy rate is approximately 99%. The United Nations assigns the United States an Education Index of 0.97, tying it for twelfth-best in the world.

## Health

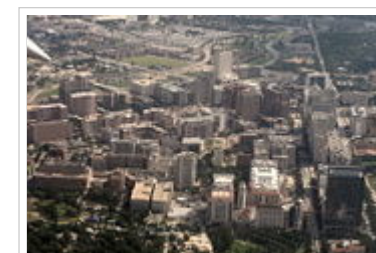
The American life expectancy of 77.8 years at birth is a year shorter than the overall figure in Western Europe, and three to four years lower than that of Norway, Switzerland, and Canada. Over the past two decades, the country's rank in life expectancy has dropped from 11th to 42nd place in the world. The infant mortality rate of 6.37 per thousand likewise places the United States 42nd out of 221 countries, behind all of Western Europe. U.S. cancer survival rates are the highest in the world. Approximately one-third of the adult population is obese and an additional third is overweight; the obesity rate, the highest in the industrialized world, has more than doubled in the last quarter-century. Obesity-related type 2 diabetes is considered epidemic by healthcare professionals. The U.S. adolescent pregnancy rate, 79.8 per 1,000 women, is nearly four times that of France and five times that of Germany. Abortion in the United States, legal on demand, is a source of great political controversy. Many states ban public funding of the procedure and have laws to restrict late-term abortions, require parental notification for minors, and mandate a waiting period prior to treatment. While the incidence of abortion is in decline, the U.S. abortion ratio of 241 per 1,000 live births and abortion rate of 15 per 1,000 women aged 15–44 remain higher than those of most Western nations.



The University of Virginia, designed by Thomas Jefferson, is one of 19 American UNESCO World Heritage Sites



The United States healthcare system far outspends any other nation's, measured in both per capita spending and percentage of GDP. Unlike most developed countries, the U.S. healthcare system is not universal, and relies on a higher proportion of private funding. In 2004, private insurance paid for 36% of personal health expenditure, private out-of-pocket payments covered 15%, and federal, state, and local governments paid for 44%. The World Health Organization ranked the U.S. healthcare system in 2000 as first in responsiveness, but 37th in overall performance. The United States is a leader in medical innovation. In 2004, the U.S. nonindustrial sector spent three times as much as Europe per capita on biomedical research. Medical bills are the most common reason for personal bankruptcy in the United States. In 2005, 46.6 million Americans, or 15.9% of the population, were uninsured, 5.4 million more than in 2001. The primary cause of the decline in coverage is the drop in the number of Americans with employer-sponsored health insurance, which fell from 62.6% in 2001 to 59.5% in 2005. Approximately one third of the uninsured lived in households with annual incomes greater than \$50,000, with half of those having an income over \$75,000. Another third were eligible but not registered for public health insurance. In 2006, Massachusetts became the first state to mandate health insurance; California is considering similar legislation.

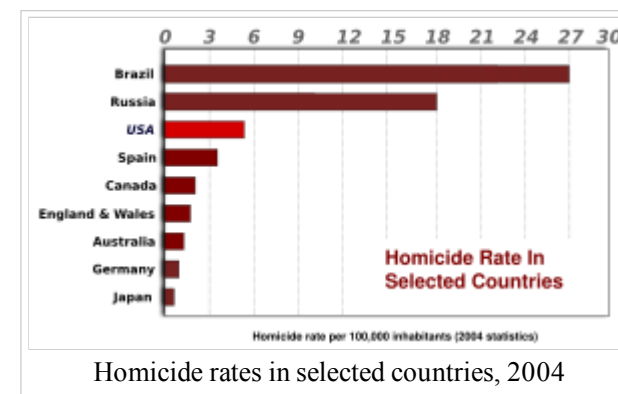


The Texas Medical Centre in Houston, the world's largest medical centre

## Crime and punishment

Law enforcement in the United States is primarily the responsibility of local police and sheriff's departments, with state police providing broader services. Federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. Marshals Service have specialized duties. At the federal level and in almost every state, jurisprudence operates on a common law system. State courts conduct most criminal trials; federal courts handle certain designated crimes as well as appeals from state systems.

Among developed nations, the United States has above-average levels of violent crime and particularly high levels of gun violence and homicide. In 2006, there were 5.7 murders per 100,000 persons, three times the rate in neighboring Canada. The U.S. homicide rate, which decreased by 42% between 1991 and 1999, has been roughly steady since. Some scholars have associated the high rate of homicide with the country's high rates of gun ownership, in turn associated with U.S. gun laws which are very permissive compared to those of other developed countries.



The United States has the highest documented incarceration rate and total prison population in the world and by far the highest figures among democratic, developed nations. At the start of 2008, more than 2.3 million people were held in American prisons or jails, more than one in every 100 adults. The current rate is almost seven times the 1980 figure. African American males are jailed at over six times the rate of white males and three times the rate of Hispanic males. In the latest comparable data, from 2006, the U.S. incarceration rate was more than three times the figure in Poland, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country with the next highest rate. The country's extraordinary rate of incarceration is largely caused by changes in sentencing and drug policies. Though it has been abolished in most Western nations, capital punishment is sanctioned in the United States for certain federal and military crimes, and in thirty-seven states. Since 1976, when the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty after a four-year moratorium, there have been over 1,000 executions in the United States. In 2006, the country had the sixth highest number of executions in the world, following China, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, and



Sudan. In December 2007, New Jersey became the first state to abolish the death penalty since the 1976 Supreme Court decision.

## Culture

The United States is a multicultural nation, home to a wide variety of ethnic groups, traditions, and values. There is no "American" ethnicity; aside from the now relatively small Native American population, nearly all Americans or their ancestors immigrated within the past five centuries. The culture held in common by the majority of Americans is referred to as mainstream American culture, a Western culture largely derived from the traditions of Western European migrants, beginning with the early English and Dutch settlers. German, Irish, and Scottish cultures have also been very influential. Certain cultural attributes of Mandé and Wolof slaves from West Africa were adopted by the American mainstream; based more on the traditions of Central African Bantu slaves, a distinct African American culture developed that would eventually have a major effect on the mainstream as well. Westward expansion integrated the Creoles and Cajuns of Louisiana and the Hispanos of the Southwest and brought close contact with the culture of Mexico. Large-scale immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from Southern and Eastern Europe introduced many new cultural elements. More recent immigration from Asia and especially Latin America has had broad impact. The resulting mix of cultures may be characterized as a homogeneous melting pot or as a pluralistic salad bowl in which immigrants and their descendants retain distinctive cultural characteristics.

While American culture maintains that the United States is a classless society, economists and sociologists have identified cultural differences between the country's social classes, affecting socialization, language, and values. The American middle and professional class has been the source of many contemporary social trends such as feminism, environmentalism, and multiculturalism. Americans' self-images, social viewpoints, and cultural expectations are associated with their occupations to an unusually close degree. While Americans tend greatly to value socioeconomic achievement, being ordinary or average is generally seen as a positive attribute. Though the American Dream, or the perception that Americans enjoy high social mobility, played a key role in attracting immigrants, particularly in the late 1800s, some analysts find that the United States has less social mobility than Western Europe and Canada.

Women, many of whom were formerly more limited to domestic roles, now mostly work outside the home and receive a majority of bachelor's degrees. The changing role of women has also changed the American family. In 2005, no household arrangement defined more than 30% of households; married childless couples were most common, at 28%. The extension of marital rights to homosexual persons is an issue of debate; several more liberal states permit civil unions in lieu of marriage. In 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that state's ban on same-sex marriage unconstitutional; the Supreme Court of California ruled similarly in 2008. Forty-three states still legally restrict marriage to the traditional man-and-woman model.

## Literature, philosophy, and the arts

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, American art and literature took most of its cues from Europe. Writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Henry David Thoreau established a distinctive American literary voice by the middle of the nineteenth century. Mark Twain and poet Walt Whitman were major figures in the century's second half; Emily Dickinson, virtually unknown during her lifetime, is recognized as another essential American poet. Eleven U.S. citizens have won the Nobel Prize in Literature, most recently Toni Morrison in 1993. Ernest Hemingway, the 1954 Nobel laureate, is often named as one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century. A work seen as capturing fundamental aspects of the national experience and



character—such as Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925)—may be dubbed the "Great American Novel." Popular literary genres such as the Western and hardboiled crime fiction developed in the United States. Postmodernism is the most recent major literary movement in the world, and though on the theory side postmodernism began with French writers like Jacques Derrida and Alain Robbe-Grillet, and was transitioned into largely by Irish writer Samuel Beckett, it has since been dominated by American writers such as Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, William S. Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, John Barth, E.L. Doctorow, Kurt Vonnegut and many others.

The transcendentalists, led by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thoreau, established the first major American philosophical movement. After the Civil War, Charles Peirce and then William James and John Dewey were leaders in the development of pragmatism. In the twentieth century, the work of W. V. Quine and Richard Rorty helped bring analytic philosophy to the fore in U.S. academic circles.

In the visual arts, the Hudson River School was an important mid-nineteenth-century movement in the tradition of European naturalism. The 1913 Armory Show in New York City, an exhibition of European modernist art, shocked the public and transformed the U.S. art scene. Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, and others experimented with new styles, displaying a highly individualistic sensibility. Major artistic movements such as the abstract expressionism of Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning and the pop art of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein have developed largely in the United States. The tide of modernism and then postmodernism has also brought American architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Philip Johnson, and Frank Gehry to the top of their field.

One of the first notable promoters of the nascent American theatre was impresario P. T. Barnum, who began operating a lower Manhattan entertainment complex in 1841. The team of Harrigan and Hart produced a series of popular musical comedies in New York starting in the late 1870s. In the twentieth century, the modern musical form emerged on Broadway; the songs of musical theatre composers such as Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, and Stephen Sondheim have become pop standards. Playwright Eugene O'Neill won the Nobel literature prize in 1936; other acclaimed U.S. dramatists include multiple Pulitzer Prize winners Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, and August Wilson.

Though largely overlooked at the time, Charles Ives's work of the 1910s established him as the first major U.S. composer in the classical tradition; other experimentalists such as Henry Cowell and John Cage created an identifiably American approach to classical composition. Aaron Copland and George Gershwin developed a unique American synthesis of popular and classical music. Choreographers Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham were central figures in the creation of modern dance; George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins were leaders in twentieth-century ballet. The United States has long been at the fore in the relatively modern artistic medium of photography, with major practitioners such as Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, Ansel Adams, and many others. The newspaper comic strip and the comic book are both U.S. innovations. Superman, the quintessential comic book superhero, has become an American icon.



New York City's Broadway theatre district is host to many popular productions

## Food



Mainstream American culinary arts are similar to those in other Western countries. Wheat is the primary cereal grain.

Traditional American cuisine uses ingredients such as turkey, white-tailed deer venison, potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, squash, and maple syrup, indigenous foods employed by Native Americans and early European settlers. Slow-cooked pork and beef barbecue, crab cakes, potato chips, and chocolate chip cookies are distinctively American styles. Soul food, developed by African slaves, is popular around the South and among many African Americans elsewhere. Syncretic cuisines such as Louisiana creole, Cajun, and Tex-Mex are regionally important. Characteristic dishes such as apple pie, fried chicken, pizza, hamburgers, and hot dogs derive from the recipes of various immigrants. French fries, Mexican dishes such as burritos and tacos, and pasta dishes freely adapted from Italian sources are widely consumed. Americans generally prefer coffee to tea. Marketing by U.S. industries is largely responsible for making orange juice and milk ubiquitous breakfast beverages. During the 1980s and 1990s, Americans' caloric intake rose 24%; frequent dining at fast food outlets is associated with what health officials call the American "obesity epidemic." Highly sweetened soft drinks are widely popular; sugared beverages account for 9% of the average American's caloric intake.

## Sports

Since the late nineteenth century, baseball has been regarded as the national sport; football, basketball, and ice hockey are the country's three other leading professional team sports. College football and basketball also attract large audiences. Football is now by several measures the most popular spectator sport in the United States. Boxing and horse racing were once the most watched individual sports, but they have been eclipsed by golf and auto racing, particularly NASCAR. Soccer, though not a leading professional sport in the country, is played widely at the youth and amateur levels. Tennis and many outdoor sports are also popular.

While most major U.S. sports have evolved out of European practices, basketball, volleyball, skateboarding, and snowboarding are American inventions. Lacrosse and surfing arose from Native American and Native Hawaiian activities that predate Western contact. Eight Olympic Games have taken place in the United States. The United States has won 2,191 medals at the Summer Olympic Games, more than any other country, and 216 in the Winter Olympic Games, the second most.

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American cultural icons: apple pie, baseball, and the American flag



The Pro Bowl (2006), American football's annual all-star game



# Uruguay

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Americas; Countries

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**Uruguay** (official full name in Spanish: *República Oriental del Uruguay*; Spanish pronunciation: [reˈpuβlika orjenˈtal ðel uruˈɣwai], **Eastern Republic of Uruguay**) is a country located in the southeastern part of South America. It is home to 3.46 million people, of which 1.7 million live in the capital Montevideo and its metropolitan area.

It is bordered by Brazil to the north, by Argentina across the bank of both the Uruguay River to the west and the estuary of Río de la Plata to the southwest, and the South Atlantic Ocean to the southeast. Its surface is 176.215 km<sup>2</sup> being by its territorial extension the second smallest country in South America, larger only than Suriname and the French overseas department of French Guiana.

Montevideo was founded by the Spanish in the early 18th century as a military stronghold. Uruguay won its independence in 1825-1828 following a three-way struggle between Spain, Argentina and Brazil. It is a constitutional democracy, where the president fulfills the roles of both head of state and head of government.

The economy is largely based on agriculture (making up 10% of GDP and the most substantial export) and the state sector, Uruguay's economy is on the whole more stable than in its surrounding states, and it maintains a solid reputation with investors.

According to Transparency International, Uruguay is the second least corrupt country in Latin America (after Chile), with its political and labor conditions being among the freest on the continent.

In November 2007 it became the first Latin American country and the second in all of the Americas to recognize same-sex civil unions at the national level.

94.6% of the population are of European descent. Just under half of the population are declared Roman Catholics. However, the majority of Uruguayans are only nominally religious.

### *República Oriental del Uruguay* (Spanish) Eastern Republic of Uruguay



Flag



Coat of arms

**Motto:** *Libertad o muerte* (Spanish)  
"Freedom or death"

**Anthem:** *Himno Nacional Uruguayo* (Spanish)



**Capital**  
(and largest city)      Montevideo

**Official languages**      Spanish

**Demonym**      Uruguayan, Oriental



## Etymology

The name "Uruguay" comes from Guaraní. It has many possible meanings. Some of the proposed meanings are:

- "River of the uru" or "River of the country of the uru": a version attributed to Felix de Azara, which suggests that the name of the country comes from the word *urú*, which means "bird" in the vicinity of the Uruguay River (from *uru* = "bird", *gua* = "place of", and *y* = "water").
- "River of colorful or 'painted' chinchillas (birds)": poetic interpretation attributed to Juan Zorrilla de San Martín.
- "River of those who bring food": an anonymous version which has been popularized since the discovery of an old document written by Jesuit Lucas Marton.

## History

The inhabitants of Uruguay before European colonization of the area were various tribes of hunter gatherer native Americans, the most well known being the Charrúa Indians, a small tribe driven south by the Guaraní Indians of Paraguay. The population is estimated at no more than 5,000 to 10,000.

<b>Government</b>	Republic ( presidential system)
- President	Tabaré Vázquez Rosas
- Vice President	Rodolfo Nin Novoa
<b>Independence</b>	from Brazil
- Declaration	25 August 1825
- Constitution Jury	18 July 1830
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	176.215 km <sup>2</sup> 68,037 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.5%
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2008 estimate	3,477,778 ( 134)
- 2002 census	3,399,236
- Density	19/km <sup>2</sup> ( 19) 50/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$37,18 billion (USD)
- Per capita	\$11,621(USD)
<b>Gini (2003)</b>	44.9 (high)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.852 (high) ( 46th)
<b>Currency</b>	Uruguayan peso (\$, UYU ) ( UYU)
<b>Time zone</b>	UYT ( UTC-3)
- Summer ( DST)	UYST ( UTC-2)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.uy
<b>Calling code</b>	+598



Europeans arrived in the territory of present-day Uruguay in the year 1536, but the absence of gold and silver limited settlement in the region during the 16th and 17th centuries. Uruguay became a zone of contention between the Spanish and the Portuguese empires. In 1603 the Spanish began to introduce cattle, which became a source of wealth in the region. The first permanent settlement on the territory of present-day Uruguay was founded by the Spanish in 1624 at Villa Soriano on the south-western coast of the Río Negro. In 1680 the Portuguese built a fort at Colonia del Sacramento. Spanish colonization increased as Spain sought to limit Portugal's expansion of Brazil's frontiers.

Another segment of colonial Uruguay's population consisted of people of African descent. Colonial Uruguay's African community grew in number as its members escaped harsh treatment in Buenos Aires. Many relocated to Montevideo, which had a larger black community, seemed less hostile politically than Buenos Aires, and had a more favorable climate with lower humidity.

As a province of the Viceroyalty of La Plata, colonial Uruguay was known as the **Banda Oriental**, or "Eastern Strip", referring to its location east of the Rio Uruguay. The inhabitants called themselves *Orientales* ("Easterners"), a term they still commonly use to refer to themselves.

Uruguay's capital, Montevideo, was founded by the Spanish in the early 18th century as a military stronghold; its natural harbor soon developed into a commercial centre competing with Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires. Uruguay's early 19th century history was shaped by ongoing conflicts between the British, Spanish, Portuguese, and colonial forces for dominance in the Argentina-Brazil-Uruguay region. In 1806 and 1807, the British army attempted to seize Buenos Aires as part of their War with Spain. As a result, at the beginning of 1807, Montevideo was occupied by a 10,000-strong British force who held it until the middle of the year when they left to attack Buenos Aires.

The Uruguayans' road to independence was much longer than those of other countries in the Americas. Early efforts at attaining independence focused on overthrow of Spanish rule, a process begun by Jose Gervasio Artigas in 1811 when he led his forces to victory against the Spanish in the battle of Las Piedras on May 18, 1811. In 1816, Portuguese troops invaded present-day Uruguay, which led to its eventual annexation by Brazil in 1821 under the provincial name, Provincia Cisplatina. On April 19, 1825, thirty-three Uruguayan exiles led by Juan Antonio Lavalleja returned from Buenos Aires to lead an insurrection in Uruguay with the help of Argentine troops. They were known as the *Treinta y Tres Orientales*. Their actions inspired representatives from Uruguay to meet in Florida, a town in the recently liberated area, where they declared independence from Portugal (and therefore Brazil) on August 25, 1825. Uruguayan independence was not recognized by its neighbors until 1828, after the Argentina-Brazil War, when Britain, in search of new commercial markets, brokered peace between Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay.



The Plaza Independencia ("Independence Square"), in Montevideo, hosts the tomb of José Artigas, late leader of the Provincia Oriental and the Liga Federal. In front of the square, the *Palacio Salvo* can be seen.





## Politics

Uruguay's politics take place in a framework of a presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the President of Uruguay is both head of state and head of government, and of a multi-party system. Executive branch is exercised by the government. Legislative branch is vested in both the government and the two chambers of the General Assembly of Uruguay. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature.

For most of Uruguay's history, the Partido Colorado has been the government. The other "traditional" party of Uruguay, Partido Blanco, having ruled only twice. The Partido Blanco has its roots in the countryside and the original settlers of Spanish origin and the cattle ranchers. The Partido Colorado has its roots in the port city of Montevideo, the new immigrants of Italian origin and the backing of foreign interests. The Partido Colorado built a welfare state financed by taxing the cattle revenue and giving state pickles and free services to the new urban immigrants which became dependent on the state. The elections of 2004, however, brought the Frente Amplio, a coalition of socialists, former Tupamaros, former communists and mainly social democrats among others to govern with majorities in both houses of parliament and the election of President Tabaré Vázquez by an absolute majority.

The Reporters Without Borders worldwide press freedom index has ranked Uruguay as 57th of 168 reported countries in 2006.

According to Freedom House, an American organization that tracks global trends in political freedom, Uruguay ranked twenty-seventh in its "Freedom in the World" index. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, Uruguay scores a 7.96 on the Democracy Index, located in the last position among the 28 countries considered to be Full Democracies in the world. The report looks at 60 indicators across five categories: Free elections, civil liberties, functioning government, political participation and political culture.

Uruguay ranks 28th in the World CPI (Corruption Perception Index) composed by Transparency International.

## Culture

Uruguay has an impressive legacy of artistic and literary traditions, especially for its small size. The contribution of its alternating conquerors and diverse immigrants has resulted in native traditions that integrate this diversity. Uruguay has centuries old remains, fortresses of the colonial era. Its cities have a rich architectural heritage and an impressive number of writers, artists, and musicians. Uruguayan tango is the form of dance that originated in the neighborhoods of Montevideo, Uruguay towards the end of the 1800s. Tango, candombe, and murga are the three main styles of music in this city.

## Direct democracy

The Uruguayan constitution allows citizens to repeal laws or to change the constitution, by referendum. During the last 15 years the method has been used several times; to confirm a law renouncing prosecution of members of the military who violated human rights during the military regime (1973-1985), to stop privatization of public utilities companies (See Economy: Public Sector), to defend pensioners' incomes, and to protect water resources.

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 617 of 637



Río de la Plata in 1603.



## Departments

Uruguay consists of nineteen departments (*departamentos*, singular "*departamento*"). The first departments were formed in 1816 and the newest date from 1885 which is Flores. The departments are governed by an *intendente municipal* who is elected for five years. The members of the Departmental Assembly (*Junta Departamental*) form the legislative level of the department.

Department	Area (square kilometres)	Population*	Capital
Artigas	11,928	78,019	Artigas
Canelones	4,536	485,028	Canelones
Cerro Largo	13,648	86,564	Melo
Colonia	6,106	119,266	Colonia del Sacramento
Durazno	11,643	58,859	Durazno
Flores	5,144	25,104	Trinidad
Florida	10,417	68,181	Florida
Lavalleja	10,016	60,925	Minas
Maldonado	4,793	140,192	Maldonado
Montevideo	530	1,326,064	Montevideo
Paysandú	13,922	113,244	Paysandú
Río Negro	9,282	53,989	Fray Bentos
Rivera	9,370	104,921	Rivera
Rocha	10,551	69,937	Rocha
Salto	14,163	123,120	Salto
San José	4,992	103,104	San José de Mayo
Soriano	9,008	84,563	Mercedes
Tacuarembó	15,438	90,489	Tacuarembó
Treinta y Tres	9,676	49,318	Treinta y Tres





\* 2004

## Geography

At 176,214 square kilometres (68,036 square miles) of continental land and 142,199 square kilometres (54,903 sq mi) of jurisdictional waters and small river islands, Uruguay is the second smallest sovereign nation in South America (after Suriname) and the third smallest territory (French Guiana is the smallest). The landscape features mostly rolling plains and low hill ranges (*cuchillas*) with a fertile coastal lowland. A dense fluvial network covers the country, consisting of four river basins or deltas; the Río de la Plata, the Uruguay River, the Laguna Merín and the Río Negro. The major internal river is the Río Negro ('black river'). Several lagoons are found along the Atlantic coast.

The highest point in the country is the Cerro Cathedral at 513.66 meters (1,685 ft 3 in) in the *Sierra de Carapé* mountain range. To the southwest is the Río de la Plata, the estuary of the Uruguay River, which forms the western border, and the Paraná River, that does not run through Uruguay itself.

## Borders

Uruguay shares borders with Argentina and Brazil.

With Argentina:

Uruguay River to the west and Río de la Plata in the south.

With Brazil:

Chuy Stream 13 kilometres (8.1 mi), straight line (Chuy) 8.7 kilometres (5.4 mi), San Miguel Stream 13 km (8.1 mi), Merín Lagoon, 280.1 km (174 mi) Yaguarón River, 142.4 km (88.5 mi), Yaguarón 'Chico' River 18.5 km (11.5 mi), 'Arrollo de la Mina' Stream 20.4 km (12.7 mi), Aceguá straight line 37.2 km (23.1 mi), San Luis Stream 31.3 km (19.4 mi), North Branch of the San Luis Stream 3.6 km (2.2 mi), Straight line 8 km (5 mi), 'Cañada del Cementerio' 4 km (2.5 mi), Straight lines 0.6 km (0.4 mi), 'Cuchilla de Santa Ana' SE 168.5 km (104.7 mi), Rivera-Livramento 4.8 km (3 mi), 'Cuchilla de Santa Ana' 20.8 km (12.9 mi), 'Cuchilla Negra' 4189.3 km (2603.1 mi), 'Arrollo de la Invernada' Stream 37.8 km (23.5 mi), Cuareim River 313.4 km (194.7 mi)

## Climate

The climate in Uruguay is temperate: it has warm summers and cold winters. The predominantly gently undulating landscape is also somewhat vulnerable to rapid changes from weather fronts. It receives the periodic influence of the polar air in winter, and tropical air from Brazil in summer. Without mountains in



zone that act as a barrier, the air masses freely move by the territory, causing abrupt weather changes.

The coolest month is June, while the warmest is January. The rainfall is equally distributed throughout the year, but tends to be a bit more frequent in the autumn months. There can be frequent thunderstorms in the summer. Although snow is not very common, it snowed in 1913, 1918, 1963, 1989, 1992, and 2007.

## Enclaves and exclaves

Since 1984 Uruguay has the Antarctic base "General Artigas" on King George Island in Antarctica, part of the South Shetland Islands archipelago, at , some 100 km (62 mi) from the Antarctic peninsula itself.

## Economy



Montevideo, Uruguay's capital.

Uruguay has a middle income economy, mainly dominated by the State services sector, an export-oriented agricultural sector and an industrial sector. Uruguay relies heavily on trade, particularly in agricultural exports, leaving the country particularly vulnerable to slumps in commodity prices and global economic slowdowns. After averaging growth of 5% annually in 1996-1998, in 1999-2001 the economy suffered from lower demand in Argentina and Brazil, which together account for nearly half of Uruguay's exports. Despite the severity of the trade shocks, Uruguay's financial indicators remained stabler than those of its neighbours, a reflection of its solid reputation among investors and its investment-grade sovereign bond rating — one of only two in South America. In recent years Uruguay has shifted some of its energy into developing the commercial use of technologies and has become the first exporter of software in Latin America.



Playa Brava in Punta del Este, Uruguay

While some parts of the economy appeared to be resilient, the downturn had severe impact on the local population. Unemployment levels rose to more than 20%, real wages fell, the peso devalued. These worsening economic conditions played a part in turning public opinion against the mildly free market economic policies adopted by the previous administrations in the 1990s, leading to the popular rejection of proposals for privatization of the state petroleum company in 2003 and of the state water company in 2004. The newly elected Frente Amplio government, while pledging to continue payments on Uruguay's external debt, has also promised to undertake a Emergency Plan (See section:Social Problems Poverty and inequality) to attack the widespread problems of poverty and unemployment.

## Agriculture

Agriculture played such an important part in Uruguayan history and national identity until the middle of the twentieth century that the entire country was then sometimes likened to a single huge *estancia* (agricultural estate) centred around Montevideo, where the wealth generated in the hinterland was spent, at its *casco* or administrative head.



Today, agriculture contributes roughly 11% to the country's GDP and is still the main foreign exchange earner, putting Uruguay in line with other agricultural exporters like Brazil, Canada and New Zealand. Uruguay is a member of the Cairns Group of exporters of agricultural products. Uruguay's agriculture has relatively low inputs of labor, technology and capital in comparison with other such countries, which results in comparatively lower yields per hectare but also opens the door for Uruguay to market its products as "natural" or "ecological."

Campaigns like "Uruguayan grass-fed beef" and "Uruguay Natural" aim to establish Uruguay as a premium brand in beef, wine and other food products.

Recently, an industry has developed around *estancia* tourism which capitalizes on the traditional or folkloristic connotations associated with gaucho culture and the remaining resources of Uruguay's historic *estancias*.

## Demographics



A heartland of historic *estancias*: Estancia San Eugenio, Casupá, southern department of Florida.



The overwhelming majority of Uruguay's population is of predominantly white European descent: Spaniards, and Italians being the most prevalent, followed by French, Germans, Portuguese, British, Swiss, Russians, Poles, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Latvians, Lebanese, Israeli, Dutch, Belgians, Croatians, Austrians, Serbians, Greeks, Scandinavians, Irish, Romanians, and Armenians. There are also numbers of Argentines, Chileans, Paraguayans, Brazilians, Bolivians, Israeli, and Lebanese. According to the 2006 National Survey of Homes by the Uruguayan National Institute of Statistics: 94.6% chose European ancestry, 9.1% chose Afro/Black ancestry, and 4.5% chose native-American ancestry (people surveyed were allowed to choose more than one option).

Many of the European immigrants arrived in Uruguay in the late 1800s and have heavily influenced the architecture and culture of Montevideo and other major cities. For this reason, Montevideo and life within the city are reminiscent of parts of Europe.

Some colonies such as *Colonia Valdense* -a Waldensian colony-, *Colonia Suiza* -also named Nueva Helvecia- a mainly Swiss colony with some German and Austrian settlers, were founded in the department of Colonia. There are also towns founded by early British settlers such as Conchillas and Barker. A Russian colony called *San Javier* was founded in the department of Río Negro. Mennonite colonies can also be found in the department of Río Negro and in the department of Canelones. One of them, called *El Ombú*, is famous for its well-known Dulce de Leche "Claldy" and is located near the city of Young.

Uruguay has a large urban middle class and a literacy rate of 96.79% (1996 est). During the 1970s and 1980s, an estimated 600,000 Uruguayans emigrated, mainly to Spain, Italy, Argentina and Brazil. Other Uruguayans went to various countries in Europe, to the USA, Canada, and Australia.



People in Montevideo, Uruguay



Queen of Colonia Valdense 12th annual celebration

## Religion



Uruguay's oldest church is in San Carlos, Maldonado.

Church and state are officially separated since 1919. According to the 2006 National Survey of Homes by the Uruguayan National Institute of Statistics: 47.1% of Uruguayans define themselves as Roman Catholic, 23.2% as "believing in God but without religion", 17.2% as Atheist or Agnostic, 11.1% "Non-Catholic Christian" (Protestant), 0.6% as followers of Umbanda or other "afro" religions, 0.3% as Jewish, and 0.4% chose "Other".

The majority of Uruguayans do not actively practice religion. It is widely considered the most secular nation in Latin America.

## Social Issues



According to data published by the United Nations, the Gini index for Uruguay was 0.449 in 2003, where 1.00 stands for maximum inequality and 0 for even distribution of the wealth between the population.

A recent report used 2 indicators to estimate the number of people living in poverty in the country.

- *Indigence line*: income of the family is not enough for the basic food consumption.
- *Poverty line*: income of the family is not enough for food consumption, clothing, health and transport.

The numbers obtained depends according with the methodology used, the inform uses 3 different methods. According to the one proposed by the Regional Workshop about poverty measurement in 1996, which produces the highest values of all, the results for the first quarter of 2006 are:

Population below Indigence line: 3.01%

Population below Poverty line: 18%

The reports shows the indicators are improving as the country is recovering from the last 2002 crisis; in 2004, poverty indicators reached an all time high.

A new ministry of Social Development was created by the Broad Front (Uruguay) (*Frente Amplio*) government led by Tabare Vazquez, and an Emergency plan which targets the less favoured 200.000 Uruguayans.

The average income of a woman in 2002 in Uruguay was 71.8% of the income of men for the same activity. The average income of African heritage workers is 65% of that of those of European heritage.



Although rents in neighborhoods not in high demand are not very expensive in Uruguay, it is usually required to have another property as a warranty for the contract, or leave a deposit which many can not afford. This first condition makes renting a property especially difficult for the least favoured sectors of the population. According to the INE 23, 3% of the population lives in a place neither owned nor rented. Some of them are proper built houses, but others are precarious constructions built illegally in public or private empty land just outside the cities. Thus, whole new poor neighborhoods have emerged in the last decades. They are called *Asentamientos* or more colloquially *Cantegriles* in ironic allusion to the fashionable Neighbourhood of Cantegril in Punta del Este. The phenomena is similar to the *Favelas* in Brazil, *Villas Miseria* in Argentina, *Barrios* in Venezuela, *Arrabales* in Spain, *Poblaciones Callampa* in Chile or *Jacales* in Mexico.

## Sport

The main sport in Uruguay is football. The Uruguay national football team is one of only five nations to win the FIFA World Cup on two or more occasions. In 1930, Uruguay hosted the first ever World Cup and went on to win the competition, defeating Argentina 4-2 in the final. Uruguay won the 1950 FIFA World Cup as well, famously defeating the favored hosts, Brazil, 2-1 in the final. Uruguay is by far the smallest country, population wise, to win a World Cup. Out of the World Cup winners, the nation with the second smallest population is Argentina (winners of the 1978 and 1986 editions) who currently have just over 40,000,000 people according to the latest estimate; the 2002 census has Uruguay's current population slightly under 3,400,000. The Uruguay national team has also won the Copa América 14 different times, a record it shares with Argentina.

The most popular football teams in Uruguay are Club Nacional de Football (Three times World champions, three times Copa Libertadores de América champions, two times Copa Interamericana champions, one time Recopa Sudamericana champions) and Club Atlético Peñarol (Three times World champions, five times Copa Libertadores de América champions), followed by Defensor, Danubio (last Uruguayan champion). Uruguay has had many great known players such as Enzo Francescoli and Currently known now Alvaro Recoba and Diego Forlan (UEFA golden boot winner).

Basketball, Rugby, and tennis are other popular sports in Uruguay.

## Brother countries

New Zealand Minnesota (Partner for the Americas)

## International rankings

Political and economic rankings

GDP per capita - 60<sup>th</sup> highest, at I\$11,969

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Montevideo, capital of the country. A view of pedestrian street in the *Ciudad Vieja*, former Spanish citadel





Human Development Index - 46<sup>th</sup> high, at 0.852

Income Equality - , at 0.449 ( Gini Index)

Literacy Rate - 51<sup>st</sup>, at 97.7%

Unemployment rate - 112<sup>th</sup>, at 8.70%

#### Health rankings

Fertility rate- 139<sup>th</sup> most fertile, at 1.97 per woman

Birth rate - 157<sup>th</sup> most births, at 13.91 per 1000 people

Infant mortality - 128<sup>th</sup> most deaths, at 1 per 1000 live births

Death rate - 84<sup>th</sup> highest death rate, at 9.16 per 1000 people

Life Expectancy - 47<sup>th</sup> highest, at 76.4 years

Suicide Rate - 24<sup>th</sup> highest suicide rate, at 15.1 for males and 6.4 for females per 100,000 people

HIV/AIDS rate - 108<sup>th</sup> most cases, at 0.30%

#### Other rankings

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions - 125<sup>th</sup> highest emissions, at 1.65 tonnes per capita

Electricity Consumption - 88<sup>th</sup> highest consumption of electricity, at 7,762,000,000 kWh

Broadband Internet access - no data

Global Peace Index - 21<sup>th</sup> highest peace rate in 2008

#### Comparative ranking by index

Index (Year)	Author / Editor / Source	Year of publication	Countries sampled	World Ranking <sup>(1)</sup>	Ranking L.A. <sup>(2)</sup>
Human Poverty, HPI-1 (2005) <sup>(3)</sup>	United Nations (UNDP)	2007-08	108	2°	1°
Poverty below \$2 a day (1990-2005) <sup>(4)</sup>	United Nations (UNDP)	2007-08	71	3°	2°
Global Peace (2008)	The Economist	2008	140	21°	2°
Democracy (2006)	The Economist	2007	167	27°	2°
Corruption Perception (2006)	Transparency International	2007	163	28°	2°
Press Freedom (2007)	Reporters Without Borders	2007	169	37°	2°



Human Development (2005)	United Nations (UNDP)	2007-08	177	46°	3°
Economic Freedom (2008)	The Wall Street Journal	2008	157	46°	3°
Quality-of-life (2005)	The Economist	2007	111	46°	6°
Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (2008)	World Economic Forum	2008	130	61°	7°
Global Competitiveness (2007)	World Economic Forum	2007-08	131	75°	8°
Income inequality (1989-2007) <sup>(5)</sup>	United Nations (UNDP)	2007-2008	126	88°	2°

<sup>(1)</sup> Worldwide ranking among countries evaluated.

<sup>(2)</sup> Ranking among the 20 Latin American countries.

<sup>(3)</sup> Ranking among 108 developing countries with available data only.

<sup>(4)</sup> Ranking among 71 developing countries with available data only. Countries in the sample surveyed between 1990-2005. Refers to population below income poverty line as defined by the World Bank's \$2 per day indicator

<sup>(5)</sup> Because the Gini coefficient used for the ranking corresponds to different years depending on the country, and the underlying household surveys differ in method and in the type of data collected, the distribution data are not strictly comparable across countries. The ranking therefore is only a proxy for reference purposes, and though the source is the same, the sample is smaller than for the HDI

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# Venezuela

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**Venezuela** (pronounced /ˌvɛnəˈzweɪrələ/, Amer. Span. IPA: [vɛnɛˈswela]), officially the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** (Spanish: **República Bolivariana de Venezuela**), is a country on the northern coast of South America.

The country comprises a continental mainland and numerous islands located off the Venezuelan coastline in the Caribbean Sea. Currently, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela possesses borders with Guyana to the east, Brazil to the south, and Colombia to the west. Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, St. Lucia, Barbados, Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Leeward Antilles lie just north, off the Venezuelan coast. Falling within the tropics, Venezuela sits close to the equator, in the Northern Hemisphere.

A former Spanish colony, which has been an independent republic since 1821, Venezuela holds territorial disputes with Guyana, largely concerning the Essequibo area, and with Colombia concerning the Gulf of Venezuela. There was a Venezuelan Boundary Crisis in 1985. Today, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is known widely for its petroleum industry, the environmental diversity of its territory, and its natural features. Venezuela is considered to be among 17 of the most megadiverse countries in the world.

Venezuela is among the most urbanized countries in Latin America; the vast majority of Venezuelans live in the cities of the north, especially in the capital Caracas which is also the largest city. Other major cities include Maracaibo, Valencia, Maracay, Barquisimeto, Ciudad Guayana and the popular tourist city of Mérida. Venezuela is also home to a diversity of wildlife in a variety of protected habitats.

## Etymology

### *República Bolivariana de Venezuela* Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela



Flag



Coat of arms

' *Motto*: **'Dios y Federacion** (Spanish)  
God and Federation

**Anthem**: *Gloria al Bravo Pueblo* (Spanish)  
Glory to the Brave People



<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Caracas
<b>Official languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Demonym</b>	Venezuelan
<b>Government</b>	Presidential republic



A *palafito*, similar to those seen by Amerigo Vespucci.

The name "Venezuela" is believed to have originated from the cartographer Amerigo Vespucci who, together with Alonso de Ojeda, led a 1499 naval expedition along the northwestern coast's Gulf of Venezuela. On reaching the Guajira Peninsula, the crew observed villages (*palafitos*) that the people had built over the water. This reminded Vespucci of the city of Venice ( Italian: *Venezia*), so he named the region "*Venezuola*", meaning "little Venice" in Italian. In Spanish, the suffix *-zuela* is used as a diminutive term (e.g., *plaza* / *plazuela*, *cazo* / *cazuela*); thus, the term's original sense would have been that of a " little Venice".

Martín Fernández de Enciso, a member of Vespucci and de Ojeda's crew, states in his work *Summa de Geografía* that the indigenous population they found were called "*Veneciuela*", suggesting that the name "Venezuela" may have evolved from a native word. The Vespucci story, however, remains the most popular and accepted version of the origin of the country's name. In English, the word *Venezuela* is pronounced as IPA: /ˌvɛnɪzˈweɪlə/. The Venezuelan Spanish is IPA: [beneˈswela].

## History

Human habitation of Venezuela is estimated to have commenced at least 15,000 years ago, from which period leaf-shaped flake tools, together with chopping and plano-convex scraping implements, have been found exposed on the high riverine terraces of the Rio Pedregal in western Venezuela. Late Pleistocene hunting artifacts, including spear tips, have been found at a similar series of sites in northwestern Venezuela known as "El Jobo"; according to radiocarbon dating, these date from 13,000 to 7,000 BC. In the 16th century, when the Spanish colonization of Venezuela began, indigenous peoples such as the Mariches, themselves descendants of the Caribs, were systematically killed. Indian caciques (leaders) such as Guaicaipuro and Tamanaco attempted to resist Spanish incursions, but were ultimately subdued; Tamanaco himself, by order of Caracas' founder Diego de Losada, was also put to death.

- President	Hugo Chávez Frías
<b>Independence</b>	
- from Spain	July 5, 1811
- from Gran Colombia	January 13, 1830
- Recognised	March 30, 1845
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	916,445 km <sup>2</sup> ( 33rd) 353,841 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.32
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2007 estimate	27,730,469 ( 42nd)
- 2001 census	23,054,210
- Density	30.2/km <sup>2</sup> ( 173rd) 77/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$223.4 billion ( 45th)
- Per capita	\$7,165 ( 90th)
<b>Gini</b> (2000)	44.1 (medium)
<b>HDI</b> (2007)	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.792 (medium) ( 74th)
<b>Currency</b>	Bolívar fuerte ( <span>VEF</span> )
<b>Time zone</b>	UTC-4:30
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ve
<b>Calling code</b>	+58
<p><sup>^</sup> The "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" has been the full official title since the adoption of the new Constitution of 1999, when the state was renamed in honour of Simón Bolívar.</p> <p><sup>^</sup> Formerly "God and Federation" (Spanish: <i>«Dios y Federación»</i>).</p>	



Venezuela was first colonized by Spain in 1522, when it hosted the Spanish Empire's first permanent South American settlement in what is now Cumaná. Originally part of the Viceroyalty of Peru, most of Venezuela eventually became part of the Viceroyalty of New Granada; portions of eastern Venezuela were incorporated into New Andalusia. After a series of unsuccessful uprisings, Venezuela—under the leadership of Francisco de Miranda, a Venezuelan marshal involved in the French Revolution—declared independence on 5 July 1811. This began the Venezuelan War of Independence. However, a devastating earthquake that struck Caracas in 1812, together with the rebellion of the Venezuelan *llaneros*, helped bring down the first Venezuelan republic. A second Venezuelan republic, proclaimed on 7 August 1813, lasted several months before being crushed as well.

Sovereignty was only attained after Simón Bolívar, known as *El Libertador* ("The Liberator") and aided by José Antonio Páez and Antonio José de Sucre, won the Battle of Carabobo on 24 June 1821. José Prudencio Padilla and Rafael Urdaneta's victory in the Battle of Lake Maracaibo on 24 July 1823 helped seal Venezuelan independence. New Granada's congress gave Bolívar control of the Granadian army; leading it, he liberated several countries and founded Gran Colombia. Sucre, who won many battles for Bolívar, went on to liberate Ecuador, and later become the second president of Bolivia. Venezuela remained part of Gran Colombia until 1830, when a rebellion led by Páez allowed the proclamation of a new Republic of Venezuela; Páez became its first president.

Much of Venezuela's nineteenth century history was characterized by political turmoil and dictatorial rule. During first half of the 20th century, *caudillos* (military strongmen) continued to dominate, though they generally allowed for mild social reforms and promoted economic growth. Following the death of Juan Vicente Gómez in 1935 and the demise of *caudillismo* (authoritarian rule), pro-democracy movements eventually forced the military to withdraw from direct involvement in national politics in 1958. Since that year, Venezuela has had a series of democratically elected governments. The discovery of massive oil deposits, totaling some 400 million barrels, during World War I prompted an economic boom that lasted into the 1980s; by 1935, Venezuela's per capita GDP was Latin America's highest, and globalization and heavy immigration from Southern Europe and poorer Latin American countries markedly diversified Venezuelan society.

The huge public spending and accumulation of internal and external debts by the government and private sector during the Petrodollar years of the 1970s and early 80s, followed by the collapse of oil prices during the 1980s, crippled the Venezuelan economy. As the government devalued the currency in order to face its mounting local and non-local financial obligations, Venezuelans' real standard of living fell dramatically. A number of failed economic policies and increasing corruption in government and society at large, has led to rising poverty and crime and worsening social indicators and increasing political instability, resulting in three major coup attempts, two in 1992 and another in 2002. In the February 1992 coup, Hugo Chávez, a former paratrooper, attempted to overthrow the government of President Carlos Andrés Pérez as anger grew against the President's economic austerity measures. Chávez was unsuccessful and landed in jail. In November of that year, another unsuccessful coup attempt occurred, organized by other revolutionary groups in the Venezuelan Armed Forces and those that remained from Chávez's previous attempt. By 2002, the tables had turned, and Hugo Chávez, now a democratically elected president, was temporarily ousted from power by his opponents. The current president Hugo Chávez, who led the first unsuccessful coup in 1992, was elected as a reaction against the established political parties and the corruption and inequalities their policies created. Since coming to power, Chávez has attracted some controversy through his reforms of

<sup>^</sup> The Constitution also recognizes all indigenous languages spoken in the country.

<sup>^</sup> Area totals include only Venezuelan-administered territory.

<sup>^</sup> On 1 January 2008 a new bolivar, the *bolívar fuerte* (ISO 4217 code VEF), worth 1,000 VEB, was introduced.



Detail of Martín Tovar y Tovar's *La Batalla de Carabobo*



the Constitution, the implementation of his "Bolivarian Revolution," and his assumption, approved by the elected National Assembly, of powers to rule by decree.

## Government

The Venezuelan president is elected by a vote, with direct and universal suffrage, and functions as both head of state and head of government. The term of office is six (seis) years, and a president may be re-elected to a single consecutive term. The president appoints the vice-president and decides the size and composition of the cabinet and makes appointments to it with the involvement of the legislature. The president can ask the legislature to reconsider portions of laws he finds objectionable, but a simple parliamentary majority can diminish these objections.

The unicameral Venezuelan parliament is the National Assembly or *Asamblea Nacional*. Its 167 deputies, of which three are reserved for indigenous people, serve five-year terms and may be re-elected for a maximum of two additional terms. They are elected by popular vote through a combination of party lists and single member constituencies. The highest judicial body is the Supreme Tribunal of Justice or *Tribunal Supremo de Justicia*, whose magistrates are elected by parliament for a single twelve-year term. The National Electoral Council (*Consejo Nacional Electoral*, or *CNE*) is in charge of electoral processes; it is formed by five main directors elected by the National Assembly.

## Politics

There are currently two major blocs of political parties: the leftist Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) and its major allies For Social Democracy (PODEMOS), Fatherland for All (PPT), and the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV); and A New Era (UNT) together with its allied parties Project Venezuela, Justice First, Movement for Socialism (Venezuela) and others. Following the fall of Marcos Pérez Jiménez in 1958, Venezuelan politics was dominated by the centre-right Christian democratic COPEI and the centre-left social democratic Democratic Action (AD) parties; this two-party system was formalized by the *puntofijismo* arrangement. However, this system has been sidelined following the initial 1998 election of current president Hugo Chávez, which started the bolivarian revolution.

The voting age in Venezuela is 18 and older. Voting is not compulsory. Most of the political opposition boycotted the 2005 parliamentary election. Consequently, the MVR-led bloc secured all 167 seats in the National Assembly. Then, the MVR voted to dissolve itself in favour of joining the proposed United Socialist Party of Venezuela, while Chávez requested that MVR-allied parties merge themselves into it as well. The National Assembly has twice voted to grant Chávez the ability rule by decree in several broadly defined areas, once in 2000 and again in 2007. This power has been granted to previous administrations as well..

## Public health



The National Assembly,  
Caracas



Infant mortality in Venezuela stood at 16 deaths per 1,000 births in 2004, much lower than the South American average (by comparison, the U.S. stands at 5 deaths per 1,000 births in 2006). Child malnutrition (defined as stunting or wasting in children under age five) stands at 17%; Delta Amacuro and Amazonas have the nation's highest rates. According to the United Nations, 32% of Venezuelans lack adequate sanitation, primarily those living in rural areas. Diseases ranging from typhoid, yellow fever, cholera, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis D are present in the country. Only 3% of sewage is treated; most major cities lack treatment facilities. 17% of Venezuelans lack access to potable water.

Travelers to Venezuela are advised to obtain vaccinations for a variety of diseases including typhoid, yellow fever, cholera, hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis D. In a cholera epidemic of contemporary times in the Orinoco Delta, Venezuela's political leaders were accused of racial profiling of their own indigenous people to deflect blame from the country's institutions, thereby aggravating the epidemic.

As had previous administrations, the government is attempting to create a national universal health care system that is free of charge. The current vehicle for this idea is Misión Barrio Adentro.

## Foreign relations

Throughout most of the 20th century, Venezuela maintained friendly relations with most Latin American and Western nations. Relations between Venezuela and the United States worsened in 2002, when the U.S. was hasty to approve of the 2002 Venezuelan coup d'état attempt. Correspondingly, ties to various leftist-led Latin American and anti-U.S. Middle-Eastern countries have strengthened. Venezuela stresses hemispheric integration via such proposals as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas trade proposal and the newly launched pan-Latin American television network teleSUR. Venezuela was a proponent of OAS's decision to adopt its Anti-Corruption Convention, and is actively working in the Mercosur trade bloc to push increased trade and energy integration. Globally, it seeks a "multi-polar" world based on strengthened ties among Third World countries.

## Military

Venezuela's national armed forces include roughly 87,500 personnel spread through four service branches: the Ground Forces, the Navy (including the Marine Corps), the Air Force, and the Armed Forces of Cooperation (FAC), commonly known as the National Guard. As of 2005, a further 100,000 soldiers were incorporated into a new fifth branch, known as the Armed Reserve; these troops bear more semblance to a militia than the older branches. The President of Venezuela is the commander-in-chief of the national armed forces.

## Subdivisions



Soil from Venezuela and four other countries—Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru—liberated by the Venezuelan leader Simón Bolívar is buried at the *Parque de las Cinco Repúblicas* in Mérida.



Venezuela is divided into twenty-three states (*Estados*), a capital district (*distrito capital*) corresponding to the city of Caracas, the Federal Dependencies (*Dependencias Federales*, a special territory), and Guayana Esequiba (claimed in a border dispute with Guyana). Venezuela is further subdivided into 335 municipalities (*municipios*); these are subdivided into over one thousand parishes (*parroquias*). The states are grouped into nine administrative regions (*regiones administrativas*), which were established by presidential decree. Historically, Venezuela has also claimed all Guyanese territory west of the Essequibo River; this 159,500 square kilometres (61,583 sq mi) tract was dubbed *Guayana Esequiba* or the *Zona en Reclamación* (the "zone to be reclaimed").

## States

Name	Capital	Name	Capital
1  <b>Amazonas</b>	Puerto Ayacucho	13  <b>Mérida</b>	Mérida
2  <b>Anzoátegui</b>	Barcelona	14  <b>Miranda</b>	Los Teques
3  <b>Apure</b>	San Fernando de Apure	15  <b>Monagas</b>	Maturín
4  <b>Aragua</b>	Maracay	16  <b>Nueva Esparta</b>	La Asunción
5  <b>Barinas</b>	Barinas	17  <b>Portuguesa</b>	Guanare
6  <b>Bolívar</b>	Ciudad Bolívar	18  <b>Sucre</b>	Cumaná
7  <b>Carabobo</b>	Valencia	19  <b>Táchira</b>	San Cristóbal
8  <b>Cojedes</b>	San Carlos	20  <b>Trujillo</b>	Trujillo
9  <b>Delta Amacuro</b>	Tucupita	21  <b>Vargas</b>	La Guaira
10  <b>Falcón</b>	Coro	22  <b>Yaracuy</b>	San Felipe
11  <b>Guárico</b>	San Juan De Los Morros	23  <b>Zulia</b>	Maracaibo
12  <b>Lara</b>	Barquisimeto		



## Dependencies

Name	Capital
•  <b>Federal Dependencies</b> (none)	

## Administrative regions





Name	Subregions
<b>Andean</b>	Barinas, Mérida, Táchira, Trujillo, Páez Municipality of Apure
<b>Capital</b>	Miranda, Vargas, Capital District
<b>Central</b>	Aragua, Carabobo, Cojedes
<b>Central-Western</b>	Falcón, Lara, Portuguesa, Yaracuy
<b>Guayana</b>	Bolívar, Amazonas, Delta Amacuro
<b>Insular</b>	Nueva Esparta, Federal Dependencies
<b>Llanos</b>	Apure (excluding Paez Municipality), Guárico
<b>North-Eastern</b>	Anzoátegui, Monagas, Sucre
<b>Zulian</b>	Zulia



## Geography

Venezuela's mainland rests on the South American Plate; With 2,800 kilometres (1,740 mi) of coastline, Venezuela is home to a wide variety of beautiful landscapes. The extreme northeastern extensions of the Andes reach into Venezuela's northwest and continue along the northern Caribbean coast. Pico Bolívar, the nation's highest point at 4,979 metres (16,335 ft), lies in this region. The country's centre is characterized by the *llanos*, extensive plains that stretch from the Colombian border in the far west to the Orinoco River delta in the east. To the south, the dissected Guiana Highlands is home to the northern fringes of the Amazon Basin and Angel Falls, the world's highest waterfall. The Orinoco, with its rich alluvial soils, binds the largest and most important river system of the country; it originates in one of the largest watersheds in Latin America. The Caroní and the Apure are other major rivers.



Monte Roraima, a tepui in Canaima National Park in southeastern Venezuela. The park lies atop the Guiana Shield; its Precambrian geological formations rank among the world's oldest.



The country can be further divided into ten geographical areas, some corresponding to climatic and biogeographical regions. In the north are the Venezuelan Andes and the Coro region, a mountainous tract in the northwest, is home to several sierras and valleys. East of it are lowlands abutting Lake Maracaibo and the Gulf of Venezuela. The Central Range runs parallel to the coast and includes the hills surrounding Caracas; the Eastern Range, separated from the Central Range by the Gulf of Cariaco, covers all of Sucre and northern Monagas. The Llanos region comprises a third of the country's area north of the Orinoco River. South of it lies the Guiana Shield, a massive two billion year old Precambrian geological formation featuring *tepuis*, mysterious table-like mountains. The Insular Region includes all of Venezuela's island possessions: Nueva Esparta and the various Federal Dependencies. The Deltaic System, which forms a triangle covering Delta Amacuro, projects northeast into the Atlantic Ocean.



Pico Bolívar in the northwestern state of Mérida.

Though Venezuela is entirely situated in the tropics, its climate varies substantially; it varies from that of humid low-elevation plains, where average annual temperatures range as high as 28 °C (82 °F), to glaciers and highlands (the *páramos*) with an average yearly temperature of 8 °C (46 °F). Annual rainfall varies between 430 millimetres (17 in) in the semiarid portions of the northwest to 1,000 millimetres (39 in) in the Orinoco Delta of the far east. Most precipitation falls between May and November (the rainy season or "winter"); the drier and hotter remainder of the year is known as "summer", though temperature variation throughout the year is not as pronounced as at temperate latitudes.

## Flora and fauna

Venezuela lies within the Neotropic ecozone; large portions of the country were originally covered by moist broadleaf forests. One of seventeen megadiverse countries and among the top twenty countries in terms of endemism, some 38% of the over 21,000 plant species are unique to the country; 23% of reptilian and 50% of amphibian species are also endemic. Venezuela hosts significant biodiversity across habitats ranging from xeric scrublands in the extreme northwest to coastal mangrove forests in the northeast. Its cloud forests and lowland rainforests are particularly rich, for example hosting over 25,000 species of orchids. These include the *flor de mayo* orchid (*Cattleya mossiae*), the national flower.



The araguaney (*Tabebuia chrysantha*), Venezuela's national tree.



Venezuela's national tree is the *araguaney*, whose characteristic lushness after the rainy season led novelist Rómulo Gallegos to name it «*[l]a primavera de oro de los araguaneyes*» ("the golden spring of the *araguaneyes*"). Notable mammals include the giant anteater, jaguar, and the capybara, the world's largest rodent. More than half of Venezuelan avian and mammalian species are found in the Amazonian forests south of the Orinoco. Manatees, Boto river dolphins, and Orinoco crocodiles, which reach up to 8 metres (26 ft) in length, are notable aquatic species. Venezuela also hosts a huge number of bird species, a total of 1,417, 48 of which are endemic. Important birds include ibises, ospreys, kingfishers, and the yellow-orange turpial, the national bird.

In recent decades, logging, mining, shifting cultivation, development, and other human activities have posed a major threat to Venezuela's wildlife; between 1990 and 2000, 0.40% of forest cover was cleared annually. In response, federal protections for critical habitat were implemented; for example, 20% to 33% of forested land is protected. Venezuela is currently home to a biosphere reserve that is part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves; five wetlands are registered under the Ramsar Convention. In 2003, 70% of the nation's land was under conservation management in over 200 protected areas, including 43 national parks.

## Economy

The petroleum sector dominates Venezuela's mixed economy, accounting for roughly a third of GDP, around 80% of exports, and more than half of government revenues. The country's main petroleum deposits are located around and beneath Lake Maracaibo, the Gulf of Venezuela, and in the surroundings of the Orinoco River where the biggest reserve of the country is located.

## Demographics

Since 1926, Venezuelan Census does not contain information about ethnicity so only rough estimates are available. Some 68% of the population are Mestizo, defined as a mixture of any other races; another 21% are unmixed caucasians, mostly of Spanish, Italian, German, and Portuguese stock. Other important groups include Afro-Venezuelans, though their numbers are unclear due to poor census data. Asians, predominantly Arab and Chinese descent, make up a small percentage of the population. Only about 2% of Venezuelans are Indigenous. These groups were joined by sponsored migrants from throughout Europe and neighboring parts of South America by the mid-20th century economic boom. About 85% of the population live in urban areas in northern Venezuela; 73% live less than 100 kilometres (62 mi) from the coastline. Though almost half of Venezuela's land area lies south of the Orinoco, only 5% of Venezuelans live there.

The national and official language is Spanish; 31 indigenous languages are also spoken, including Guajibo, Pemon, Warao, Wayuu, and the various Yanomaman languages. European immigrant communities and their descendants commonly use their own native languages. Nominally, 96% of the population belongs to the Roman Catholic Church.



The golden silk orb-weaver is among the more common of Venezuela's arthropods.



Caracas, Libertador Avenue



## Culture

Venezuela's heritage, art, and culture have been heavily influenced by its Latin American context. These elements extend to its historic buildings, architecture, art, landscape, boundaries, and monuments. Venezuelan culture has been shaped by indigenous, Spanish and African influences. Before this period, indigenous culture was expressed in art ( petroglyphs), crafts, architecture ( *shabonos*), and social organization. Aboriginal culture was subsequently assimilated by Spaniards; over the years, the hybrid culture had diversified by region.

Venezuelan art was initially dominated by religious motifs, but began emphasizing historical and heroic representations in the late 19th century, a move led by Martín Tovar y Tovar. Modernism took over in the 20th century. Notable Venezuelan artists include Arturo Michelena, Cristóbal Rojas, Armando Reverón, Manuel Cabré, the kinetic artists Jesús-Rafael Soto and Carlos Cruz-Diez.

Venezuelan literature originated soon after the Spanish conquest of the mostly pre-literate indigenous societies; it was dominated by Spanish influences. Following the rise of political literature during the War of Independence, Venezuelan Romanticism, notably expounded by Juan Vicente González, emerged as the first important genre in the region. Although mainly focused on narrative writing, Venezuelan literature was advanced by poets such as Andrés Eloy Blanco and Fermín Toro. Major writers and novelists include Rómulo Gallegos, Teresa de la Parra, Arturo Uslar Pietri, Adriano González León, Miguel Otero Silva, and Mariano Picón Salas. The great poet and humanist Andrés Bello was also an educator and intellectual. Others, such as Laureano Vallenilla Lanz and José Gil Fortoul, contributed to Venezuelan Positivism.



*Basilica de La Chinita*, Our  
Lady of Rosario of  
Chiquinquirá Basilica,  
Maracaibo



Carlos Raúl Villanueva was the most important Venezuelan architect of the modern era; he designed the Central University of Venezuela, (a World Heritage Site) and its Aula Magna. Other notable architectural works include the Capitol, the Baralt Theatre, the Teresa Carreño Cultural Complex, and the General Rafael Urdaneta Bridge.

Indigenous musical styles of Venezuela are exemplified by the groups Un Solo Pueblo and Serenata Guayanesa. The national musical instrument is the cuatro. Typical musical styles and pieces mainly emerged in and around the *llanos* region, including *Alma Llanera* (by Pedro Elías Gutiérrez and Rafael Bolívar Coronado), *Florentino y el Diablo* (by Alberto Arvelo Torrealba), *Concierto en la Llanura* by Juan Vicente Torrealba, and *Caballo Viejo* (by Simón Díaz). The Zulian *gaita* is also a popular style, generally performed during Christmas. The national dance is the *joropo*. Teresa Carreño was a world-famous 19th century piano virtuosa.

Baseball is Venezuela's most popular sport, although football (soccer), spearheaded by the Venezuela national football team, is gaining influence. Famous Venezuelan baseball players include Luis Aparicio (inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame), David (Dave) Concepción, Oswaldo (Ozzie) Guillén (current White Sox manager, World Series champion in 2005), Cubs Ace Carlos Zambrano, Freddy García, Andrés Galarraga, Omar Vizquel (an eleven-time Gold Glove winner), Luis Sojo, Miguel Cabrera, Bobby Abreu, Félix Hernández, Magglio Ordóñez, Ugueth Urbina, Víctor Martínez, Rafael Betancourt, and Johan Santana (a two-time unanimously selected Cy Young Award winner).

The World Values Survey has consistently shown Venezuelans to be among the happiest people in the world, with 55% of those questioned saying they were "very happy".

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The Teresa Carreño Cultural Complex in Caracas.



The *joropo*, as depicted in a 1912 drawing by Eloy Palacios.