



**Official Name:** Aruba



## PROFILE

### Geography

Area: 180 sq. km. (112 sq. mi.).

Cities: *Capital*--Oranjestad.

Terrain: Flat with a few hills; scant vegetation.

Climate: Subtropical.

### People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*--Aruban(s).

Population (2008): 106,050.

Annual population growth rate: 1.46%.

Ethnic groups: Mixed white/Caribbean Amerindian 80%, other 20%.

Religion: Roman Catholic 81%, Evangelist 4.1%, Protestant 2.5%, Jehovah's Witness 1.5%, Methodist 1.2%, other 5.3%, unspecified or none 4.6%.

Languages: Dutch (official); Papiamentu, Spanish, and English also are spoken.

Education: *Literacy*--97%.

Health: *Infant mortality rate*--16/1,000. *Life expectancy*--72 years for men, 78 years for women.

Work force (54,720): Most employment is in wholesale and retail trade and repair, followed by hotels and restaurants and oil refining. *Unemployment*--about 5.7% (2007).

## **Government**

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Independence: Part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Branches: *Executive*--monarch represented by a governor (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), Cabinet.

*Legislative*--unicameral parliament. *Judicial*--Joint High Court of Justice appointed by the monarch.

Subdivisions: Aruba is divided into eight regions--Noord/Tank Leendert, Oranjestad (west), Oranjestad (east), Paradera, Santa Cruz, Savaneta, Sint Nicolaas (north), and Sint Nicolaas (south).

Political parties: People's Electoral Movement (MEP), Aruba People's Party (AVP), Network (RED), Aruban Patriotic Movement (MPA), Real Democracy (PDR), Aruba Liberal Organization (OLA), Aruba Patriotic Party (PPA), Aruba Democratic Alliance (ALIANSA), Socialist Movement of Aruba (MSA).

Suffrage: Universal at 18 years.

## **Economy**

GDP (2008): \$1.968 billion.

Growth rate (2008): -1.6%.

Per capita GDP (2008): \$25,922.

Natural resources: Beaches. Tourism/services and oil refining are dominant factors in GDP.

Trade (2009): *Exports*--\$138 million: oil products, live animals and animal products, art and collectibles, machinery and electrical equipment, transport equipment. *Major markets in value*--Panama (23.89%), Colombia (17.42%), Netherlands Antilles (20.51%), U.S. (9.35%), Venezuela (12.60%), Netherlands (7.56%). *Imports*--\$1.092 billion: crude petroleum, food, manufactures. *Major suppliers*--U.S. (49.5%), Netherlands (16.14%), U.K. (4.94%).

## **PEOPLE AND HISTORY**

Aruba's first inhabitants were the Caquetios Indians from the Arawak tribe. Fragments of the earliest known Indian settlements date back to about 1000 A.D. Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda is regarded as the first European to arrive in about 1499. The Spanish garrison on Aruba dwindled following the Dutch capture of nearby Bonaire and Curacao in 1634. The Dutch occupied Aruba shortly thereafter, and retained control for nearly two centuries. In 1805, during the Napoleonic wars, the English briefly took control over the island, but it was returned to Dutch control in 1816. A 19th-century gold rush was followed by prosperity brought on by the opening in 1924 of an oil refinery. The last decades of the 20th century saw a boom in the tourism industry. In 1986 Aruba seceded from the Netherlands Antilles and became a separate, autonomous member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Movement toward full independence was halted at Aruba's prerogative in 1990. Aruba has a mixture of people from South America and Europe, the Far East, and other islands of the Caribbean.

## **GOVERNMENT**

Part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Aruba has semi-autonomy on most internal affairs with the exception of defense, foreign affairs, final judicial review, and "Kingdom matters" including human rights and good governance. The constitution was enacted in January 1986. Executive power rests with a governor, while a prime minister heads an eight-member Cabinet. The governor is appointed for a 6-year term by the monarch and the prime minister and deputy prime minister are elected by the legislature, or Staten, for 4-year terms. The Staten is made up of 21 members elected by direct, popular vote to serve 4-year terms. Aruba's judicial system, mainly derived from the Dutch system, operates independently of the legislature and the executive. Jurisdiction, including appeal, lies with the Common Court of Justice of Aruba and the Kingdom-level Supreme Court of Justice in the Netherlands.

### **Principal Government Officials**

Governor General--Fredis J. Refunjol

Prime Minister--Michiel Godfried (Mike) Eman

Deputy Prime Minister--Mike Eric de Meza

Minister of Economic Affairs, Social Affairs and Culture--Michelle Janice Hooyboer-Winklaar

Minister of General Affairs and Foreign Relations--Michiel Godfried (Mike) Eman

Minister of Finance, Communication, Utilities and Energy--Mike Eric de Meza

Minister of Health and Sport--Richard Wayne Milton Visser

Minister of Justice and Education--Arthur Lawrence Dowers

Minister of Tourism, Labor and Transport--Otmar Enrique Oduber

Minister of Integration, Infrastructure and Environment--Oslin Benito Sevinger

Minister Plenipotentiary to The Hague--Edwin Bibiano Abath

Minister Plenipotentiary to Washington, DC--Jocelyne Croes

President, Bank of Aruba--Jane R. Semeleer

Attorney General--Robert Pietersz

### **POLITICAL CONDITIONS**

The Aruba People's Party (AVP), led by Mike Eman, won the September 25, 2009 parliamentary elections, capturing 12 of the 21 seats; People's Electoral Movement (MEP) dropped from 11 to 8 seats, and Real Democracy Party (PDR) took the final seat. The Network of Eternal Democracy (RED) and Aruban Patriotic Movement (MPA) did not return to parliament.

### **ECONOMY**

Through the 1990s and into the 21st century Aruba posted growth rates around 5%. However, in 2001, a decrease in demand and the terrorist attacks on the United States led to the first economic contraction in 15 years. Deficit spending has been a staple in Aruba's history, and modestly high inflation has been present as well, although recent efforts at tightening monetary policy may correct this. Oil processing is the dominant industry in Aruba, despite the expansion of the tourism sector. Approximately 1.25 million tourists per year visit Aruba, with 75% of those from the United States. The sizes of the agriculture and manufacturing industries remain minimal.

### **FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Aruba conducts foreign affairs through the Kingdom of the Netherlands, whose embassies and consulates issue visas for travel to the island. Aruba has strong relations with other Caribbean governments. Aruba is an observer in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), an associate member of the World Trade Organization through the Netherlands, and is a full member of the Association of Caribbean States.

### **U.S.-ARUBA RELATIONS**

#### **Principal U.S. Officials**

Chief of Mission/Consul General--**Timothy J. Dunn**

Vice Consul--Winifred L. Hofstetter

Management Officer--Donald Feeney

The **U.S. Consulate General** for Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles is located at J.B. Gorsiraweg #1, Willemstad, Curacao; tel.

599-9-461-3066, fax: 599-9-461-6489, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am-5:00 pm. Email: [infocuracao@state.gov](mailto:infocuracao@state.gov)

## **TRAVEL AND BUSINESS INFORMATION**

The U.S. Department of State's Consular Information Program advises Americans traveling and residing abroad through Country Specific Information, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings. **Country Specific Information** exists for all countries and includes information on entry and exit requirements, currency regulations, health conditions, safety and security, crime, political disturbances, and the addresses of the U.S. embassies and consulates abroad. **Travel Alerts** are issued to disseminate information quickly about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term conditions overseas that pose significant risks to the security of American travelers. **Travel Warnings** are issued when the State Department recommends that Americans avoid travel to a certain country because the situation is dangerous or unstable.

For the latest security information, Americans living and traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet web site at <http://www.travel.state.gov>, where the current **Worldwide Caution**, **Travel Alerts**, and **Travel Warnings** can be found. **Consular Affairs Publications**, which contain information on obtaining passports and planning a safe trip abroad, are also available at <http://www.travel.state.gov>. For additional information on international travel, see <http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Travel/International.shtml>.

The Department of State encourages all U.S. citizens traveling or residing abroad to register via the **State Department's travel registration** website or at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. Registration will make your presence and whereabouts known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency and will enable you to receive up-to-date information on security conditions.

Emergency information concerning Americans traveling abroad may be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or the regular toll line 1-202-501-4444 for callers outside the U.S. and Canada.

The **National Passport Information Center** (NPIC) is the U.S. Department of State's single, centralized public contact center for U.S. passport information. Telephone: 1-877-4-USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778); TDD/TTY: 1-888-874-7793. Passport information is available 24 hours, 7 days a week. You may speak with a representative Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., Eastern Time, excluding federal holidays.

Travelers can check the latest health information with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. A hotline at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) and a web site at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx> give the most recent health advisories, immunization recommendations or requirements, and advice on food and drinking water safety for regions and countries. The CDC publication "Health Information for International Travel" can be found at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentYellowBook.aspx>.

### **Further Electronic Information**

**Department of State Web Site.** Available on the Internet at <http://www.state.gov>, the Department of State web site provides timely, global access to official U.S. foreign policy information, including **Background Notes** and **daily press briefings** along with the directory of **key officers** of Foreign Service posts and more. The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) provides security information and regional news that impact U.S. companies working abroad through its website <http://www.osac.gov>

[Export.gov](#) provides a portal to all export-related assistance and market information offered by the federal government and provides trade leads, free export counseling, help with the export process, and more.

[STAT-USA/Internet](#), a service of the U.S. Department of Commerce, provides authoritative economic, business, and international trade information from the Federal government. The site includes current and historical trade-related releases, international market research, trade opportunities, and country analysis and provides access to the [National Trade Data Bank](#).

