



**Official Name: Barbados**



**PROFILE**

**Geography**

Area: 431 sq. km. (166 sq. mi.); about three times the size of Washington, DC.

Cities: *Capital*--Bridgetown.

Terrain: Generally flat, hilly in the interior.

Climate: Tropical.

**People**

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*--Barbadian(s); informally "Bajan(s)."

Population (2008 estimate): 281,698.

Annual population growth rate (2005): 0.3%.

Ethnic groups: Predominantly of African descent 90%, white 4%, Asian or mixed 6%.

Religions: Protestant 67% (Anglican 40%, Pentecostal 8%, Methodist 7%, other 12%), Roman Catholic 4%, none 17%, other 12%.

Language: English.

Education (2005): *Adult literacy*--99.7%.

Health (2005): *Infant mortality rate*--11.0/1,000. *Life expectancy*--men 70.8 years; women 74.8 years.

Work force (2006): 142,000 (*tourism, government, manufacturing, construction, mining, agriculture, fishing*).

Unemployment (2009): 10%.

## **Government**

Type: Parliamentary democracy; independent sovereign state within the Commonwealth.

Independence: November 30, 1966.

Constitution: 1966.

Branches: *Executive*--governor general (representing Queen Elizabeth II, head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. *Legislative*--bicameral Parliament. *Judicial*--magistrate's courts, Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeals), Caribbean Court of Justice in Trinidad and Tobago.

Subdivisions: Eleven parishes and the city of Bridgetown.

Political parties: Barbados Labour Party (BLP), Democratic Labour Party (DLP), People's Empowerment Party (PEP).

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

## **Economy**

GDP (2008): \$3.682 billion.

GDP growth rate (2008): 0.7%.

Per capita GDP (2008 est.): \$19,100.

Inflation (2007): 5.5%.

Natural resources: Petroleum, fish, quarrying, natural gas.

Agriculture: Sugar accounts for less than 1% of GDP and 80% of arable land.

Manufacturing and construction: Food, beverages, infrastructure, electronic components, textiles, paper, chemicals.

Services: Tourism, banking and other financial services, and data processing.

Trade (2005): *Exports*--\$359 million (merchandise) and \$1.41 billion (commercial services). *Major markets*--United States (13.4%), European Union (12.4%), Trinidad and Tobago (10.8%), St. Lucia (6.1%), and Jamaica (5%). *Imports*--\$1.6 billion (merchandise) and \$636 million (commercial services). *Major suppliers*--United States (35.9%), Trinidad and Tobago (21.2%), European Union (13.3%), Japan (7.6%), and Canada (3.4%).

Official exchange rate: BDS\$2 = U.S. \$1.

## **PEOPLE**

About 90% of Barbados' population is of African descent, 4% European descent, and 6% Asian or mixed. About 40% of Barbadians are Anglican, and the rest mostly Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, and Moravian. There also are small Jewish and Muslim communities. Barbados' population growth rate has been very low, less than 1% since the 1960s, largely due to family planning efforts and a high emigration rate.

## **HISTORY**

British sailors who landed on Barbados in the 1620s at the site of present-day Holetown on the Caribbean coast found the island uninhabited. As elsewhere in the eastern Caribbean, Arawak Indians may have been annihilated by invading Caribs, who are believed to have subsequently abandoned the island.

From the arrival of the first British settlers in 1627-28 until independence in 1966, Barbados was a self-funding colony under uninterrupted British rule. Nevertheless, Barbados always enjoyed a large measure of local autonomy. Its House of Assembly, which began meeting in 1639, is the third-oldest legislative body in the Western Hemisphere, preceded only by Bermuda's legislature and the Virginia House of Burgesses.

As the sugar industry developed into the main commercial enterprise, Barbados was divided into large plantation estates, which

replaced the small holdings of the early British settlers. Some of the displaced farmers relocated to British colonies in North America. To work the plantations, slaves were brought from Africa; the slave trade ceased a few years before the abolition of slavery throughout the British empire in 1834.

Plantation owners and merchants of British descent dominated local politics. 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 in 1938. Progress toward more democratic government for Barbados was made in 1951, when the first general election under universal adult suffrage occurred. This was followed by steps toward increased self-government, and in 1961, Barbados achieved the status of self-governing autonomy.

From 1958 to 1962, Barbados was one of 10 members of the West Indies Federation, and Sir Grantley Adams served as its first and only prime minister. When the federation was terminated, Barbados reverted to its former status as a self-governing colony. Following several attempts to form another federation composed of Barbados and the Leeward and Windward Islands, Barbados negotiated its own independence at a constitutional conference with the United Kingdom in June 1966. After years of peaceful and democratic progress, Barbados became an independent state within the British Commonwealth on November 30, 1966.

#### **GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS**

Under its constitution, Barbados is a parliamentary democracy modeled on the British system. The governor general represents the monarch. Control of the government rests with the cabinet, headed by the prime minister and responsible to the Parliament.

The bicameral Parliament consists of the House of Assembly and Senate. The 30 members of the House are elected by universal suffrage to 5-year terms. Elections may be called at any time the government wishes to seek a new mandate or if the government suffers a vote of no-confidence in Parliament. The Senate's 21 members are appointed by the governor general--12 with the advice of the prime minister, two with the advice of the leader of the opposition, and seven at the governor general's discretion to represent segments of the community.

Barbados has an independent judiciary composed of magistrate courts, which are statutorily authorized, and a Supreme Court, which is constitutionally mandated. The Supreme Court consists of the high court and the court of appeals, each with four judges. The Chief Justice serves on both the high court and the court of appeals. The court of last resort is the Caribbean Court of Justice.

The island is divided into 11 parishes and the city of Bridgetown for administrative purposes. There is no local government.

The two main political parties--the Barbados Labour Party (BLP), the Democratic Labour Party (DLP)--are both moderate and have no major ideological differences; electoral contests and political disputes often have personal overtones. The major political problems facing Barbados today are in promoting economic growth: creating jobs, encouraging agricultural diversification, attracting foreign investment, and promoting tourism.

In January 15, 2008 parliamentary elections voters gave a majority to the DLP, led by David Thompson. This election ended 14 years of rule by the BLP. Prime Minister Thompson pledged to focus on domestic issues, particularly the cost of living, healthcare, and crime.

#### **Principal Government Officials**

Head of State--Queen Elizabeth II

Governor General--Clifford Straughn Husbands  
Prime Minister--David John Howard Thompson  
Ambassador to the United States and the OAS--John Beale  
Ambassador to the UN--Christopher Hackett

Barbados maintains an **embassy** in the United States at 2144 Wyoming Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008 (tel. 202-939-9200), a consulate general in New York City at 800 2nd Avenue, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-867-8435), and a consulate general in Miami at 150 Alhambra Circle, Suite 1270, Coral Gables, FL 33134 (tel. 305-442-1994).

## **ECONOMY**

Since independence, Barbados has transformed itself from a low-income economy dependent upon sugar production into an upper-middle-income economy based on tourism. Barbados is now one of the most prosperous countries in the western hemisphere outside of the United States and Canada. The economy went into a deep recession in 1990 after 3 years of steady decline brought on by fundamental macroeconomic imbalances. After a painful readjustment process, the economy began to grow again in 1993. Growth rates averaged between 3%-5% since then until 2001, when the economy contracted 2.8% in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the global drop-off in tourism. Growth picked up again in 2004 and 2005, and the economy grew by 3.8% in 2006.

Tourism drives the economy in Barbados, but offshore banking and financial services have become an increasingly important source of foreign exchange and economic growth. The sugar industry, once dominant, now makes up less than 1% of GDP and employs only around 500 people. The labor force totaled 142,000 persons at the end of 2006. The average rate of unemployment during the last quarter of 2006 was estimated at 7.6%. The current account deficit expanded to 12.5% of GDP, and government debt rose above 80% of GDP in 2006.

Barbados hosted the final matches of the Cricket World Cup in 2007, and much of the country's investment during 2006 and the beginning of 2007 was directed toward accommodating the expected influx of visitors. As a result of these preparations, growth was registered in all sectors, especially transportation, communications, construction, and utilities. The government and private sector are both working to prepare the country for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Single Market and Economy (CSME)--a European Union-style single market.

## **FOREIGN RELATIONS**

As a small nation, the primary thrust of Barbados' diplomatic activity has been within international organizations. The island is a member of the Commonwealth and participates in its activities. Barbados was admitted to the United Nations in December 1966. Barbados joined the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1967.

On July 4, 1973, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Jamaica signed a treaty in Trinidad to found the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). In May 1974, most of the remaining English-speaking Caribbean states joined CARICOM, which now has 15 members. Barbados also is a member of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), established in 1970, with headquarters in Bridgetown. The Eastern Caribbean's Regional Security System (RSS), which associates Barbados with six other island nations, also is headquartered in Barbados. In July 1994, Barbados joined the newly established Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

Barbados has diplomatic missions headed by resident ambassadors or high commissioners in Canada, the United Kingdom, the

United States, and Venezuela, and at the European Union (Brussels) and the UN. It also has resident consuls general in Toronto, Miami, and New York City. Brazil, Canada, China, Cuba, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela have ambassadors or high commissioners resident in Barbados.

### **U.S.-BARBADIAN RELATIONS**

In 1751, George Washington visited Barbados as a young man, making what is believed to have been his only trip abroad. The U.S. Government has been represented on Barbados since 1823. From 1956 to 1978, the United States operated a naval facility in Barbados.

The United States and Barbados have had friendly bilateral relations since Barbados' independence in 1966. The United States has supported the government's efforts to expand the country's economic base and to provide a higher standard of living for its citizens. Barbados is a beneficiary of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative. U.S. assistance is channeled primarily through multilateral agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) office in Bridgetown.

In May 1997, Prime Minister Owen Arthur hosted President Bill Clinton and 14 other Caribbean leaders during the first-ever U.S.-regional summit in Bridgetown, Barbados. The summit strengthened the basis for regional cooperation on justice and counter narcotics issues, finance and development, and trade.

Barbados receives counternarcotics assistance and is eligible to benefit from the U.S. military's exercise-related and humanitarian assistance construction program.

Barbados and U.S. authorities cooperate closely in the fight against narcotics trafficking and other forms of transnational crime. In 1996, the United States and Barbados signed a mutual legal assistance treaty (MLAT) and an updated extradition treaty covering all common offenses, including conspiracy and organized crime. A maritime law enforcement agreement was signed in 1997. A popular tourist destination, Barbados had around 570,000 tourists in 2006, mainly cruise ship visitors. The majority of tourists are from the U.K., Germany, the Caribbean, and the United States. An estimated 3,000 Americans reside in the country.

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

Ambassador--vacant

Deputy Chief of Mission--Brent Hardt

Political/Economic Section Chief--Ian Campbell

Consul General--Nicole Theriot

Commercial Affairs--Ian Campbell

Public Affairs Officer--John Roberts

Peace Corps Director--Marjorie Jeanchild (resident in St. Lucia)

The **U.S. Embassy** in Barbados is located in the Wildey Business Park, Wildey, St. Michael (tel: 246-436-4950; fax: 246-429-5246).

### **Other Contact Information**

U.S. Department of Commerce

International Trade Administration

Office of Latin America and the Caribbean  
14th & Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230  
Tel: 202-482-1658, 800-USA-Trade  
Fax: 202-482-0464

Caribbean/Latin American Action  
1818 N Street, NW  
Suite 310  
Washington, DC 20036  
Tel: 202-466-7464  
Fax: 202-822-0075

#### **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://www.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**.

