



Official Name: Commonwealth of Dominica



PROFILE

Geography

Area: 754 sq. km. (290 sq. mi.).

Cities: *Capital*--Roseau (population 14,500).

Terrain: Mountainous volcanic island with rainforest cover.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*--Dominican (Dom-i-NEE-can).

Population (2008): 72,000.

Annual growth rate (2005-2010): -3%. (Negative population growth is due to external migration.)

Ethnic groups: Mainly of African descent, mixed Black and European, Syrian and some Carib Amerindians.

Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant (Methodist, Pentecostal, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Baptist), Islam, Baha'i, Rastafarianism, Anglican, Jehovah's Witnesses, Nazarene, Church of Christ, and Brethren Christian Churches.

Languages: English (official); a French-based Creole is widely spoken.

Education (2005): *Adult literacy*--94%.

Health (2006): *Infant mortality rate*--13/1,000. *Life expectancy*--men 72 years; women 77.9 years. Has among the highest numbers of centenarians per capita in the world, with 22 confirmed cases.

Work force (2005): 24,370.

Unemployment (2005): 13.1%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy; republic within the Commonwealth.

Independence: November 3, 1978.

Constitution: November 1978.

Branches: *Executive*--president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. *Legislative*--unicameral House of Assembly. *Judicial*--magistrate and jury courts, Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeals), Privy Council.

Subdivisions: 10 parishes.

Political parties: Dominica Labour Party (incumbent), United Workers Party.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP (2008): \$364 million.

GDP growth rate (2008): 3.2%.

GDP growth rate (1998-2008): 0.8%

Per capita GDP (2008): \$5,082.

Inflation of consumer prices (2008): 6.3%.

Natural resources: timber, water (hydropower), copper.

Agriculture (10% of GDP in 2005): *Products*--bananas, citrus, coconuts, cocoa, herbal oils and extracts.

Manufacturing (3% of GDP in 2005): *Types*--agricultural processing, soap and other coconut-based products, apparel.

Trade (2005): *Exports*--\$39.0 million (merchandise) and \$82.0 million (commercial services). *Major markets*--European Union (27.8%), Jamaica (12.7%), Antigua and Barbuda (11.3%), Trinidad and Tobago (9.0%), and Saint Lucia (6.8%). *Imports*--\$165 million (merchandise) and \$49 million (commercial services). *Major suppliers*--United States (36.6%), Trinidad and Tobago (20.5%), China (19.4%), European Union (13.4%), and Japan (4.6%).

PEOPLE

Almost all Dominicans are descendants of enslaved Africans brought in by colonial planters in the 18th century. Dominica is the only island in the eastern Caribbean to retain some of its pre-Columbian population--the Carib Indians--about 3,000 of whom live on the island's east coast. The population growth rate is very low, due primarily to emigration to more prosperous Caribbean Islands, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada.

English is the official language; however, because of historic French domination, the most widely spoken dialect is a French-based Creole. Nearly 80% of the population is Catholic. In recent years, a number of Protestant churches have been established.

HISTORY

The island's indigenous Arawak people were expelled or exterminated by Caribs in the 14th century. Columbus landed there in November 1493. Spanish ships frequently landed on Dominica during the 16th century, but fierce resistance by the Caribs discouraged Spain's efforts at settlement.

In 1635, France claimed Dominica. Shortly thereafter, French missionaries became the first European inhabitants of the island. Carib incursions continued, though, and in 1660, the French and British agreed that both Dominica and St. Vincent should be abandoned. Dominica was officially neutral for the next century, but the attraction of its resources remained; rival expeditions of

British and French foresters were harvesting timber by the start of the 18th century.

Largely due to Dominica's position between Martinique and Guadeloupe, France eventually became predominant, and a French settlement was established and grew. As part of the 1763 Treaty of Paris that ended the Seven Years' War, the island became a British possession. In 1778, during the American Revolutionary War, the French mounted a successful invasion with the active cooperation of the population. The 1783 Treaty of Paris, which ended the war, returned the island to Britain. French invasions in 1795 and 1805 ended in failure.

In 1763, the British established a legislative assembly, representing only the white population. In 1831, reflecting a liberalization of official British racial attitudes, the Brown Privilege Bill conferred political and social rights on free nonwhites. Three Blacks were elected to the legislative assembly the following year. Following the abolition of slavery, in 1838 Dominica became the first and only British Caribbean colony to have a Black-controlled legislature in the 19th century. Most Black legislators were smallholders or merchants who held economic and social views diametrically opposed to the interests of the small, wealthy English planter class. Reacting to a perceived threat, the planters lobbied for more direct British rule.

In 1865, after much agitation and tension, the colonial office replaced the elective assembly with one comprised of one-half elected members and one-half appointed. Planters allied with colonial administrators outmaneuvered the elected legislators on numerous occasions. In 1871, Dominica became part of the Leeward Island Federation. The power of the Black population progressively eroded. Crown Colony government was re-established in 1896. All political rights for the vast majority of the population were effectively curtailed. Development aid, offered as compensation for disenfranchisement, proved to have a negligible effect.

Following World War I, an upsurge of political consciousness throughout the Caribbean led to the formation of the Representative Government Association. Marshaling public frustration with the lack of a voice in the governing of Dominica, this group won one-third of the popularly elected seats of the legislative assembly in 1924 and one-half in 1936. Shortly thereafter, Dominica was transferred from the Leeward Island Administration and was governed as part of the Windwards until 1958, when it joined the short-lived West Indies Federation.

After the federation dissolved, Dominica became an associated state of the United Kingdom in 1967 and formally took responsibility for its internal affairs. On November 3, 1978, the Commonwealth of Dominica was granted independence by the United Kingdom.

Independence did little to solve problems stemming from centuries of economic underdevelopment, and in mid-1979, political discontent led to the formation of an interim government. It was replaced after the 1980 elections by a government led by the Dominica Freedom Party under Prime Minister Eugenia Charles, the Caribbean's first female prime minister. Chronic economic problems were compounded by the severe impact of hurricanes in 1979 and in 1980. By the end of the 1980s, the economy recovered, but weakened again in the 1990s due to a decrease in banana prices. In the 2000s, the economy was hit by a spate of disasters, including the removal of the European preferential trade for bananas, the impact of Hurricane Dean, and the global financial meltdown. Dominica has managed quite well during the current global recession as a smaller percentage of its economy is based on tourism and foreign investment.

In the January 2000 elections, the Edison James United Workers Party (UWP) was defeated by the Dominican Labour Party (DLP), led by Roosevelt P. "Rosie" Douglas. Douglas died after only a few months in office and was replaced by Pierre Charles,

who died in office in January 2004. Roosevelt Skerrit, also of the DLP, replaced Charles as Prime Minister. Under Prime Minister Skerrit's leadership, the DLP won elections in May 2005 and in December 2009. In 2009, the DLP won 18 of the 21 constituencies, with the UWP collecting 3 seats. Currently the opposition has decided to boycott parliament over allegations of campaign improprieties. Due to the absence in parliament of 2 UWP members, the government held by-elections on July 9, 2010 with both seats won by the UWP.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Dominica has a Westminster-style parliamentary government, and there are two major political parties--the Dominica Labour Party (the majority party), and the Dominica United Workers Party. The Dominica Freedom Party has lost its party base and is no longer a factor in elections. A president and prime minister make up the executive branch. Nominated by the prime minister in consultation with the leader of the opposition party, the president is elected for a 5-year term by the parliament. The president appoints as prime minister the leader of the majority party in the parliament and also appoints, on the prime minister's recommendation, members of the parliament from the ruling party as cabinet ministers. The prime minister and cabinet are responsible to the parliament and can be removed on a no-confidence vote.

The unicameral parliament, called the House of Assembly, is composed of 21 regional representatives and nine senators. The regional representatives are elected by universal suffrage and, in turn, decide whether senators are to be elected or appointed. If appointed, five are chosen by the president with the advice of the prime minister and four with the advice of the opposition leader. If elected, it is by vote of the regional representatives. Elections for representatives and senators must be held no later than 5 years after the first meeting of parliament, although the prime minister can call elections any time. The last election was held in December 2009.

Dominica's legal system is based on English common law. There are three magistrate's courts, with appeals made to the Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeal and, ultimately, to the Privy Council in London.

Councils elected by universal suffrage govern most towns. Supported largely by property taxation, the councils are responsible for the regulation of markets and sanitation and the maintenance of secondary roads and other municipal amenities. The island is also divided into 10 parishes, whose governance is unrelated to the town governments.

Principal Government Officials

President--Nicholas Liverpool

Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Foreign Affairs and Information Technology--Roosevelt Skerrit

Minister for National Security, Labour and Immigration--Charles Savarin

Ambassador to the United States and Organization of American States--Hubert J. Charles

Ambassador to the United Nations--Vince Henderson

The Dominican Embassy in the United States is located at 3216 New Mexico Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20016 (tel. 202-364-6781). Dominica also has a consulate general co-located with its UN mission in New York at Suite 900, 820 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (tel: 212-599-8478).

ECONOMY

Many consider Dominica's economic situation the most challenging of all the Eastern Caribbean states. While the economy has grown faster in more recent years, growth over the last decade was still under 1%. The country nearly had a financial crisis in

2003 and 2004. Growth in 2006 was attributed to gains in tourism, construction, offshore and other services, and some sub-sectors of the banana industry. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently praised the Government of Dominica for its successful macroeconomic reforms. The IMF also pointed out remaining challenges, including further reductions in public debt, increased financial sector regulation, and market diversification.

Bananas and other agriculture dominate Dominica's economy, and nearly one-third of the labor force works in agriculture. This sector, however, is highly vulnerable to weather conditions and to external events affecting commodity prices. In 2007, Hurricane Dean caused significant damage to the agricultural sector as well as the country's infrastructure, especially roads. In response to reduced European Union (EU) banana trade preferences, the government has diversified the agricultural sector by introducing coffee, patchouli, aloe vera, cut flowers, and exotic fruits such as mangoes, guavas, and papayas. Dominica has had some success in increasing its manufactured exports, primarily soap.

Dominica is mostly volcanic and has few beaches; therefore, tourism has developed more slowly than on neighboring islands. Nevertheless, Dominica's high, rugged mountains, rainforests, freshwater lakes, hot springs, waterfalls, and diving spots make it an attractive eco-tourism destination. Cruise ship stopovers have increased following the development of modern docking and waterfront facilities in the capital.

Dominica's currency is the Eastern Caribbean Dollar (EC\$), a regional currency shared among members of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU). The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) issues the EC\$, manages monetary policy, and regulates and supervises commercial banking activities in its member countries. The ECCB has kept the EC\$ pegged at EC\$2.7=U.S. \$1.

Dominica is a beneficiary of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative that grants duty-free entry into the United States for many goods. Dominica also belongs to the predominantly English-speaking Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Like its Eastern Caribbean neighbors, the main priority of Dominica's foreign relations is economic development. The country maintains missions in Washington, New York, London, and Brussels and is represented jointly with other Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) members in Canada. Dominica also is a member of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the British Commonwealth. It became a member of the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1978 and of the World Bank and Organization of American States (OAS) in 1979. In March 2004, Dominica established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. In January 2008, Dominica joined the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA).

U.S.-DOMINICAN RELATIONS

The United States and Dominica have friendly bilateral relations. The United States supports the Dominican Government's efforts to expand its economic base and to provide a higher standard of living for its citizens. U.S. assistance is primarily channeled through multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), as well as through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) office in Bridgetown, Barbados. The Peace Corps also provides technical assistance to Dominica, and has volunteers on the island working primarily in education, youth development, and health.

In addition, the United States and Dominica work together in the battle against illegal drugs. Dominica cooperates with U.S. agencies and participates in counternarcotics programs in an effort to curb narco-trafficking and marijuana cultivation. In 1995,

the Dominican Government signed a maritime law enforcement agreement with the United States to strengthen counternarcotics coordination, and in 1996, the government signed mutual legal assistance and extradition treaties to enhance joint efforts in combating international crime.

More Americans visit Dominica than any other national group. In 2008, tourist visitors totaled around 460,000, mainly from the United States, the French West Indies, the United Kingdom, and CARICOM. The two largest private employers in Dominica are U.S. companies, and a large number of Americans attend Ross University, a U.S. medical school with a campus in Portsmouth.

The United States maintains no official presence in Dominica. The Ambassador and Embassy officers are resident in Barbados but travel frequently to Dominica.

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

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Ambassador--vacant

Chargé d'Affaires--Brent Hardt

Political/Economic/Commercial Section Chief--Ian Campbell

Consul General--Nicole Theriot

Regional Labor Attaché--Jake Aller

Public Affairs Officer--John Roberts

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

Other Contact Information

International Trade Administration

U.S. Department of Commerce

1401 Constitution Ave NW

Washington, DC 20230

Tel: 1-800-USA-TRADE

<http://trade.gov/>

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://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**.

