

## KEY FACTS

**Official name:** Curaçao (Kòrsou in Papiamentu)

**Head of State:** Queen Beatrix of The Netherlands, represented by Acting Governor Adèle Van der Pluijm-Vrede (19 Nov 2012)

**Head of government:** *Formateur* (head of coalition government) Daniel Hodge (from 31 Dec 2012)

**Ruling party:** Coalition of Pueblo Soberano (PS) (Sovereign People), with Partido pa Adelanto i Inovashon Soshal (PAIS) and Partido Nashonal di Pueblo (PNP) (National People's Party), plus an independent (from 19 Nov 2012)

**Area:** 444 square kilometres

**Population:** 149,679 (2011; census figure)

**Capital:** Willemstad

**Official language:** Dutch and Papiamentu (official)

**Currency:** Netherlands Antilles guilder (Naf) = 100 cents

**Exchange rate:** Naf1.79 per US\$ (Jul 2013); (official rate pegged to US\$ since Jan 2000)

**GDP real growth:** 0.10% (2011)

**Unemployment:** 10.50% (2011)

**Inflation:** 3.10% (2011)\*

**Balance of trade:** -US\$1.38 billion (2012)\*

\* estimated figure

# Curaçao

## COUNTRY PROFILE

### Historical profile

The islands of the Netherlands Antilles were first inhabited by Carib and Arawak Indians.

1493 Christopher Columbus was the first European to sight the islands.

1499 The Spanish explorer, Alonso de Ojedo, visited Curaçao but left without establishing a settlement.

1527 The islands were settled, mainly by Spanish and Portuguese Jews escaping persecution.

1634 The Dutch East India Company took over the islands, 'persuading' the settlers to depart, first from St Maarten and later from Aruba.

1642–46 Peter Stuyvesant was governor.

1816 After a number of changes of possession, the islands – Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire (known as the Leeward Islands), St Eustatius, Saba and Sint Maarten (half of which is the French territory of St Martin) (known as the Windward Islands) – were confirmed as Dutch territory.

1863 Slavery was abolished.

1916 The first oil refinery was opened in Curaçao.

1954 Internal autonomy was granted as associated states within a federacy.

1986 Aruba separated from the other islands and became a self-governing member of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. The remaining islands became the Antilles of Five.

1998 The general election resulted in a six-party coalition government under Prime Minister Suzanne Camelia-Römer.

1999 The Partido Laboral Krusado Popular (PLKP) (Labour Party People's Crusade) left the coalition, to be replaced by the Partido Antiá Restrukturá (PAR) (Party for the Restructured Antilles), with Miguel Pourier becoming prime minister.

2000 In a referendum, St Maarten voted in favour of separate status within the Kingdom of The Netherlands and relinquishing membership of The Netherlands Antilles government.

2002 The ruling coalition was returned to power in the elections.

2004 The coalition government avoided collapse, caused by a corruption crisis, when support was offered by the Democratische Partij (DP) (Democratic Party) of Bonaire. The government finally collapsed when the National People's Party (PNP) withdrew, citing its unwillingness to work with Justice Minister Ben Komproe. Prime Minister Louisa-Godett

resigned and Etienne Ys became prime minister.

2005 The islanders of Curaçao voted to become an autonomous state within the Kingdom of The Netherlands and break with The Netherlands Antilles. The tiny neighbouring island, Sint Eustatius, decided to remain within the Antilles. The Movishon Antia Nobo (New Antilles Movement) was renamed Partido MAN. 2006 Emily de Jongh-Elhage became prime minister, following parliamentary elections. The islands of Curaçao and St Maarten signed an agreement of independence to become autonomous territories within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. At the same time Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius agreed to become city-states of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. When these changes are enacted the Netherlands Antilles will cease to exist. A new terminal in the Curaçao International Airport was opened, designed to accommodate around 1.6 million passengers per year. The growth in tourism on the island and in the region is seen as a major industry and a phase two expansion is planned for when arrivals are expected to reach 2.5 million in 2031.

2007 Negotiations for a change in their status began between Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius and The Netherlands. 2008 The Netherlands Antilles failed to have its name removed from the blacklist of tax havens by the Tax Directorate of the European Commission, despite being named a co-operative country by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the IMF. 2009 A national census was undertaken, which recorded 141,766 people.

2010 Early general elections in Curaçao were automatically triggered when parliament failed to pass a new constitution. In the resulting parliamentary elections no single political party won outright power and a coalition was formed led by Movementu Futuro Korsou (MFK) (Movement for the Future of Curaçao), with Pueblo Soberano (PS) (Sovereign People) and Partido MAN (MAN Party). On 10 October the Netherlands Antilles ceased to exist and Curacao and St Maarten became semi-autonomous countries within the Kingdom of The Netherlands. Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba became Bijzondere Gemeenten (special municipalities). Gerrit Schotte became prime minister.

2011 A new airline InselAir, began a non-stop service between Caracas and Hato in July.

2012 On 3 August Gerrit Schotte resigned as prime minister following the collapse of his coalition government. On 13 September, parliament convened and sacked nine members of the caretaker government. On 29 September Stanley Betrain was appointed as interim prime minister. Weeks of ill-tempered negotiations resulted in an interim government elected by parliament. Parliamentary elections were finally held on 19 October. On 26 October, The PS and MFK won five seats each and agreed to form a coalition with MAN to form a government, with Ivar Asjes as prime minister. However on 30 October MFK officials withdrew from the coalition agreement when its leader, former prime minister Schotte, objected to the process of choosing ministers, which included a full screening for probity. A coalition agreement formed a government of PS, PAIS and PNP and an independent and on 19 November Glenn Camelia was named *formateur* (head of coalition government). On 24 November, Governor Frits Goedgedrag resigned due to prolonged illness and his deputy, Adèle Van der Pluijm-Vrede, became Acting Governor. New airport fees were introduced on 1 December, with various charges depending on destination.

2013 An economic survey was conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics in June. Preliminary results showed that confidence in the economy has improved somewhat in the opinion of entrepreneurs. Fewer entrepreneurs, 49 per cent, indicated that confidence in the economy in the past six months had deteriorated, compared to 56 per cent in December 2012.

### Political structure

#### Constitution

A new constitution was adopted in September 2010.

#### Form of state

Parliamentary democratic monarchy. Curaçao became a semi-autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands on 10 October 2010. The Netherlands government remains responsible for defence and foreign policy, and has oversight over Curaçao's finances under a debt relief agreement.

#### National legislature

The *staten* (legislature) has 21 members, directly elected to serve four-year terms.

#### Legal system

The legal system is based on Dutch civil law, with some English common law. Judges are appointed by the monarch. Rights of appeal exist from The Netherlands Antilles Court of Appeals to the Supreme Court of The Netherlands, in The Hague.

#### Last elections

19 October 2012 (parliamentary)

**Results:** Parliamentary: Pueblo Soberano (Sovereign People) won 22.6 per cent of the vote (five seats out of 21), *Movimentu Futuro Korsou* (MFK) (Movement for the Future of Curaçao) 21.2 per cent, (five), *Partido Antiá Restrukturá* (PAR) (Party for the Restructured Antilles) 19.7 per cent, (four), *Partido pa Adelanto I Inovashon Soshal* (PAIS) (Party for Advancement and Social Innovation) 17.7 per cent (four), *Movishon Anita Nobo* (MAN) (MAN Party) 9.5 per cent (two), *Partido Nashonal di Pueblo* (PNP) (National People's Party) 5.9 per cent, (one); two other political parties failed to win any seats. Turnout was 74.5 per cent.

#### Next elections

2016 (parliamentary)

### Political parties

#### Ruling party

Coalition of Pueblo Soberano (PS) (Sovereign People), with *Partido pa Adelanto I Inovashon Soshal* (PAIS) and *Partido Nashonal di Pueblo* (PNP) (National People's Party), plus an independent (from 19 Nov 2012)

#### Political situation

Curaçao came into being on 10 October 2010, after the Netherlands Antilles ceased to exist and Curaçao and St Maarten became semi-autonomous countries within the Kingdom of The Netherlands. Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba became *Bijzondere Gemeenten* (special municipalities) of the Netherlands. An early general election in Curaçao had been automatically triggered when parliament failed to pass the new constitution in June 2010. On 27 August no single political party won outright power in parliamentary elections and a coalition was formed led by *Movimentu Futuro Korsou* (MFK) (Movement for the Future of Curaçao), with Pueblo Soberano (Sovereign People) and *Partido MAN* (MAN Party). Gerrit Schotte became prime minister on 10 October.

### Population

149,679 (2011; census figure)

**Last census:** 26 March 2011: 149,679

#### Ethnic make-up

African and mixed race (85 per cent), Carib Amerindian, white, East Asian.

#### Religions

Baptist, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Seventh-Day Adventist and others.

### Education

Primary schooling lasts for six years (from age six to 12) and junior secondary school lasts four years (age 12 to 16). Following primary education, students have a choice of attending technical or vocational colleges in place of secondary school.

Higher education is provided by the *Universiteit van de Nederlandse Antillen* (University of the Netherlands Antilles). There is also a nursing school and a teacher training college in Curaçao.

### Health

Curaçao has two general hospitals and one surgical hospital and receives patients from the other islands of The Netherlands Antilles. Most health professionals receive training in The Netherlands.

It is estimated that around 30 per cent of the population of the Netherlands Antilles suffer from hypertension; psychological problems are also highly prevalent among adults. The general standard of health among the Antilleans is poor, with poor nutrition and little or no exercise undertaken by the adult population. The Dutch government has assigned priority to encouraging the population to develop healthier lifestyles.

#### HIV/Aids

There is a national strategic action plan to halt the rapid spread of the disease. The drugs problem could prove to be a potent source of transmission.

**Life expectancy:** 76.3 years (estimate 2003)

**Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate:** 2.1 births per woman (World Bank)

**Birth rate/Death rate:** 16 births per 1,000 population; 6.4 deaths per 1,000 population (2003).

**Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000):** 11 per 1,000 live births (2003)

### Welfare

A public insurance programme covers 100 per cent of health care costs for blue-collar workers. There is also an insurance fund for retired workers. Private companies also provide insurance plans for their employees. A social security fund covers employees of small private establishments.

### Main cities

Willemstad (capital, estimated population 103,119 in 2012), Sint Michiel (5,429), Montana Abou (4,477), Tera Cora (3,873), Montana Rey (3,773), Souax (3,691).

### Languages spoken

Papiamentu is a local patois mixture of Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English and French.

Spanish is widely understood and spoken.

#### Official language/s

Dutch and Papiamentu (official)

### Media

#### Press

**Dailies:** The only regional daily newspaper is *Amigoe* ([www.amigoe.com](http://www.amigoe.com)) with

*Vigilante* (<http://vigilante.nl>) from Curacao as the local island publication

**Business:** Business publications include in English *Business Curaçao Directory* ([www.businesscuracao.com](http://www.businesscuracao.com)) and the annual Trade Statistics by Central Bureau of Statistics ([www.cbs.an](http://www.cbs.an)).

### Broadcasting

There are several radio stations with the three based in Curacao, Radio Hoyer ([www.radiohoyer.com](http://www.radiohoyer.com)), Easy FM and Dolfijn FM ([www.dolfijnfm.com](http://www.dolfijnfm.com)). There are two commercial television channels operating and TeleCuracao is government owned.

### Economy

The Curaçao economy is dominated by petroleum refining. The Venezuelan state-owned oil company *Petróleos de Venezuela (PdVSA)* operates several oil refineries in Curaçao, including *Isla refinery* which produces of 320,000 barrels per day. However, these refineries are old and becoming increasingly unproductive so that tourism is becoming progressively more important to Curaçao's future development. Agriculture only accounts for 1 per cent of GDP, producing aloes, sorghum, vegetables and tropical fruit. Dutch aid remains important to the economy. GDP growth was 2.6 per cent in 2008, dropping into recession in 2009 with negative growth of -1.3 per cent, as the economy was hit by the global economic crisis and drop in trade. As global trade picked up and tourists returned to Curaçao growth in 2010 grew by 0.4 per cent and was projected to manage 0.1 per cent in 2011.

The unemployment rate remains high at over 10 per cent. The islands have a higher per capita income and a well-developed infrastructure compared with other countries in the region.

The commercial enterprise, *Space Experience Curaçao (SXC)*, and *Curaçao Airport Partners (CAP)* signed a letter of intent in January 2011 to develop a spaceport and SXC committed US\$75 million to the project. In February 2011 a government-backed financial feasibility study began into the proposed building of a spaceport and relevant activities on Curaçao.

### External trade

Trade is dominated by crude oil imports and the export of refined oil products.

### Imports

Include crude petroleum, food and manufactures.

**Main sources:** Venezuela (typically 50 per cent of total), US (21 per cent), Italy (5 per cent).

### Exports

Main exports include petroleum products.

**Main destinations:** US (typically 29 per cent of total), Panama (14 per cent), Mexico (9 per cent).

The agricultural sector contributes 1 per cent to GDP and employs 5 per cent of the workforce.

About 8 per cent of total area is cultivated arable land. Soil is generally poor and rainfall inadequate for most crops. Small amounts of fruit and vegetables are grown for local consumption.

### Industry and manufacturing

The industrial sector contributes about 19 per cent to GDP and employs 20 per cent of the workforce. It is dominated by petroleum refining and transshipment. Manufacturing is concentrated on food processing and import substitution (paints, paper, soap, beer, chemicals). The emphasis is on diversification into light export-based industries such as electronics and pharmaceuticals.

### Tourism

The island of Curaçao offers a typical Caribbean experience of sun, sea and surf, it also has a historic capital town centre that is included in the list of *Unesco World Heritage sites*. It hosts an annual jazz festival in March, as well as other more sporting events, in particular diving among the coral reefs. The Curaçao-based airline *InselAir* has flights to a number of American destinations while *Air Canada* and *Continental Airlines* have expanded their services since independence in 2010 to include non-stop flights from Toronto-Pearson and Newark, respectively. As a one-year old state in 2011, statistics for tourism in Curaçao are still presented within the statistics of the defunct *Netherland Antilles* until the Curaçao government can gather and present its own report. In general, travel and tourism was estimated to have contributed 34 per cent of GDP in the former *Netherland Antilles*, and provided a total of 36.9 per cent of all jobs.

Curaçao became a popular destination in 2010. Visitors from the Netherlands are the single largest group followed by Venezuelan visitors wishing to stay close to home; it is also a popular destination for the slightly older US traveller (rather than party-loving college students on package holidays) who can find pleasure in peaceful surroundings.

There are no known hydrocarbon resources. The 1914 discovery of oil in Venezuela was the impetus for the island of Curaçao's choice as the location of what was then the largest oil refinery in the world, which currently has a capacity of 320,000 barrels per day (bpd). Crude oil is imported mainly from Venezuela and Mexico under the *San Jose Pact*. Some of

this is consumed domestically but the majority is refined and exported. Any imported natural gas or coal used is commercially insignificant

### Banking and insurance

Under an EU tax directive introduced in 2005 in a number of associate and dependent EU countries, impose a withholding tax to be passed to the relevant EU country but typically retains the anonymity of the saver. Withholding taxes began at 15 per cent and will rise to 35 per cent by 2011.

The Netherlands Antillies has also agreed to supply information on tax fraud, for criminal or civil trials, and notify EU member states about additional malpractice.

### Central bank

*Centrale Bank van Curaçao en Sint Maarten* (Central Bank of Curaçao and St. Maarten) (CBCS)

### Main financial centre

Willemstad

### Time

GMT minus five hours (minus six hours during summer daylight saving).

### Geography

Curaçao is located in the Caribbean Sea, 70km off the coast of northern South America, in the Netherlands Windward islands and consists of low hills.

### Hemisphere

Northern

### Climate

There are low levels of humidity and rainfall on Curaçao where temperatures average 29 degrees Celsius (C). Average annual rainfall is 550mm. There are higher levels of rainfall from May–December.

### Entry requirements

#### Passports

Required by all and must be valid for at least three months from date of departure.

#### Visa

Not required by nationals of countries which are signatories of the Schengen Accords, which includes most EU/EEA member states; North America and Australasia for visits up to three months. Lists of nationals that do and do not require a visa can be found on the website of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign affairs: [www.mfa.nl/lon-en/homepage](http://www.mfa.nl/lon-en/homepage) under visas.

All visitors must provide evidence of sufficient funds for their stay and a return/onward ticket.

#### Currency advice/regulations

There are no restrictions regarding the import and export of local or foreign currencies.

Travellers cheques are widely accepted; US dollar cheques will avoid additional exchange charges.

### Health (for visitors)

#### Mandatory precautions

Yellow fever vaccination certificate required if arriving from an infected area.

#### Advisable precautions

Inoculations and boosters should be current for tetanus and hepatitis A. There may be a need for vaccinations for diphtheria, typhoid, tuberculosis and hepatitis B.

### Hotels

There are numerous tourist hotels. Government tax of 5 per cent and 10–15 per cent service charge is added to the bill.

### Credit cards

All major credit and charge cards accepted. ATMs are available in major centres.

### Public holidays (national)

#### Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 30 Apr (Queen's Birthday), 1 May (Labour Day), 2 Jul Curaçao Flag Day, 25–26 Dec (Christmas).

#### Variable dates

Carnival (Jan/Feb), Easter Monday (Mar/Apr) Ascension Day (Aug).

### Working hours

#### Banking

Mon–Fri: 0830–1200, 1330–1630.

#### Business

Mon–Fri: 0800–1200, 1330–1630.

#### Government

Mon–Fri: 0800–1200, 1330–1630.

#### Shops

Mon–Sat: 0800–1200, 1400–1800. Gift shops open on Sundays and public holidays when cruise ships call.

### Telecommunications

#### Mobile/cell phones

There are several 900, 900/1800 GSM services covering the island.

### Electricity supply

Variable: 120/127/220V AC at 50 cycles or 60 cycles.

### Getting there

#### Air

**National airline:** Windward Island Airways (Winair) (short haul flights only)

**International airport/s:** Curaçao (CUR), 12km north of Willemstad; with duty-free shops, bar, restaurant, hotel reservations and car hire. Taxis are available, fares are standard and should be agreed in advance.

**Airport tax:** Passenger facility charge (PFC), from 1 December 2012:

destination Bonaire US\$10; destination Aruba and Sint Maarten US\$20; destination elsewhere US\$39; transfer passengers US\$5.

#### Surface

**Water:** There is a weekly ferry to Curaçao from Venezuela.

### Getting about

#### National transport

**Road:** There is an all-weather network on the island.

#### City transport

**Taxis:** Taxis are usually identified by TX before the licence plate. Fares are standard and should be agreed before travelling. Tipping is discretionary.

#### Car hire

Car hire is widely available. An international licence is required.

## BUSINESS DIRECTORY

### Telephone area codes

The international dialling code (IDD) for Curaçao is + 599, followed by area code and subscriber's number: Willemstad9

### Chambers of Commerce

Curaçao Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 1 Kaya Junior Salas, PO Box 10, Willemstad (tel: 9461-3918; fax: 9461-5652; e-mail: businessinfo@curacao-chamber.an).

### Banking

Banco di Caribe, Schottegatweg Oost 205, PO Box 3785, Willemstad, Curaçao (tel: 9432-3410; internet: www.bancodicaribe.com).

Banco Industrial de Venezuela CA, Handelskade 12, PO Box 701, Willemstad, Curaçao (tel: 9461-1621; fax: 9461-6534).

Banco Mercantil Venezolano NV, A Mendez Chumaceiro Bvd; PO Box 565, Curaçao (tel: 9461-1566, 9461-2117; fax: 9461-1974; internet: www.bancomercantilcu.com).

Citco Bank Antilles NV, Schottegatweg Oost 44, Willemstad, Curaçao (tel: 9732-2322; fax: 9732-2330; email: curacao-bank@citco.com).

FirstCaribbean International Bank (Curacao) NV, De Ruyterkade 61, PO Box 3144, Willemstad (tel: 9433-8338; fax: 9433-8198; email: www.firstcaribbeanbank.an).

MCB Maduro & Curiel's Bank NV, Plaza Jojo Correa 2-4, PO Box 305, Willemstad, Curaçao (tel: 9466-1100; fax: 9466-1444; email: infor@mcb-bank.com).

MCB Maduro & Curiel's Bank, Schottegatweg Oost 130, Saliña, Curaçao (tel: 9466-1100; fax: 9466-1444; internet: mcb-bank.com).

Orco Bank N V, Dr H Fergusonweg 10, PO Box 3987, Curaçao (tel: 9737-2000; fax: 9737-6741).

### Central bank

Centrale Bank van Curaçao en Sint Maarten (Central Bank of Curaçao and St. Maarten) (CBCS), Simon Bolivar Plein 1, Willemstad (tel: 434-5500; fax: 461-5004; email: info@centralbank.an).

### Travel information

#### National tourist organisation offices

Curaçao Tourist Board, PO Box 3266; Pietermaai 19, Curaçao (tel: 9434-8200; fax: 9461-5017; internet: www.curacao-tourism.com).

### Ministries

Ministry of Finance, Pietermaai 4–4A, Willemstad, Curaçao (tel: 9461-2052).

Office of the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Netherlands Antilles, Badhuisweg 175, 2597 JP The Hague, The Netherlands (tel: (+31-70) 351-2811; fax: (+31-70) 351-2722).

### Other useful addresses

British Consulate, PO Box 3803, Brombadiersweg z/n, Willemstad, Curaçao (tel: 9436-9366; fax: 9436-9533).

Curaçao Inc (for business information), International Trade Centre Bldg, Piscaderabay, PO Box 6112, Curaçao (tel: 9463-6250; fax: 9463-6485).

Curaçao Industry and International Trade Development Co (CURINDE), Emancipatie Boulevard 7, Curaçao (tel: 9437-6000; fax: 9437-1336).

Foreign Investment Agency Curaçao, Scharlooweg 174 Willemstad, Curaçao (tel: 9465-7044; fax: 9461-5788).

International Trade Centre, PO Box 6005, International Trade Centre Building, Piscadera Bay, Curaçao (tel: 9462-4433, 9463-6250; fax: 9462-4408, 9463-6485).

Island Government of Curaçao, Department of Economic Affairs, Hoogstraat 18, Curaçao (tel: 9462-4066; fax: 9462-6596).