

Guam

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

Guam is the largest of the Marianas islands, which were occupied by the Chamorro Indians, a Malayo-Polynesian people, around 1500 BC.

1521 The Spanish seized control of Guam, which became a port of call for its galleons travelling between Mexico and the Philippines.

1898 Spain ceded Guam to the US after it lost the Spanish-American war. Guam was transformed into a strategic naval base.

1941 The US were forced out by the Japanese during the Second World War.

1944 US rule was reinstated after three years of fighting. Guam has remained an important military base since then.

1950 The Organic Act of Guam granted the island internal self-government and the islanders US citizenship, but not voting rights in US elections.

1962 The US passed the Naval Clearing Act which opened Guam's ports to foreign visitors.

1975 More than 100,000 evacuees from the fall of Vietnam were repatriated via Guam.

1996 Around 7,000 Kurdish refugees, fearing retaliation from Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein were housed on Guam.

1997 The strongest ever recorded typhoon ripped through Guam, leaving thousands homeless.

2002 Felix Camacho (Republican) was elected governor. Super-typhoon Pongsona struck in December.

2004 A state of emergency was declared after typhoon Tingting hit the island, leaving it almost completely flooded; weeks later super-typhoon Chaba struck. The Republicans won control of the legislature.

2006 Governor Camacho won re-election with 50 per cent of the vote.

2008 The Democratic Party won a majority in the legislature.

2009 The US launched marine protected areas (MPA), totalling 500,000 square km of sea and sea floor, around its Pacific islands. Mining and commercial fishing out to 50 nautical miles (54.26km) from shore was banned. A lost Chamorro-English dictionary was found on Guam and re-published to help preserve Guam's indigenous language. The dictionary had

been compiled by Chamorro elders in the late 1970s, in longhand, then stored away and lost. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ordered the oil company Shell to clean up its site in the west of Guam, which had contaminated groundwater with hazardous waste.

2010 Governor Camacho proposed that Guam's name should be changed to Guahan, a spelling, which he said, was a more indigenous spelling and pronunciation of the island. Official correspondence with the governor already uses the alternative spelling and other government departments are being encouraged to adopt the practice. The resident population took part in the United States census, which, after personal details, included questions on race, housing and internet and mobile phone access. The US decided to increase its military forces on Guam with the addition of an expanded dock for a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier and missile defence system. It was seen as a response to China's increased spending on its military. In gubernatorial elections held in November, Eddie Calvo (Republican) won 50.6 per cent of the vote, Carl Gutierrez (Democrat) 49.4 per cent.

2011 Governor Eddie Calvo took office in January. Following a proposal by the state authorities in Guam to include visitors from China and Russia in the visa-waiver programme, federal officials began evaluating the impact on US national security in July. Results of the census were released in August, showing a population of 159,358.

2012 On 2 October, the legislature passed a health insurance bill for government employees. Tourism statistics released in November show 1.38 million visitors had arrived from South Korea, the strongest market, and was the best ever year on record.

2013 Bank of Guam's chief economist, Joseph Bradley, said in April that despite the estimated US\$85.4 billion in US federal budget cuts, which will mean a fall in civilian allocations for Guam, because of the perceived increase in threat from North Korea, military spending is likely to increase. The Guam Visitors Bureau announced at the end of May that tourist arrivals during the month had increased by 7.1 per cent over May 2012 to more than 64,000. The top five markets were Japan

KEY FACTS

Official name: Territory of Guam (Guahan)

Head of State: President of the United States of America Barack Obama (from 20 Jan 2009)

Head of government: Governor Eddie Calvo (Republican) (from 3 Jan 2011)

Ruling party: Democratic Party (elected 4 Nov 2008)

Area: 549 square km

Population: 160,378 (July 2013)*; (159,358; 2010, census figure)

Capital: Agaña

Official language: Chamorro and English

Currency: US dollar (US\$) = 100 cents

Exchange rate: US\$1.00 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

* estimated figure

(which actually fell by 2.9 per cent), Korea (up by 72 per cent), Taiwan (down 4 per cent), the People's Republic of China (up almost 60 per cent) and the United States mainland (down 14 per cent).

Political structure

Constitution

Guam is represented by an elected non-voting delegate to the US House of Representatives; elections are every two years. Its inhabitants are US citizens but are not allowed to vote in US elections. In June 2004, a new process for the island's primary elections was approved, which prevents voters from crossing over between political parties on the ballot; voters can, however, keep their political affiliations confidential.

Form of state

Although it is administered by the department of the interior, Guam is virtually a self-governing unincorporated territory of the US.

The executive

Local executive power rests with a governor, elected by popular vote to a four-year term, who heads a cabinet made up of departmental directors.

National legislature

The unicameral, Liheslaturan Guåhan (in Chamorro) (Legislature of Guam) has 15 members, elected to a two-year term by popular vote, within one constituency that covers the whole island. It deals with legislation on local matters.

Last elections

4 November 2008 (parliamentary); 2 November 2010 (gubernatorial); 6 November 2012 (local senators and delegate to the US House of Representatives)

Results: Parliamentary: Democratic Party (Dem) won 10 seats (out of 15), Republican Party (Rep) 5.

Gubernatorial: Eddie Calvo (Rep) won 50.6 per cent of the vote, Carl Gutierrez (Dem) 49.4 per cent.

Senate: Dem won nine seats (out of 15), Rep six.

US House of Representatives: Madeleine Z Bordallo (Dem) won 58 per cent of the vote, Frank Flores Blas (Rep) 38.14 per cent.

Next elections

6 November 2014 (parliamentary and gubernatorial)

Political parties

Ruling party

Democratic Party (elected 4 Nov 2008)

Main opposition party

Republican Party

Political situation

The US House of Representatives passed an economic stimulus plan, whereby tax rebate cheques began to be sent to all tax payers in mid-2008, to stimulate the local economy and encourage consumer

spending. Most households in Guam were looking forward to sums between US\$300–600 for singles and US\$1,200 for couples but 247 were disappointed when the Guam administration garnished their cheques for outstanding local tax duties.

The recovered US\$100,788 was much needed, to cover costs for the Memorial Hospital, Guam Housing, an Urban Renewal plan and child support.

In March 2011, the Republican controlled US-Congress voted to rescind the voting rites of representations of Guam effectively disenfranchising their electorate in policies that directly affect them.

Population

160,378 (July 2013)*; (159,358; 2010, census figure)

Last census: 1 April 2010: 159,358

Population density: 276 inhabitants per square km.

Annual growth rate: 1.5 per cent (2003)

Ethnic make-up

Native Chamorros comprise 37 per cent of the population, Filipinos (26 per cent), white (10 per cent), Chinese, Japanese, Korean and others (27 per cent). There is tension between the Chamorros and guest workers from the Philippines and other Asian countries.

Religions

Roman Catholic (85 per cent)

Education

The education system is similar to that of the US but is poorly managed, with drop-out rates at around 50 per cent. Schools lack basic equipment and essential books.

Education is a high priority for parents and is considered the key to success in Chamorro life. Despite ongoing criticisms of the flaws in the system, the government has implemented no major reforms.

An agreement between the education departments of Guam and the Marshall Islands, signed in October 2010, allow an exchange of students to study at the University of Guam and the College of the Marshall Islands.

Compulsory years: Five to 16

Health

With a young and growing population the government is faced with the challenge of developing a health care system that will meet their needs. Health services are funded by the US government and the World Health Organisation (WHO). Health services are good but there is a shortage of adequately trained medical staff. Training of medical personnel was a government priority throughout 2002–05. There are high incidents of mental retardation and thyroid cancers, blamed on

nuclear contamination when naval ships were sent for decontamination to Guam.

Life expectancy: 77.9 years (World Bank)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate:

3.7 births per woman (World Bank)

Birth rate/Death rate: 23 births and four deaths per 1,000 population (2003)

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 6.5 per 1,000 live births (2003)

Main cities

Agaña (capital, estimated population 1,001 in 2012), Yigo (12,190), Tamuning (11,990), Mangilao (10,819), Astumbo (6,970), Ordot (5,571), Barrigada (5,049).

Languages spoken

English, Chamorro, Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

Official language/s

Chamorro and English

Media

Press

The *Guam Business News* is a monthly publication.

Dailies: In English the *Pacific Daily News* (www.guampdn.com) is the only national newspaper.

Weeklies: There are several weeklies available. In English, *Micro Call*, *Guam Shopper's Guide*, *Pacific Crossroads*, *Pacific Voice* (published on Sundays for the Catholic community), *Pacific Sunday News* and *Tropic Topics*. In Japanese, *Guam Shinbun* and *Guam Kyodo News Service*, which provides a facsimile news service twice daily for the Japanese community and tourists. In Korean, the *Korean Community News* and *Korean News*.

Business: *Guam Business News* is a monthly publication.

Periodicals: In English, *Latte Magazine* is a quarterly, featuring contemporary life and multiculturalism; *Micronesica* is a bi-annual and *Manila, Manila* is a glossy news and lifestyle magazine catering to the Filipino community.

Broadcasting

The US Federal Communications Commission is responsible for broadcasting regulations.

Radio: There are several radio stations, the largest are K57 (KGUM) (www.k57.com) and KAUM (www.kuam.com), with news and talk shows, and these are parts of larger broadcasting media enterprises. KTKB Mega Mixx (www.ktkb.com) and Loud Radio 88 (<http://loudradio88.homestead.com>) are private stations. Several Christian radio stations provide music and entertainment, Light 91, Joy 92 and Adventist World Radio.

Television: Commercial TV stations include K57 (www.k57.com) and KAUM

(www.kuam.com), with locally produced news and imported entertainment programmes. A cable service is provided by MSNBC KUAM (www.msnbc.msn.com)
Other news agencies: ABC Pacific Beat: www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat
 Pacific Magazine: www.pacificmagazine.net
 Pacific Islands New Association (Pina): www.pina.com.fj

Economy

Guam remains one of the most prosperous islands in the Pacific and has the second highest GDP per capita of the region, Hawaii having the highest. About 60 per cent of Guam's income comes from US federal spending, which has, since 2006, grown with the decision to open a new military base. The Marine's base was scheduled to open in 2012, to be home to around 8,000 military personnel. However in February 2012 the plan was stalled due to on-going negotiations with Japan concerning the Marines' redeployment from the US military base on Okinawa. US\$1 billion per annum for 6–10 years (2006–16) was allocated for the construction of the military base. An additional US\$400 million was allocated to Guam for civil purposes and general infrastructure.

Tourism is the single largest component of the service sector with Guam increasingly being seen as a reasonable destination for Japanese visitors on a limited budget. Tourism accounts for around 35 per cent of total employment.

Aside from tourism, the only other significant source of income is the fishing industry, although the cement and construction industries have continued to prosper due to the damage to buildings and infrastructure by natural disasters, as well as construction of the US military base.

External trade

Guam exports free of duty to a number of countries, including Australia, Japan and the US.

Imports

Main imports are petroleum and petroleum products, food and manufactured goods.

Main sources: Singapore (typically 50 per cent of total), South Korea (21 per cent), Japan (14 per cent).

Exports

Main exports are construction materials, fish, food and beverage products.

Main destinations: Japan (typically 67 per cent of total), Singapore (7 per cent), UK (5 per cent).

Re-exports

Food re-exports for distribution throughout the Pacific provide the mainstay of export income along with refined petroleum products.

Agriculture

The agriculture sector typically accounts for 7 per cent of gross island product (GIP). Most agricultural activity is part-time market gardening on smallholdings.

In March 2004, a fungus infected thousands of betel nut trees in the southern parts of Guam and scientists feared it could spread to other types of palm tree. More than 3,000 infected trees were destroyed.

Fishing is an important source of protein. Future areas for growth include salmon and trout farming. Typical annual catches include 200t freshwater fish, 280t marine fish, and 28t of all other seafood.

Industry and manufacturing

Industry typically accounts for 15 per cent of GDP and employs about 3 per cent of the labour force. Most industrial goods are imported.

Main industries include US military, tourism, construction, transshipment services, concrete products, printing and publishing, food processing and textiles. Government policy is attempting to focus on attracting foreign investment, particularly from Asian manufacturers, in order to develop the industrial base.

Tourism

Among Guam's natural attractions are its unspoilt coral reefs, white sand beaches, lagoons and waterfalls. The brown tree snake, accidentally introduced in the 1940's has, however, decimated its bird-life and eradication programmes are carried out regularly. Guam is ideal for water sports including surfing, canoeing, jet skiing, and deep-sea fishing, in waters that are clear and warm. On the land, there are seven golf courses and good hiking tracks. It is one of the best diving destinations in the world with shipwrecks and coral reefs. On Cocos Island, two miles off the Southern tip of Guam, there is a Spanish galleon wreck with billions of dollars worth of treasure that has still to be recovered.

Most visitors to Guam come from Japan and South Korea, with new arrivals from China boosting visitor numbers since 2010 when Continental Micronesia began more flights and routes within the Pacific region. These flights are in competition with new low-cost carriers, Fly Guam, Jinair (a subsidiary of Korean Air) and PacificFlier, that have also begun operations.

Tourism constitutes an important component of GDP and after several years of negative growth by 2010 expansion in the sector reached double digits. The Guam Visitor's Bureau began to apply a uniform approach towards visitors so that they gain a more comprehensive experience of

the Micronesian culture. In 2010, several low-cost air carriers began flights from South Korea, China and the US, boosting the number of visitors. The tourist bureau began to market Guam as more than beach and shopping holidays, to include cultural attractions and sporting events to attract more visitors throughout the year.

Environment

In May 2005 a US research study confirmed that Guam had received measurable radioactive fallout during nuclear testing from 1946–62. The government confirmed that residents would be eligible under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. Radioactive pollution was also acknowledged in Apra Harbour, caused when military ships were decontaminated by washing down after testing. Military expansion of the Andersen Air Force Base will cause the loss of some pristine native forest at a time when several endangered bird species are being reintroduced into the area.

Mining

Mining contributes less than 5 per cent to GDP. Rock and cement production supplies the construction industry.

Hydrocarbons

Guam does not produce or refine oil; it relies entirely on imports, which amounts to around 12,000 barrels per day.

Energy

Total installed electricity generating capacity is over 500MW, produced in thermal power station; consumption is around 1.7 billion kilowatt hours.

Banking and insurance

Central bank

Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco

Time

GMT plus ten hours

Geography

Guam is the southernmost and largest of the Marianas, situated about 2,170km (1,350 miles) south of Tokyo, Japan, and 5,300km (3,300 miles) west of Honolulu, Hawaii.

The island consists of two ancient volcanoes of which the southern peak is 407 metres at its tallest. In the north and between the summits are limestone plateaux with deep gorges that drop to the narrow coastal shelf.

The world's deepest chasm in the deepest ocean, the Marianas Trench, lies around 400km south-west of Guam.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

Guam is warm and humid with temperatures averaging between 24–30 degrees Celsius. Dec–May is generally cooler and

drier. Rainfall, up to 300mm per month, averages 2,000mm per annum. The heaviest rainfall is usually between Jul–Sep. There are occasional tropical storms. The tropical humidity is tempered somewhat by the prevailing north-westerly trade winds.

Dress codes

Informal, lightweight clothing is acceptable.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all.

Visa

US entry requirements apply. Visas required by all, except US citizens and foreign nationals of countries that have visa free entry to the US and are in possession of machine readable passports with biometric data, under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) introduced in 2005. All other visitors and passport holders must apply for a visa. Visas, for both tourism and business, are valid for up to 90 days. A return/onward ticket is also required. Further information can be found at <http://travel.state.gov/> including information on temporary business visas. More detailed information can be found at http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/visa_info.htm.

Currency advice/regulations

There are no restrictions on import or export of foreign or local currency. However amounts over US\$10,000 or equivalent must be declared.

Customs

Personal items are duty-free.

Prohibited imports

Plant material, meat products, illegal drugs and any material that breaches US copyright laws.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

Vaccination certificates required for yellow fever if travelling from infected area.

Advisable precautions

Dengue fever is endemic; it is advisable to cover up at dawn and dusk and prophylaxis should be used. Vaccinations for diphtheria, tuberculosis, hepatitis A and B, tetanus, typhoid fever should be considered. No cases of polio have been reported since the 1990s. There is a rabies risk in rural areas.

Ciguatera poisoning is possible if eating tropical reef-fish – toxins are not removed through cooking – avoiding barracuda, grouper, snapper and amberjack will reduce the risk.

Medical insurance is necessary as all healthcare costs are high. All continuous medication should be carried along with its packaging and prescription.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 4 Jul (US Independence Day), 21 Jul (Liberation Day), 2 Nov (All Souls' Day), 11 Nov (Veterans' Day), 8 Dec (Lady of Camarin Day), 25 Dec (Christmas).

Variable dates

Martin Luther King Day (third Mon in Jan), President's Day (second Mon in Feb), Guam Discovery Day (first Mon in Mar), Good Friday, Memorial Day (last Mon in May), Labour Day (first Mon in Sep), Columbus Day (first Mon in Oct), Thanksgiving Day (fourth Thu in Nov).

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Thu: 1000–1500; Fri: 1000–1800; Sat 0900–1200. ATMs are available.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0730/0830–1730/1800; Sat: 0830–1200.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0730/0830–1730/1800; Sat: 0830–1200.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0800–1700; Sat: 0800–1300.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

GSM 1900 and 850 services cover most of the island.

Electricity supply

110V AC, 60Hz

Weights and measures

US system

Getting there

Air

Korean Air, Continental Micronesia, All Nippon Airlines and Japan Airlines all serve Guam.

International airport/s:

The Antonio B Won Pat International Airport (GUM), 11km from Agaña; duty-free shop, first-class lounge, restaurant, currency exchange, hotel reservations and car hire.

Airport tax: None

Surface

Main port/s: Apra Harbour.

Getting about

National transport

Road: The roads and highways are third-rate and bumpy, with some 600km surfaced.

Buses: A reasonable service connects almost all villiages, however services do not run on Sundays or public holidays.

Taxis: Are readily available and fares are metered.

Car hire

Available through most major companies. In general, charges are based on time, mileage and insurance. An international driving licence is required.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling code (IDD) for Guam is +1 671, followed by subscriber's number.

Chambers of Commerce

Guam Chamber of Commerce, 173 Aspinall Avenue, Ada Plaza Center, PO Box 283, Agana 96932 (tel: 472-6311; fax: 472-6202; e-mail: gchamber@guamchamber.com.gu).

Banking

Bank of Hawaii, PO Box BH, Agaña 96910 (tel: 4779-781; fax: 4777-533).

First Commercial Bank, 1st Floor, 330 Hernan Cortes Ave, Agaña 96910 (tel: 4726-864/5; fax: 4778-921).

Union Bank of California NA, 194 Hernan Cortes Ave, Agaña 96910 (tel: 4778-811; fax: 4723-284).

Central bank

Federal Reserve System, 20th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20551 (tel: (202) 452-3000; fax: (202) 452-3819).

Travel information

Dive Rota, PO Box 941, Rota MP 96951 (email: mark@diverota.com; internet: www.diverota.com).

Freedom Air, PO Box 1578, Hagatna, 96932 (tel: 647-8360/1; fax: 472-8080; email: freedom@ite.net).

National tourist organisation offices

Guam Visitors Bureau, PO Box 3520; 401 Pale San Vitores Road, Tamuning 96913 (tel: 646-5278/9; fax: 646-8861; internet: www.visitguam.org).

Other useful addresses

Guam Economic Development Authority, Suite 911, ITC Building, 590 South Marine Drive, Tamuning, Guam 96911 (tel: 649-4141; fax: 649-4146).

Other news agencies: ABC Pacific Beat: www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat

Pacific Magazine: www.pacificmagazine.net

Pacific Islands New Association (Pina): www.pina.com.fj

Internet sites

The Pacific Daily News: www.guampdn.com

KUAM Broadcasting News: www.kuam.com