

Martinique

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1493 Columbus was the first European visitor.

1635 The island was settled by the French – in the face of indigenous Indian hostility. 1700s The island was seized by the British several times.

1763 Marie-Joséphé Rose Tascher de la Pagerie – Napoleon's Empress Joséphine – was born at Les Trois Îlets.

1814 The British gave up their attempts to control the island and it became a French possession under the Treaty of Paris.

1848 The Emancipation Proclamation abolished slavery in the West Indies.

1902 St Pierre was destroyed by an eruption of the volcano Mount Pelée.

1946 Martinique became a French Département d'Outre-Mer (DOM) (Overseas Department).

1974 Martinique was further incorporated into the French political system and granted the status of region of France.

1983 Martinique was granted devolution. A Regional Council was established under the French decentralisation policy.

1999–2001 The presidents of the regional assemblies of Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana called for more autonomy from France.

2002 Martinique adopted the euro as its official currency.

2003 A referendum in Guadeloupe and Martinique rejected a French government-backed reform plan to streamline the system of local government and give the islands a new status.

2004 Martinique was the first port of call for Cunard's newest, and largest, cruise ship, *Queen Mary II*. Yves Dassonville took over as *Préfet*, replacing Michel Cadot.

2007 Ange Mancini was appointed *Préfet*.

2008 The poet, Aimé Césaire, a leading figure of not only the local but also the wider, international black empowerment and cultural community, died. President Sarkozy led the mourners in a state funeral in Fort-de-France.

2009 Civil unrest following a workers' strike in protest against low pay and rising prices resulted in the deployment of riot police from mainland France. As a result a reported 10,000 tourists cancelled their holidays. The France-based minister of overseas territories arrived to oversee negotiations.

2010 By 80–20 per cent (on a turnout of 55 per cent), voters rejected a referendum proposal to devolve more power to local government and grant more autonomy. Serge Letchimy was elected president of the Regional Council.

2011 In July, the EU agreed to allow Martinique to impose import duties from 1 July 2014, to protect local production of food and manufactured goods.

2012 Laurent Prévost was appointed as *Préfet* on 2 March. Ten candidates took part in the French presidential elections (held over two rounds on 21 April and 5 May); in the runoff, incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy (UMP) won 48.37 per cent of the vote and rival François Hollande (Parti Socialiste (PS) (Socialist Party)) 51.63 per cent. Turnout was 80.35 per cent. On 15 May François Hollande took office as president and head of state. On 10 November the town of Sainte Marie and the l'Office National des Forêt (ONF) (National Forestry Office) inaugurated the refurbished tourist development along the shoreline, including a new monument, an exhibition of the site's heritage and an artistic presentation.

2013 A report released in St Lucia in April proposed that Martinique and Guadeloupe should become members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

Political structure

Constitution

28 September 1958 (French Fifth Republic)

Under the 1946 constitution of the French Fourth Republic, Martinique became a Département d'Outre-Mer (DOM) (Overseas Department) of France. In 1974, it was granted additional status as a region of France.

Martinique is represented in the French National Assembly by four deputies and in the Senate by two senators.

Administration is by a *préfet* appointed by the government in Paris.

Since 1983, following the French government's policy of decentralisation, regional councils have been elected with powers similar to those of the regions.

Local administration is through a Conseil Régional (Regional Council) of 41 members and a 45-member Conseil Général (General Council), both directly elected for six-year terms.

Form of state

Département d'Outre-Mer (DOM) (Overseas Department) of France, with

KEY FACTS

Official name: Martinique

Head of State: President of France François Hollande (PS) (from 15 May 2012), represented by *Préfet* Laurent Prévost (from 2 March 2012)

Head of government: President of Conseil Général Claude Lise (since 22 Mar 1992); President of Conseil Régional Serge Letchimy (from 26 Mar 2010)

Ruling party: Coalition led by Mouvement pour l'Indépendance de la Martinique (MIM), with Conseil National des Comités Populaires (CNCP) (since Mar 2004)

Area: 1,100 square km

Population: 406,000 (2010)

Capital: Fort-de-France

Official language: French

Currency: Euro (€) = 100 cents (from 1 Jan 2002; previous currency French franc, locked at Ff6.56 per euro)

Exchange rate: €0.75 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

additional status as a région (region) of France.

The executive

The island is administered by a *préfet* (commissioner), appointed by the central government in Paris.

National legislature

The Conseil Régional (Regional Council) provides legislative administration for the island; it has 41 members elected by proportional representation for four-year terms.

Legal system

French law applies. The country has no supreme court but this role is filled by a nine-member Conseil Constitutionnel (Constitutional Council). Its task is to ensure that law treaties and regulations are in keeping with the constitution and that elections are conducted in a regular manner. The highest court of appeal is the Cour de Cassation, which can overrule decisions in all lower courts, but not government legislation. Since the signing of the Single European Act in 1986, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has been the highest authority in certain areas of French law.

Next elections

2014 (Regional council)

Political parties

Ruling party

Coalition led by Mouvement pour l'Indépendance de la Martinique (MIM), with Conseil National des Comités Populaires (CNCP) (since Mar 2004)

Main opposition party

Parti Progressiste Martiniquais (PPM) (Martinican Progressive Party)

Political situation

A referendum on a French government proposal held in Martinique in 2003 seemed straightforward. The proposal was twofold. First, it would streamline the local government apparatus and reduce the number of elected offices. The second effect would be a change in Martinique's relationship with France, which would effectively reduce its standing as a region of France. The proposal was made in response to a call made in 1999–2000 for more independence.

However, the proposal was rejected and the failure was thought to be due to voters' worry that any change in their status would ultimately result in a withdrawal of French central government funds needed, most particularly, for social security.

Population

406,000 (2010)

Last census: 1 January 2006: 397,732

Population density: 282 inhabitants per sq km.

Annual growth rate: 0.6 per cent (2003)

Ethnic make-up

African and mixed race (90 per cent), white (5 per cent), East Indian and others (5 per cent).

Religions

Roman Catholic (85 per cent), Protestant (10 per cent), Islam, Hindu, pagan African (5 per cent).

Education

There is 42 per cent enrolment in education for the 20- to 24-year age groups with a high rate of unemployment among them.

Literacy rate: 98 per cent, adult rate (2003)

Health

Water for consumption is subject to intensive controls and is of high quality.

There are three public hospitals including one teaching hospital, and three private clinics.

HIV/Aids

Martinique has a departmental Aids control scheme.

Life expectancy: 79 (estimate 2003)

Birth rate/Death rate: 15 births per 1,000 population; 6.4 deaths per 1,000 population (2003).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 7.4 per 1,000 live births (2003)

Welfare

With unemployment ranging between 30 and 35 per cent among the youth, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of people calling for independence from France. The French social security system guarantees a high minimum wage, a 35-hour working week, five-week vacations, a 40 per cent incentive on salary and other social benefits.

Main cities

Fort-de-France (capital (prefecture), estimated population 84,440 in 2012), Le Lamentin (43,734), Le Robert (27,000), Schoelcher (22,076), Le Francois (20,860), Sainte Marie (20,515), Ducos (20,128).

Languages spoken

French and Creole patois (developed from French, English, Spanish and some African languages). English is widely understood.

Official language/s

French

Media

Press

In French, *France Antilles* is the only daily newspaper, which belongs to a French-based publishing house. Weekly publications include *Le Progressiste*, *Aujourd'hui Dimanche*, *Justice*, *Le Naif* and *Antilla*.

Broadcasting

The French overseas broadcaster RFO (www.rfo.fr) provides locally produced radio and television news

(<http://martinique.rfo.fr>) and imported French programmes, as well as internet TV services.

Radio: Apart from the public RFO Martinique radio broadcasts, Radio Caraïbes International (<http://rci.fm>) and NRJ Antilles (www.nrjantilles.com) are private radio stations.

Economy

Martinique has an open market economy, with the service sector providing three out of four jobs and tourism providing 7 per cent of GDP. The tourist sector is a major employer and key source of foreign exchange; Martinique has not only increased its share of the cruise ship industry but has also become a leading provider of luxury holiday venues. Agriculture accounts for almost 40 per cent of export earnings, of which bananas account for 49.5 per cent.

The local economy represents no more than 25 per cent of GDP, with French funding accounting for the remaining 75 per cent.

A French government 15-year economic development plan for the dependent territories, published in 2002, has led to greater improvements in infrastructure and has improved the island's investment climate.

Among the improvements is the construction of a land and sea transport terminal, next to Pointe Simon Cruise Terminal, which integrates water taxis and public transport at the Cap Est lagoon resort and spa.

External trade

As a département d'outre-mer (DOM) of France, Martinique is integrated as an outermost region of the European Union, which includes all EU trade agreements. The large trade deficit is only partly offset by invisible earnings from tourism, workers' remittances from abroad, and French aid aimed at developing the tourist trade and reducing unemployment.

Imports

Principal imports are petroleum products, crude oil, foodstuffs, construction materials, vehicles, clothing and other consumer goods.

Main sources: France (typically 60 per cent), Venezuela (6.0 per cent), Germany (4.0 per cent), Italy (4.0 per cent), US (3.0 per cent).

Exports

Principal exports are refined petroleum products, bananas, rum and pineapples.

Main destinations: France (typically 45 per cent), Guadeloupe (28 per cent).

Agriculture

Once the mainstay of economy, the agricultural sector has declined in recent years. It employs 10 per cent of the workforce and contributes 7 per cent to GDP. Around 48 per cent of total land area is cultivated, 25 per cent is forest and 19 per cent savannah. The majority of farms are privately run by smallholders. Activity is centred on the production of pineapples and bananas, mainly for industrial processing and export. Crops such as sweet potatoes, yams, manioc, beans, cabbages and tomatoes are grown primarily for domestic consumption. Small quantities of aubergines and limes are exported. Virtually all the island's meat requirements are met by imports.

The future of the important banana industry, which has relied on preferential access to the EU, is threatened by a World Trade Organisation ruling that this access is illegal and must end.

Fishing (lobster, crayfish, crab, clams) is undertaken all year round. The typical total annual fish catch is over 6,250t. Shellfish, molluscs and cephalopods account for another 909t per annum.

Industry and manufacturing

Major industries include an oil refinery (capacity 17,000 barrels per day (bpd)), a cement works, rum distilling, sugar refining, dairy produce, fruit canning, soft drinks manufacture, mineral water bottling and a polyethylene plant. Industrial development has been poor and centres mainly on the manufacture of consumer goods for the local market. Five industrial zones have been set up and tax exemptions introduced to encourage light industrial development.

Tourism

Martinique offers a French culture in a Caribbean setting, which attracts around 500,000 visitors each year. However over 60 per cent of all visitors arrive by cruise liners (112 cruise liners in 2008 and 2009). The majority of visitors are from France (80 per cent), with citizens of other regional French departments (Guadeloupe, French Guiana) representing 9 per cent, but with no other nationality representing more than 2 per cent. Travel and tourism typically represents over 10 per cent of GDP, with total employment also over 10 per cent. A new passenger ferry was launched at the beginning of the 2011–12 tourist season, with links to other French departments, Dominica and St Lucia.

Mining

Martinique has no mineral resources. There are no known hydrocarbons reserves. Oil imports were 17,000 barrels

per day (bpd) in 2008 all of which was refined on the island by Sara (Société Anonyme de Raffinerie des Antilles) in the only refinery. Consumption was 16,000bpd.

Hydrocarbons

Any imports of coal or natural gas are commercially insignificant. A proposed pipeline from Trinidad and Tobago to Martinique and Guadeloupe could open up possibilities for the future import of natural gas.

Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 396MW in 2007, producing over 1.2 billion kilowatt hours, from two thermal power stations. The state-owned EDF (Electricité de France) is responsible for generation and distribution of electricity.

Banking and insurance

Central bank

Caisse Centrale de Co-opération Economique; European Central Bank (ECB)

Time

GMT minus four hours

Geography

Martinique is one of the Windward Islands in the West Indies, with Dominica to the north and St Lucia to the south. The island, which has an area of 1,100 square km, is bounded to the west by the calm Caribbean Sea and to the east by the choppy Atlantic Ocean.

The terrain rises from the south to the mountainous centre and the north. The highest point in the island, situated in the north, is an active volcano, Mount Pelée, which reaches 1,397m. The mountain areas are covered with rainforest. The Lamentin Plain, an area of hills and valleys, occupies the centre of the island. The northern beaches consist of volcanic ash and are grey, while those in the south, where the Salines Beach is located, are sandy and white. The southern Atlantic coastline is protected by coral reefs.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

Sub-tropical with an annual mean temperature of 26 degrees Celsius. Rain heaviest in the north. Rainy season from June–October. The island's temperature is moderated by trade winds.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all, valid for three months beyond the date of departure.

Visa

Required by all, except citizens of EU, North America, Australasia and Japan. Business visas require an invitation from a

local company or organisation. Proof of adequate funds for stay, an itinerary, a guarantee of repatriation if necessary and return/onward ticket are also required.

Currency advice/regulations

There are no restrictions on the import and export of local and foreign currencies, but amounts in excess of eur7,600 must be declared.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required if travelling from an infected area.

Advisable precautions

Hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus and polio vaccinations. Water precautions should be taken.

Hotels

There is a 5 per cent room tax. If service charge is not added, 15 per cent tip is usual.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 8 May (Victory Day), 22 May (Abolition of Slavery), 14 Jul (Bastille Day), 21 Jul (Schoelcher Day), 15 Aug (Assumption Day), 1 Nov (All Saints' Day), 11 Nov (Armistice Day), 25 Dec (Christmas Day).

Variable dates

Carnival (four days, Feb), Good Friday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Whit Monday.

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Fri: 0800–1200, 1400–1700. Banks close at noon on day preceding a bank holiday.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0800–1200, 1430–1700; Sat: 0800–1200.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0730–1300, 1500–1730.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0900–1300, 1500–1800; Sat: 0900–1300.

Telecommunications

Telephone/fax

There is a 100 per cent automatic service.

Mobile/cell phones

There are several GSM 850, 900, 1800 and 1900 services available throughout the country.

Electricity supply

220V AC, 50 cycles

Getting there

Air

National airline: Air Caraïbes.

International airport/s: Lamentin (FDF), 11km from Fort-de-France; restaurant, banks, shops, car hire.

Airport tax: None.

Surface

Main port/s: Fort-de-France is the only commercial port; other ports of entry include St Pierre, Anse Mitan and Le Marin.

Getting about

National transport

Road: Well-developed network of more than 2,000km of roads, three-quarters of which are paved and the rest gravel and earth.

Water: There are regular ferry services (*vedettes*) from Fort-de-France to Pointe de Bout and Anse Mitan.

Car hire

There are ample car rental facilities. A valid driving licence is required and also, for periods beyond 20 days, an international licence.

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 Martinique is +596, followed by subscriber's number.

Useful telephone numbers

Ambulance: 15
Fire brigade: 18
Police: 17

Chambers of Commerce

Martinique Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 50 Rue Ernest Deproge, PO Box 478, Fort-de-France 97241 (tel: 552-800; fax: 606-668; e-mail: info@martinique.cci.fr).

Banking

Banque des Antilles Françaises, 34 rue Lamartine, BP 582, 97200

Fort-de-France (tel: 739-344; fax: 635-894).

Banque Française Commerciale, 6-10 rue Ernest Deproge, 97200 Fort-de-France (tel: 638-257).

Banque National de Paris, Avenue des Caraïbes, 97200 Fort-de-France (tel: 737-111).

Chase Manhattan Bank, Place de Monseigneur Romero, 97200 Fort-de-France (tel: 602-424).

Crédit Martiniquais, rue de la Liberté, Fort-de-France (tel: 701-240).

Institut d'Émission des DOM (IEDOM), Boulevard Général de Gaulle, BP 512, 97206 Fort-de-France (tel: 594-400; fax: 594-404).

Société Générale de Banque aux Antilles, rue de la Liberté, BP 408, 97200 Fort-de-France (tel: 716-983).

Central bank

European Central Bank (ECB), Kaiserstrasse 29, D-60311 Frankfurt am Main, Germany (tel: (+49-69)-13-440; fax: (+49-69)-1344-6000; e-mail: info@ecb.int).

Travel information

Agence Régionale pour le Développement du Tourisme de la Martinique (ARDTM), 4 Rue de l'école Hotellière, Anse Goureaud, 97233 Schoelcher (tel: 616-177; fax: 612-272).

Air Caraïbes, Morne Vergain, 97139 Abymes (tel: (0590)-824-747; fax: (0490)-824-749; e-mail: direction@aircaraïbes.com).

Délégation Régionale au Tourisme, 41 Rue Gabriel Péri, 97200 Fort-de-France (tel: 393-767; fax: 730-096).

Fort-de-France Office du Tourisme, 76 rue Lazare Carnot, 97206 Fort-de-France (tel: 602-773; fax: 602-795; e-mail: info@tourismefdf.com).

Lamentin Airport, 97200 Lamentin (tel: 421-600; fax: 421-877).

National tourist organisation offices

Comité Martiniquais du Tourisme, Immeuble Le Beaupré, Pointe de Jaham, 97233 Schoelcher (tel: 616-177; fax: 612-272; e-mail: infos.cmt@martiniquetourisme.com).

Other useful addresses

Agence pour le Développement Economique de la Martinique, Immeuble Nayaradou, Plateau de Cluny, 97233 Schoelcher (tel: 734-581; fax: 724-138).

Bureau de l'Industrie de l'Artisanat, Préfecture, 97262 Fort-de-France (tel: 713-627).

Chambre Départementale d'Agriculture, Place D'Armes, BP 312, 97286 Lamentin Cedex (tel: 517-575; fax: 519-342).

Chambre des Métiers, 2 Rue du Temple, Morne Tartenson, BP 1191, 97249 Fort-de-France (tel: 713-222; fax: 704-730).

Post Office, 132 boulevard Pasteur, Fort-de-France (tel: 599-600).

Préfecture, rue Victor Severe, BP 647-648, 97262 Fort-de-France (tel: 631-861; fax: 714-029; internet site: <http://www.martinique.pref.gouv.fr/pages/somangl.html>).

Internet sites

Regional Council of Martinique: http://www.cr-martinique.fr/anglais/accueil_anglais.html

Martinique Promotion Bureau: <http://www.martinique.org>

Martinique Shipping Services: <http://www.marship.fr>