



Official Name: Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis



PROFILE

Geography

Area: St. Kitts 168 sq. km. (65 sq. mi.); Nevis 93 sq. km. (36 sq. mi.).

Cities: *Capital*--Basseterre (pop. about 15,000).

Terrain: Generally mountainous; highest elevations are 1,156 m. (3,792 ft.) at Mt. Liamuiga on St. Kitts and 985 m; (3,232 ft.) at Nevis peak on Nevis.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*--Kittitian(s), Nevisian(s).

Population (2007): 39,129.

Annual growth rate (2007): 1%.

Ethnic groups: Predominantly of African origin; some of British, Portuguese, and Lebanese descent.

Religions: Principally Anglican, with Evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic minorities.

Languages: English (official).

Education (2005): *Adult literacy*--97.8%.

Health (2007): *Infant mortality rate*--14.5/1,000. *Life expectancy*--men 68 years; women 72 years.

Unemployment (2006): 5.1%.

Government

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

Constitution: 1983.

Independence: September 19, 1983.

Branches: *Executive*--governor general (representing Queen Elizabeth II, head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. *Legislative*--bicameral Parliament. *Judicial*--magistrate's courts, Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeals), final appeal to Privy Council in London.

Administrative subdivisions: 14 parishes.

Political parties: St. Kitts and Nevis Labour Party (ruling), People's Action Movement (PAM), Concerned Citizens Movement (a Nevis-based party), and Nevis Reformation Party.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP (2007): \$477.4 million.

GDP growth rate (2006): 5.8%.

Per capita GDP (2006): \$8,546.

Inflation (2006): 5.25%.

Natural resources: Negligible.

Agriculture: Rice, yams, bananas, fish, cotton, peanuts, vegetables.

Industry: Financial and business services, tourism, construction, clothing, footwear, beverages, and tobacco.

Trade (2006): *Exports*--\$31 million (merchandise) and \$139 million (commercial services). *Major markets*--United States (91.9%), EU (3.0%), Trinidad and Tobago (2%), Netherlands Antilles (0.8%), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (0.3%). *Imports*--\$210 million (merchandise) and \$87 million (commercial services). *Major suppliers*--United States (57.9%), Trinidad and Tobago (14.1%), European Union (9.3%), Japan (3.8%), and Barbados (2.8%).

Official exchange rate: EC\$2.70 = U.S. \$1.

HISTORY

At the time of European discovery, Carib Indians inhabited the islands of St. Kitts and Nevis. Christopher Columbus landed on the larger island in 1493 on his second voyage and named it after St. Christopher, his patron saint. Columbus also discovered Nevis on his second voyage, reportedly calling it Nevis because of its resemblance to a snowcapped mountain (in Spanish, "nuestra senora de las nieves" or our lady of the snows). European settlement did not officially begin until 1623-24, when first English, then French settlers arrived on St. Christopher's Island, whose name the English shortened to St. Kitts Island. As the first English colony in the Caribbean, St. Kitts served as a base for further colonization in the region.

The English and French held St. Kitts jointly from 1628 to 1713. During the 17th century, intermittent warfare between French and English settlers ravaged the island's economy. Meanwhile Nevis, settled by English settlers in 1628, grew prosperous under English rule. St. Kitts was ceded to Great Britain by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. The French seized both St. Kitts and Nevis in 1782. The Treaty of Paris in 1783 definitively awarded both islands to Britain. They were part of the colony of the Leeward Islands from 1871-1956, and of the West Indies Federation from 1958-62. In 1967, together with Anguilla, they became a self-governing state in association with Great Britain; Anguilla seceded late that year and remains a British dependency. The Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis attained full independence on September 19, 1983.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

As head of state, Queen Elizabeth II is represented in St. Kitts and Nevis by a governor general, who acts on the advice of the prime minister and the cabinet. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party of the House of Representatives, and the cabinet conducts affairs of state. St. Kitts and Nevis has a bicameral legislature: An 11-member Senate appointed by the governor general (mainly on the advice of the prime minister and the leader of the opposition); and an 11-member popularly elected House of Representatives which has eight St. Kitts seats and three Nevis seats. The prime minister and the cabinet are responsible to the Parliament.

St. Kitts and Nevis has enjoyed a long history of free and fair elections, although the outcome of elections in 1993 was strongly protested by the opposition and the Eastern Caribbean Regional Security System (RSS) was briefly deployed to restore order. The elections in 1995 were contested by the two major parties, the ruling People's Action Movement (PAM) and the St. Kitts and Nevis Labour Party. Labour won seven of the 11 seats, with Dr. Denzil Douglas becoming prime minister. In the 2010 elections, Denzil Douglas and the Labour Party were returned to power, winning six of the eight seats allotted to St. Kitts in the Parliament. The Nevis-based Concerned Citizens Movement (CCM) won two seats, the Nevis Reformation Party (NRP) won one seat, and the PAM party won two seats. The next elections are constitutionally due by November 2015.

The constitution gives Nevis considerable autonomy. Nevis has an island assembly, a premier, and a deputy governor general. Under certain specified conditions, it may secede from the federation. In accordance with its rights under the Constitution, in 1996 the Nevis Island Administration under the Concerned Citizens' Movement (CCM) of Premier Vance Amory initiated steps towards secession from the Federation, the most recent being a referendum in 1998 that failed to secure the required two-thirds majority for secession. In the July 10, 2006 Nevis elections for the Nevis Island Administration, the NRP won three of the five seats; the CCM won two. The NRP's Joseph Parry assumed the premiership of Nevis. While opposing secession, the government acknowledged the constitutional rights of Nevisians to determine their future independence. Constitutional safeguards include freedom of speech, press, worship, movement, and association. Like its neighbors in the English-speaking Caribbean, St. Kitts and Nevis has an excellent human rights record. Its judicial system is modeled on British practice and procedure and its jurisprudence on English common law.

Principal Government Officials

Chief of State--Queen Elizabeth II

Governor General--Sir Cuthbert M. Sebastian

Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Sustainable Development, Information and Technology, Tourism, Culture and Sports--
Denzil L. Douglas

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Education--Timothy Harris

Ambassador to the United States and Permanent Representative to the OAS--Izben Williams

Permanent Representative to the UN--Delano Bart

Principal Nevis Island Government Official, Premier--Joseph Parry

The **embassy** of St. Kitts and Nevis is located at 3216 New Mexico Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20016 (tel. 202-686-2636).

ECONOMY

St. Kitts and Nevis was the last sugar monoculture in the Eastern Caribbean until the government decided to close the sugar industry in 2005, after decades of losses at the state-run sugar company. To compensate for the loss of the sugar industry, the

Government of St. Kitts and Nevis has begun exploring alternative energy uses for sugar cane. The United States and Brazil have agreed to develop biofuels programs in the region.

The economy of St. Kitts and Nevis experienced strong growth for most of the 1990s, but hurricanes in 1998 and 1999 and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks hurt the tourism-dependent economy. Economic growth picked up in 2004, with a real GDP growth rate of 6.4%, followed by 4.1% growth in 2005. The GDP growth rate rose to 5.8% in 2006, mostly as a result of diversification into tourism and construction related to the Cricket World Cup. Tourism has shown the greatest growth and is now a major foreign exchange earner for St. Kitts and Nevis, as evidenced by an 83% increase in foreign direct investment in a range of tourism-related projects. Recent significant investment included a 648-room Marriott hotel and convention center that opened in December 2002, as well as 2007 plans for "Christophe Harbor," a U.S. investor-funded \$500 million resort project. The government instituted a program of investment incentives for businesses considering the possibility of locating in St. Kitts or Nevis, encouraging domestic and foreign private investment. Government policies provide liberal tax holidays, duty-free import of equipment and materials, and subsidies for training provided to local personnel.

However, the debt of public enterprises has increased, and total public and publicly guaranteed debt reached \$290,740,000 in 2006. Consumer prices have risen marginally over the past few years. The rate of inflation, as measured by the change in the CPI, rose on average by 5.3% in 2006, compared with 3.6% in 2005 and 2.3% in 2004.

St. Kitts and Nevis is a member of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU). The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) issues the Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$) for all members of the ECCU. The ECCB also 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 to U.S. \$1.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

St. Kitts and Nevis maintains diplomatic relations with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Taiwan, Cuba, and South Korea, as well as with many Latin American countries and neighboring Eastern Caribbean states. It is a member of the Commonwealth, the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Organization of American States, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, the Eastern Caribbean Regional Security System (RSS), and the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank is headquartered in St. Kitts. St. Kitts and Nevis has chosen to recognize Taiwan instead of the People's Republic of China.

U.S.-ST. KITTS AND NEVIS RELATIONS

Since St. Kitts and Nevis attained full independence in 1983, relations with the United States have been friendly. The United States seeks to help St. Kitts and Nevis develop economically and to help strengthen its moderate, democratic, parliamentary form of government. St. Kitts and Nevis is a beneficiary of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative. U.S. assistance is primarily channeled through multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), as well as the USAID office in Bridgetown, Barbados. In addition, St. Kitts and Nevis benefits from U.S. military exercises and humanitarian civic action construction projects.

St. Kitts and Nevis is strategically placed in the Leeward Islands, near maritime transport lanes of major importance to the United States. St. Kitts and Nevis' location close to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands makes the two-island federation attractive to narcotics traffickers. To counter this threat, the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis cooperates with the United States in the fight against illegal narcotics. In 1995, the government signed a maritime law enforcement treaty with the United States, later amended

with an overflight/order-to-land amendment in 1996. St. Kitts and Nevis also signed an updated extradition treaty with the United States in 1996, and a mutual legal assistance treaty in 1997.

St. Kitts and Nevis is a popular American tourist destination. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, tourism declined, but the islands have seen growing numbers of visitors in recent years. Fewer than 1,000 U.S. citizens reside on the island, although students and staff of Ross University Veterinary School and the Medical University of the Americas (Nevis) constitute a significant population of U.S. citizens.

The United States maintains no official presence in St. Kitts and Nevis. The Ambassador and Embassy officers are resident in Barbados and frequently travel to St. Kitts and Nevis. A U.S. consular agent residing in nearby Antigua, however, assists U.S. citizens in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Ambassador--vacant

Deputy Chief of Mission--D. Brent Hardt

Political/Economic Chief--B. Rick Switzer

Consul General--vacant

Commercial Affairs--vacant

Public Affairs Officer--vacant

Peace Corps Director--Margo Jean-Child (resident in St. Lucia)

The **U.S. Embassy** in Barbados is located in the Wildey Business Park, Wildey, St. Michael (tel: 246-227-4000; fax: 246-429-5246).

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**.

