

# Curacao

Curaçao, the largest island in the Netherlands Antilles, is part of the Dutch Leeward Islands, also known as the Dutch Antilles. Willemstad, the capital, is noted for its brightly-coloured, Dutch-style houses and *Cunucu* dwellings (based on African-style mud and wattle huts). It is one of the finest shopping centres in the Caribbean. The harbour has a floating market where colourful barges full of agricultural produce are moored. Nearby is the new market building, the design of which is very striking. St Christoffel National Park, occupying the most northwestern part of the island, is a nature reserve dominated by the mountain of the same name. There are several caves decorated with Arawak Indian paintings, some unusual rock formations and fine views across the countryside. Lucky visitors may spy iguanas and shy Curaçao deer. Traditional Dutch food is popular, as well as the exciting flavours of Creole food, criollo, which makes good use of fresh fish. There are several discos run by hotels on the island some of which also have a casino.

## General Information

**Area:** 444 sq km (171 sq miles).

**Population:** 152,700 (1996).

**Population Density:** 344.0 per sq km.

**Capital:** Willemstad.

**Population:** 144,097 (1992).

### Geography:

Curaçao, the largest island in the Netherlands Antilles, is geographically part of the Dutch Leeward Islands, also known as the Dutch Antilles. It is flat, rocky and fairly barren owing to its low rainfall. There are many excellent beaches.

### Government:

Part of the Netherlands Antilles; dependency of the Netherlands. The Netherlands Antilles consist of Curaçao, Bonaire, St Maarten, St Eustatius and Saba. The capital of the island group is Willemstad, Curaçao. **Head of State:** HM Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, represented locally by Governor Jaime M Saleh since 1990. **Head of Government:** Prime Minister Emily de Jongh-Elhage since 2006.

### Language:

Dutch is the official language. Papiamentu (a mixture of Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Arawak Indian and several African languages) is the *lingua franca*; English and Spanish are also widely spoken.

### Religion:

The majority of the population is Roman Catholic, with Protestant minorities, both evangelical and other low-church denominations. There is also a Baha'i temple and a synagogue.

### Time:

GMT - 4.

### Electricity:

110/220 volts AC, 50Hz.

### Communications:

### Telephone:

Good IDD service to Europe. Country code: 599. Outgoing international code: 00.

**Mobile telephone:**

TDMA network exists. Handsets can be hired at the airport post office for a fee of approximately US\$5 per day and a deposit of US\$250. There is a five per cent tax.

**Internet:**

There is an Internet café in Willemstad. Local ISPs include *IBM* and *Curanet*.

**Telegram:**

Facilities available in most large hotels and in the post office in Willemstad.

**Post:**

Airmail to Western Europe takes four to six days.

**Press:**

English-language newspapers include the *Daily Herald* and the *Business Journal*.

**BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies:**

From time to time these change.

**BBC (website: [www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice)):**

MHz	15.19	12.10	6.195	5.975
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**Voice of America (website: [www.voagov](http://www.voagov)):**

MHz	13.79	9.455	6.130	5.995

**Passport/Visa**

	Passport Required?	Visa Required?	Return Ticket Required?
British	Yes	4	Yes
Australian	Yes	5	Yes
Canadian	3	5	Yes
USA	2	4	Yes
OtherEU	1	4	Yes
Japanese	Yes	5	Yes

**Money**

**Note:**

The Netherlands Antilles Guilder or Florin is tied to the US Dollar.

**Currency:**

Netherlands Antilles Guilder or Florin (NAG) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of NAG250, 100, 50, 25, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of 100, 50, 25, 10, 5, 2.5 and 1 cents. US Dollars are accepted everywhere. However, it is best to take notes in small denominations; US\$50 and US\$100 notes are not always easy to change.

**Currency exchange:**

Available in banks and bureaux de change. There are some ATMs.

**Credit & debit cards:**

Major credit cards are widely accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available. Debit cards are accepted in large shops and supermarkets.

**Travellers cheques:**

Widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars.

**Exchange rate indicators**

The following figures are included as a guide to the movement of the Netherlands Antilles Guilder against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date	May '01	Aug '01	Nov '01	Feb '02
£1.00=	2.56	2.58	2.52	2.55
\$1.00=	1.80	1.78	1.78	1.78

**Currency restrictions:**

The import and export of local and foreign currency is unlimited. The import of Dutch or Surinam silver coins is forbidden.

**Banking hours:**

Mon-Fri 0800-1530.

**Duty Free**

The following items may be taken into Curaçao by those over 15 years of age without payment of duty: *200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; 2 litres of alcoholic beverages; an unlimited amount of perfume; gifts up to the value of NAG100.*

**Health**

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
Yellow Fever	No	1
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	Yes	N/A
Malaria	No	N/A
Food and Drink	2	N/A

**Health care:**

There are three hospitals on Curaçao. The largest, St Elizabeth, is well equipped. Health insurance is recommended.

## **Sport & Activities**

### **Watersports:**

As with the other islands of the Caribbean, watersports are widely promoted and facilities on Curaçao itself are well developed. There are excellent beaches for **swimming** (some charge an entrance fee).

**Windsurfing, sailing** and **water-skiing** are popular on the island and the hotels and watersports centres are well equipped. **Snorkelling, scuba-diving** and **deep-sea fishing** are also popular and there are plenty of opportunities to participate in these sports. Tuition is available.

### **Other:**

Other sports available include **tennis, squash** and **golf** (at the Shell nine-hole golf course and the new 18-hole course near the Blue Bay golf resort; this course is due to be completed by autumn 2000).

### **Horseriding**

can also be arranged.

## **Climate**

Hot throughout the year, but tempered by cooling trade winds. The main rainy season is from October to December. The annual mean temperature is 27.5°C (81.5°F), rainfall is 515mm and humidity is 75.9 per cent. The island lies outside the Caribbean 'hurricane belt'.