

# Barbados – country's geographical notes

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Barbados island nation in the Caribbean, is situated about 100 miles (160 kilometres) east of the Windward Islands. Roughly triangular in shape, it measures 21 miles from northwest to southeast and about 14 miles from east to west, with a total area of 166 square miles (430 square kilometres). Its capital is Bridgetown, the only seaport.

Barbados is not part of the Lesser Antilles, although it is sometimes grouped with this archipelago. The island is of different geologic formation; it is less mountainous and has less variety in plant and animal life. The geographic position of Barbados has profoundly influenced the island's history, culture, and aspects of its economic life. In the era of sailing ships, access to the island was difficult because of the prevailing winds from the northeast. Outward-bound ships from Europe had to gain the island while heading west, for it was difficult for them to turn and reach its shores by sailing eastward against the wind.

The island remained a British possession without interruption from its settlement in the 17th century to 1966, when it attained independence. As the first Caribbean landfall from Europe, Barbados has functioned since the late 17th century as a major link between western Europe (mainly Britain), eastern Caribbean territories, and parts of the South American mainland. Because of its long association with Britain, the culture of Barbados is probably more British than that of any other Caribbean island. Since independence, however, cultural nationalism and regional awareness have tended to increase.

The climate is generally pleasant. The temperature does not usually rise above 86 F (30 C) or fall below 72 F (22 C). There are two seasons: the dry season, from early December to May, and the wet season, which lasts for the rest of the year. Average rainfall is about 60 inches (1, 525 millimeters) a year, but, despite the small size of the island, rainfall varies, rising from the low-lying coastal areas to the high central district. Barbados lies in the southern border of the Caribbean hurricane zone, and hurricanes have caused great devastation.

Barbados is densely populated. More than one-third of the population is concentrated in Bridgetown and the surrounding area. Most of the farmland is owned by large landowners or corporations. As a result, "tenancies" are as common as villages. Tenancies are clusters of wooden houses--locally known as chattel houses--located on the borders of the large estates; they are usually owned by the occupants but stand on rented ground from which they may easily be removed. Most of them have electricity and running water. The largest town is Bridgetown. In its commercial and administrative centre, multistorey buildings are altering the features of the 19th-century town. Apart from Bridgetown, Oistins, Holetown, and Speightstown are the largest towns.

The population of Barbados was 257 082 in 1990. the average population density was 572 persons per sq. km (1482 per sq. mile) was notably high considering the predominantly rural agricultural character growth of population during 1970s and 1980s was kept below 1% by out-migration. The capital, largest city and only seaport is Bridgetown with a population of 6720 in 1990.

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About 90% of the total population black; the remaining portion is composed of whites and persons of mixed racial descent.

English is the official language. More than 50% of the people are Anglicans; other important faiths include various protestant sects and Roman Catholic. Education is free to children between ages of 5 to 16yrs.

Barbados has a small, market-oriented, developing economy. Services, manufacturing, and agriculture are the main productive sectors. Although Barbados had a relatively high per capita growth rate in the 1980s, unemployment, especially among the youth and women, has been a serious problem. Most of the employment is in services and distributive trades, the greater part of which has been unionized.

The economy of Barbados has traditionally been dependent on the growing of sugarcane and the production of export of refined sugar, molasses and rum. Sugarcane is grown principally on large estates rather than on the small farms.

The annual harvest is in the early 1990s totalled about 600000 metric tons. Local industries manufacturing clothing, furniture, electrical and electronic equipment and plastic items. Newly discovered reserves of petroleum and natural gas are being exploited.

Fishing has also increased the importance. Tourists' facilities have earned more foreign revenue than sugar products.

## **Advantages and Disadvantages of Tourism to Barbados**

Barbados has many white sandy beaches and the beautiful sun, which often attracts holidaymakers. But the holidaymakers also bring many disadvantages to the country. The advantages and disadvantages are listed below in two categories.

### **Advantages**

- When holidaymakers arrive the country often needs employees to work in hotels. E. G. waiters/waitresses, cleaners, bar attendants etc.
- The country employs 15000 people.
- Holidaymakers create other jobs such as in garages, factories, taxi drivers etc.
- Tourism has encouraged the development of facilities which benefit the whole community: a deep water harbour, an airport terminal, a better road network, an improvement in water supply, sewage, disposal, electricity.
- Fisherman benefit as there is more fish needed to please tourist so the fisherman receive more money.

### **Disadvantages**

- Jobs have to shed labour at slack periods (Sep / Oct and May / June).
- Cost was expensive to establish because of the need to import foreign manufactured goods such as vehicles and furniture.
- Cost loses income for the country because food and manufactured goods still have to be imported, many hotels are foreign owned. The government is now trying to rectify by building hotels itself and encouraging local people tourists apartments.

- Tourism has an effect upon agriculture by depressing it by draining it of workers.
- The country loses money due to having the need to import goods such as Beef from New Zealand and Los Angeles.
- Economy is dependent upon conditions elsewhere- recession in North America and Europe caused tourist numbers to fall by 5% in 1981.
- Low moral standards in the tourists can have a bad effect on communities such as alcohol abuse and prostitution.
- Tourist industries have affected land beach and sea resources. It is also responsible for increase in pollution on both land and sea.

## **Is Tourism Helping Barbados?**

It's very difficult question to answer whether tourism is helping Barbados or not. So to answer this question I had divided it into two categories " Positive" and " Negative". After considering all the points it will be easier to decide whether tourism is helping Barbados or not.

### **" Positive"**

- because tourism brings money to island like Barbados through accommodation paid for by tourists, souvenirs sold to tourists e. g. clothes, steel drums, coral jewellery, tours organized by country's community as they drive them around by giving toured rides etc.
- because tourism supplies jobs for the country's community e. g. in hotels as bar attendants, waiters/waitresses, cleaners etc., taxi drivers, fishermen/women etc.
- because tourism stimulates the country's market, even providing new markets.

- because tourism has provided a better communication between races and cultures.
- because tourism has provided the country with enough money to produce an airport, maintain better road links and conditions, and an improvement in water supply, sewage disposal and electricity.

### " Negative"

- because tourism has also broken up communities by bringing so many tourists into the country that the communities are being denied access to the facilities provided.
- because tourism has caused a loss in money by tourists expecting foreign manufactured goods e. g. food, furniture, vehicles etc instead of buying native products.
- because tourism has caused a westernizing effect on culture and social standards, which can cause differences and may even cause the community to forget its background history.
- because tourism has caused the environment to change by making buildings around the beach and buildings which do not fit in with the country's environment.
- because the agriculture workers have left the fields to work in hotels close to the tourists so there are not many people to work in the fields anymore.

After considering this subject, I conclude that tourism has both positive and negative effects on Barbados.

If tourism is not controlled, in future it will not have good effect on the country as the country will be changed i. e. there will not be clean beaches

with beautiful white sand and crystal clear green sea water, beautiful palm trees or the green environment etc. this will be changed by the community changing their environment to please the tourists by building more hotels and forgetting their culture.

If you think carefully then you will realize that tourists are going to Barbados for its culture, its beautiful white sand and crystal green water, its green environment and of course the sun.

On consideration, tourism can have benefits for Barbados- bringing employment, income and improved facilities. On the other hand it can bring pollution, destruction of the environment in order to build facilities, and can have a detrimental effect on the culture and community life.

### **Why Do Fewer Tourists Travel Shorter Distances?**

In answering this question I have referred to table 1 on the previous page.

The question asked is 'why fewer tourists travel shorter distances to Barbados from South America and West Indies?' My opinion on the question asked by many people is that GNP in both places is low and the vast majority cannot afford to travel abroad.

If the country does not have a very high GNP they will not have much disposable income after all the main expenses are paid off e. g. mortgage, taxes bills, National Insurance (N. I), pensions, and road tax ( if car is involved).

South America's GNP is 3087.



West Indies GNP is 2798 (the figures stated are calculated in \$US).

If you compare the GNP of countries like USA and the UK to that of the GNP of the countries like the West Indies and the South America you will notice that people in the USA and in the UK have much more disposable income.

USA's GNP is 16664.

UK's GNP is 11903 (the figures stated are calculated in \$US).

Another reason for answering this question is that in the West Indies and in South America the annual average climate is generally the same so the residents will not need to travel to find the sun and fine weather.

## **Why Do So Many People Travel To Barbados From North America & Europe?**

The question asked is why do so many people travel to Barbados from North America and Europe.

My suggested opinion is firstly because in countries in North America and Europe usually have a higher GNP meaning after all the main expenses are paid off (stated in the question 'why do fewer tourists travel shorter distances to Barbados?') they end up with enough disposable income to spend on the trips to places like Barbados.

Another reason is that in places like Europe and North America the climate is too hot but there is either too little hot weather or the climate is not hot enough. There are not that many beautiful beaches like in Barbados.

## **Why Do Tourists From North America And Europe Turn Up in Barbados at Certain Times of the Year?**

My suggested answer for this question is because of hot climate. At certain times in the year the sun is out and the weather is basically hot, hot and hot with a lot of sun. The months when the climate is hot and sunny is at the end of December to beginning of June. The remaining months are mainly rainy months so you wouldn't actually find many tourists around in Barbados.