



Sint Maarten



Background Christopher COLUMBUS claimed Saint Martin for Spain in 1493, naming it after the feast day of St. Martin of Tours, but it was the Dutch who occupied the island in 1631 to exploit its salt deposits. The Spanish retook Saint Martin in 1633, but the Dutch continued to assert their claims. The Spanish finally relinquished the island to the French and Dutch, who divided it between themselves in 1648. The border frequently fluctuated over the next 200 years because of friction between the two countries, with the Dutch eventually holding the smaller portion of the island (about 39%) and adopting the Dutch spelling of the island's name for their territory.

The establishment of cotton, tobacco, and sugar plantations dramatically expanded African slavery on the island in the 18th and 19th centuries; the practice was not abolished in the Dutch half until 1863. The island's economy declined until 1939 when it became a free port; the tourism industry was dramatically expanded beginning in the 1950s. In 1954, Sint Maarten and several other Dutch Caribbean possessions became part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as the Netherlands Antilles. In a 2000 referendum, the citizens of Sint Maarten voted to become a self-governing country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, effective in 2010. In 2017, Hurricane Irma hit Saint Martin/Sint Maarten, causing extensive damage to roads, communications, electrical power, and housing; the UN estimated that 90% of the buildings were damaged or destroyed.

Capital	name: Philipsburg
Government type	parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy
Area	total : 34 sq km land: 34 sq km water: 0 sq km
Climate	tropical marine climate, ameliorated by northeast trade winds, results in moderate temperatures; average rainfall of 150 cm/year; hurricane season stretches from July to November
Natural resources	fish, salt
Population	total: 46,215 (2024 est.)
Population growth rate	1.15% (2024 est.)
Ethnic groups	Saint Maarten 29.9%, Dominican Republic 10.2%, Haiti 7.8%, Jamaica 6.6%, Saint Martin 5.9%, Guyana 5%, Dominica 4.4%, Curacao 4.1%, Aruba 3.4%, Saint Kitts and Nevis 2.8%, India 2.6%, Netherlands 2.2%, US 1.6%, Suriname 1.4%, Saint Lucia 1.3%, Anguilla 1.1%, other 8%, unspecified 1.7% (2011 est.)

Religions	Protestant 41.9% (Pentecostal 14.7%, Methodist 10.0%, Seventh Day Adventist 6.6%, Baptist 4.7%, Anglican 3.1%, other Protestant 2.8%), Roman Catholic 33.1%, Hindu 5.2%, Christian 4.1%, Jehovah's Witness 1.7%, Evangelical 1.4%, Muslim/Jewish 1.1%, other 1.3% (includes Buddhist, Sikh, Rastafarian), none 7.9%, no response 2.4% (2011 est.)
Languages	English (official) 67.5%, Spanish 12.9%, Creole 8.2%, Dutch (official) 4.2%, Papiamentu (a Spanish-Portuguese-Dutch-English dialect) 2.2%, French 1.5%, other 3.5% (2001 est.)
Executive branch	chief of state: King WILLEM-ALEXANDER of the Netherlands (since 30 April 2013); represented by Governor Ajamu G. BALY (since 10 October 2022) head of government: Prime Minister Luc MERCELINA (since 3 May 2024)
Legislative branch	legislature name: Parliament of Sint Maarten
Diplomatic representation from the US	embassy: the US does not have an embassy in Sint Maarten; the Consul General to Curacao is accredited to Sint Maarten
Economic overview	high-income, tourism-based Dutch autonomous constituent economy; severe hurricane- and COVID-19-related economic recessions; multilateral trust fund helping offset economic downturn; no property taxation; re-exporter to Saint Martin
Real GDP (purchasing power parity)	\$1.986 billion (2024 est.) \$1.919 billion (2023 est.) \$1.849 billion (2022 est.)
Real GDP per capita	\$45,800 (2024 est.) \$44,900 (2023 est.) \$43,900 (2022 est.)
Exports	\$1.504 billion (2023 est.) \$1.375 billion (2022 est.) \$790.938 million (2021 est.)
Exports - partners	Antigua & Barbuda 28%, USA 16%, France 12%, Netherlands 8%, Morocco 7% (2023)
Exports - commodities	scrap iron, ships, jewelry, flavored water, liquor (2023)
Imports	\$1.489 billion (2023 est.) \$1.32 billion (2022 est.) \$1.003 billion (2021 est.)
Imports - partners	USA 82%, Netherlands 7%, France 4%, Brazil 1%, Switzerland 1% (2023)
Imports - commodities	jewelry, refined petroleum, ships, pearl products, diamonds (2023)

Population Pyramid

