



Saint Barthelemy



Background In 1493, Christopher COLUMBUS named Saint Barthelemy for his brother Bartolomeo, but the island was first settled by the French in 1648. In 1784, France sold the island to Sweden, which renamed the largest town Gustavia after the Swedish King GUSTAV III and made it a free port; the island prospered as a trade and supply center during the colonial wars of the 18th century. France repurchased the island in 1877 and took control the following year, placing it under the administration of Guadeloupe. Saint Barthelemy retained its free port status along with various Swedish appellations such as Swedish street and town names, and the three-crown symbol on the coat of arms. In 2003, the islanders voted to secede from Guadeloupe, and in 2007, the island became a French overseas collectivity. In 2012, it became an overseas territory of the EU, allowing it to exert local control over the permanent and temporary immigration of foreign workers, including non-French European citizens. Hurricane Irma hit the island in 2017 and caused extensive damage.

Capital name: Gustavia

Government type parliamentary democracy (Territorial Council); overseas collectivity of France

Area total : 25 sq km

land: 25 sq km

water: negligible

Climate tropical, with practically no variation in temperature; has two seasons (dry and humid)

Natural resources few natural resources; beaches foster tourism

Population total: 7,086

Population growth rate -0.11% (2024 est.)

Ethnic groups French, Portuguese, Caribbean, Afro-Caribbean

Religions Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jehovah's Witnesses

Languages French (primary), English

Executive branch chief of state: President Emmanuel MACRON (since 14 May 2017), represented by Prefect Cyrille LE VELY (since 15 January 2025)

head of government: President of Territorial Council Xavier LEDEE (since 3 April 2022)

Legislative branch legislature name: Territorial Council

Diplomatic representation from the US embassy: none (overseas collectivity of France)

Economic overview	high-income French Caribbean territorial economy; duty-free luxury commerce and tourism industries; import-dependent for food, water, energy, and manufacturing; large Brazilian and Portuguese labor supply; environmentally fragile
Exports - partners	Nigeria 98%, Suriname 1%, France 0%, Switzerland 0%, Poland 0% (2022)
Exports - commodities	refined petroleum, fruit juice, precious metal watches, beauty products, special pharmaceuticals (2022)
Imports - partners	Switzerland 37%, Italy 14%, Portugal 11%, Suriname 9%, Brazil 5% (2022)
Imports - commodities	precious metal watches, base metal watches, jewelry, refined petroleum, cars (2022)