
I. THE COUNTRY

Location and Geography

Barbados is a small island 33 km (21 miles) long by 22 km (14 miles) wide—430 km² (166 sq miles) of coral limestone lying 13° N latitude and 59° W longitude. The island is relatively flat, the land rising in terraces to a ridge near the centre with its highest point at Mt. Hillaby 337 m (1 115 ft). The porous nature of the coral of which Barbados is composed filters rainfall and acts as a natural purification system, thus providing some of the purest water in the world.

The major industries in Barbados are tourism, sugar production and light manufacturing with a growing offshore financial sector.

Climate

Barbados enjoys a healthy tropical climate tempered by prevailing trade winds. Temperatures vary between 22 and 33° C (74 and 85° F) with a relative humidity of 68 to 70 per cent. The average annual rainfall is 150 cm (59 inches) with a rainy season between June and December.

Local Time

Atlantic Standard Time (add one hour to Eastern Standard Time; subtract four hours from Greenwich Meridian Time) is used; there is no daylight saving time.

Population

The population of Barbados is about 255 000 with a labour force of 112 000. The literacy rate is 97 per cent with an unemployment rate of between 18 and 19 per cent.

Principal Cities

The capital, Bridgetown, is situated on the southwestern side of the island and has a population of about 102 000. The other major towns are Holetown, Speightstown and Oistins.