

Saint Lucia



KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth:	1979
Population:	181,000 (2012)
GDP p.c. growth:	1.3% p.a. 1990–2012
UN HDI 2012:	world ranking 88
Official language:	English
Time:	GMT minus 4hr
Currency:	Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$)

Geography

Area:	616 sq km
Coastline:	158 km
Capital:	Castries

Saint Lucia is part of the Windward Islands group, which form an arc jutting out from the Eastern Caribbean into the Atlantic. It lies south of Dominica and north of Barbados.

Topography: Saint Lucia is a pear-shaped mountainous island of volcanic origin, 43 km long. In the centre of the island, Mt Gimie rises to 950 metres, while Gros Piton (798 metres) and Petit Piton (750 metres) lie to the west, rising sheer out of the sea. Sulphurous springs, steam and gases bubble out of a volcanic crater a few kilometres from Petit Piton. The mountains are intersected by short rivers, debouching in places into broad fertile valleys.



Climate: The hot tropical climate is moderated all year round by the north-east trade winds. The dry season is January to April, the rainy season May to November.

Environment: The most significant environmental issues are deforestation and soil erosion, particularly in the north of the island.

Vegetation: With its economy traditionally based on agriculture, about 30 per cent of the land area is under cultivation. Elsewhere there is rainforest with exotic and varied plant-life, many with brilliant flowers. Forest covers 77 per cent of the land area.

Wildlife: This small island has rich birdlife including several unique species, for example the Saint Lucia oriole and the Saint Lucia black finch. The Saint Lucia parrot was the subject of a successful conservation programme established in 1978 which raised the population from some 150 birds to over 400. Native reptiles include the Saint Lucia tree lizard and the pygmy lizard.

Main towns: Castries (capital, pop. 67,700 in 2010, including Bexon, Babonneau, Ciceron and La Clery), Dennery (3,700), Laborie (3,500), Monchy (3,100), Vieux Fort (3,000), Grande Rivière (2,700), Augier (2,500), Micoud (2,200), Soufrière (1,500) and Anse La Raye (1,400).

Transport: There are 1,210 km of roads, mainly unpaved. The main cross-island route runs from Castries in the north to Vieux Fort in the south.

The main ports are Castries and Vieux Fort. A fast catamaran service operates between Saint Lucia, Martinique and Dominica. Several cruise lines call at the island.

Hewanorra International Airport lies 67 km south of Castries and George F. L. Charles, 3 km to the north-east.

Society

KEY FACTS 2012

Population per sq km:	294
Life expectancy:	75 years
Net primary enrolment:	82%

Population: 181,000 (2012); 17 per cent of people live in urban areas; growth 1.2 per cent p.a. 1990–2012; birth rate 16 per 1,000 people (41 in 1970); life expectancy 75 years (64 in 1970).

Did you know?

Saint Lucia is a mountainous country of volcanic origin ringed with sandy beaches.

The country has more Nobel laureates per capita than any other country: poet and playwright Derek Walcott, born in Castries, Saint Lucia, on 23 January 1930, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992; and Sir Arthur Lewis was Nobel economics laureate in 1979.

Saint Lucia's population is mostly of mixed African and European descent.

Language: English is the official language; a French-based Creole is widely spoken.

Religion: Mainly Christians (Roman Catholics 68 per cent, Seventh Day Adventists nine per cent, Pentecostals six per cent, Rastafarians, Anglicans; 2001 census).

Health: Public spending on health was three per cent of GDP in 2011. The Victoria Hospital and the new Tapion Hospital provide a range of medical treatment, and the Golden Hope Hospital caters for psychiatric cases. There are cottage hospitals at Vieux Fort, Dennery and Soufrière, and more than 20 health centres. Nurses are trained in the nursing department of the Community College. Some 94 per cent of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 65 per cent have access to adequate sanitation facilities (2011). Infant mortality was 15 per 1,000 live births in 2012.

Education: Public spending on education was four per cent of GDP in 2012. There are ten years of compulsory education starting at the age of five. Primary school comprises seven years and secondary five, with cycles of three and two years. Some 92 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2010). The school year starts in September.

The Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, at Castries, offers a diverse range of courses – including associate degree, diploma and certificate courses – and 89 per cent of its students are female (2011). Saint Lucia shares in the regional University of the West Indies, which has its main campuses in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 1.70:1 (2011).

Media: There are no daily newspapers in Saint Lucia. The main newspapers are *The Star* and *The Voice* (both three times weekly); and *The Crusader*, *The Mirror* and *The Vanguard* (all weekly).

Saint Lucia's broadcast media are mostly privately owned. Only the radio network, Radio Saint Lucia, is state-owned.

Communications: Country code 1 758; internet domain '.lc'. Phonecard telephone booths, internet cafés and post offices are located throughout the island.

There are 204 main telephone lines, 1,255 mobile phone subscriptions and 486 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

Public holidays: New Year (two days), Independence Day (22 February), Labour Day (1 May), Carnival (two days in July), Emancipation Day (early August), Thanksgiving Day (early October), Saint Lucia Day (13 December), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday, Easter Monday, Whit Monday and Corpus Christi.

Economy

KEY FACTS 2012

GNI:	US\$1.2bn
GNI p.c.:	US\$6,890
GDP growth:	1.5% p.a. 2008–12
Inflation:	3.1% p.a. 2008–12

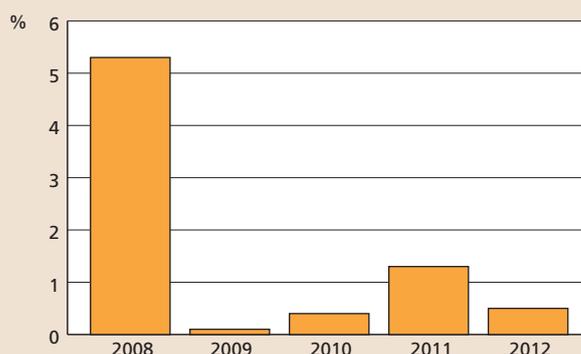
Although Saint Lucia's per capita income is relatively high among developing countries, it has been disadvantaged by its economic

dependence on bananas and by its small size, small population, limited physical and human resources, and the frequency of hurricanes.

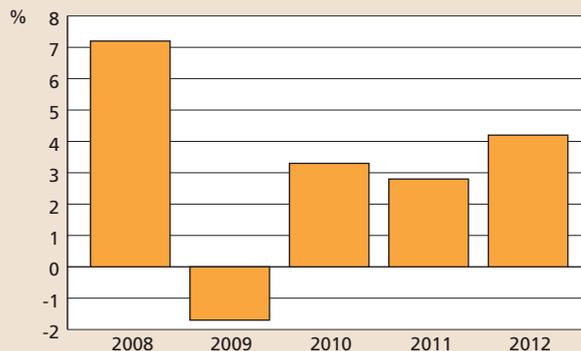
It has nevertheless successfully exploited opportunities in tourism and small-scale industry, benefiting from trade preferences from the EU and USA, and creating a more diverse economy, with well developed manufacturing, and has substantially reduced its dependence on bananas, the production and export prices of which have declined sharply. It has also encouraged development of an offshore financial services sector and a framework of sound regulation has been established.

After steady growth in the late 1990s, the economy stalled in 2000, and was in recession during 2000–02, shrinking by more than four per cent in 2001, due to the downturn in the USA and consequent fall in tourism and weakening of international markets for manufactures and bananas. In 2003 tourism recovered strongly, with more air services to the island and construction of a new resort. Tourism income was then hit in 2007 by the impact of Hurricane Dean in August – GDP growth moderating that year to

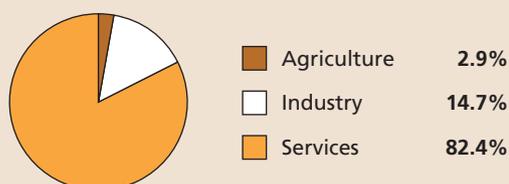
Real Growth in GDP



Inflation



GDP by Sector (2012)



1.5 per cent – and again in 2008–09 by the world economic downturn, causing the economy to stall in 2009 and to grow very little during 2009–13.

Constitution

Status:	Monarchy under Queen Elizabeth II
Legislature:	Parliament of Saint Lucia
Independence:	22 February 1979

Saint Lucia is a constitutional monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II as head of state, represented by a Governor-General. The legislature is bicameral, with the House of Assembly of 17 directly elected members (plus the Speaker) and a Senate of 11 appointed members, six by the Prime Minister (the leader of the largest party in the House of Assembly), three by the Leader of the Opposition and two by the Governor-General. Parliament is elected for five years by universal adult suffrage.

Politics

Last elections:	28 November 2011
Next elections:	2016
Head of state:	Queen Elizabeth II, represented by Governor-General, Dame Pearlette Louisy (1997–)
Head of government:	Prime Minister Dr Kenny Anthony
Ruling party:	Saint Lucia Labour Party
Women MPs:	17%

In September 1997 the country's first woman Governor-General, Dr Pearlette Louisy, was appointed, following the resignation of Sir George Mallet.

Dr Kenny Anthony and the Saint Lucia Labour Party (SLP) were returned to government in the December 2001 general election, when his SLP won 14 Assembly seats and the United Workers Party (UWP) three.

Anthony stood for a third term in the December 2006 general election which was won by the opposition UWP with 11 seats while the SLP took six. UWP leader Sir John Compton, who had since 1964 served as head of government for a total of 29 years, became Prime Minister.

Following the death of Sir John Compton at the age of 82 in September 2007, Stephenson King, who had been acting for Compton during his illness, was sworn in as Prime Minister.

In the November 2011 election Kenny Anthony and the SLP ousted the UWP government, winning 11 seats (49.7 per cent of the vote) to the UWP's six (45.8 per cent), and Anthony began a third term as Prime Minister.

International relations

Saint Lucia is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, Association of Caribbean States, Caribbean Community, Non-Aligned Movement, Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Organization of American States, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

History

Saint Lucia was named by Christopher Columbus, who sighted the island on St Lucy's day 1502. The island has been much fought over. At some time before Columbus's arrival, the Caribs ousted the Arawaks; and European powers contended with the Caribs and one another for control between 1660 and 1814; in that period the flag of Saint Lucia changed 14 times.

After unsuccessful early attempts by the Spanish to take control, possession of the island was disputed, often bloodily, by the French and British. A small English group made a failed attempt to settle in 1605; another English colony, started in 1638, was annihilated by the Caribs three years later.

The Caribs resisted French settlement with equal vigour, until a peace treaty (1660) with them permitted settlement, and ensured the safety of some French settlers from Martinique who had arrived during the preceding decade. The British made further attempts to gain control, and the island changed hands again and again, and was a focus for Anglo-French hostilities during the Napoleonic Wars. The British ultimately took possession under the Treaty of Paris in 1814, and Saint Lucia became a Crown colony.

A prosperous plantation economy developed; it was based on sugar, and worked by enslaved Africans until Britain abolished slavery in 1834.

The island was a member of the Windward Islands Federation until 1959. In 1959, Saint Lucia joined the West Indies Federation, under which it was proposed that the British

Caribbean countries should proceed to independence as a federation. Disagreements among the larger members led to dissolution of the federation in 1962, and the larger members proceeded alone to independence.

In 1967, Saint Lucia received a new constitution, giving full internal self-government under universal franchise, as one of the states of the Federated States of the Antilles. In February 1979, it became independent, as a constitutional monarchy and member of the Commonwealth, with John Compton of the United Workers Party (UWP) as its first Prime Minister.

The Saint Lucia Labour Party (SLP) won the election in 1979 and adopted a policy of close collaboration with Grenada, which had recently undergone a revolution led by Maurice Bishop, and was aligned with Cuba and North Korea. Allegations of corruption resulted in an early general election in 1982, when the UWP was returned with a large majority. It was re-elected in 1987 and 1992 (with an 11:6 majority). Prime Minister Compton adopted IMF adjustment measures and returned the country to operation of a market economy. He also pursued the integration of the Eastern Caribbean countries through the OECS.

In March 1996, at a UWP convention, Compton lost the leadership, after 30 years, and was replaced as Prime Minister by Dr Vaughan Lewis. An early general election in May 1997 resulted in victory for the SLP, winning 16 of the 17 seats, with 61 per cent of the votes, and SLP leader Dr Kenny Anthony became Prime Minister. Lewis resigned as leader of the UWP, having lost his seat.

Saint Lucia hosts the headquarters of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

Traveller information

Immigration and customs: Passports must be valid at least until the date of departure. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the left. Visitors wishing to drive will need to purchase a driving permit, at car hire firms or police stations, on presentation of a foreign driving licence. Some of the mountainous roads can be extremely steep with hairpin bends.

There are regular minibus services that connect rural areas with the capital. Taxis can be hailed in towns and have fixed fares for standard journeys.

Travel health: Prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended include dengue fever, hepatitis B and schistosomiasis (bilharzia).

There were 307,000 tourist arrivals in 2012.

Further information

Government of Saint Lucia: www.stlucia.gov.lc

Electoral Department: www.electoral.gov.lc

Parliament of Saint Lucia: www.stluciaparliament.com

Central Statistics Office: www.stats.gov.lc

Eastern Caribbean Central Bank: www.eccb-centralbank.org

Saint Lucia Tourist Board: www.stlucia.org

Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States: www.oecs.org

Commonwealth Secretariat: www.thecommonwealth.org

Commonwealth of Nations:
www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/St_Lucia

Media

The Star: stluciastar.com

The Voice: www.thevoiceslu.com

Radio Saint Lucia: www.rsonline.com

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