

# WEST INDIES

## JAMAICA



AREA 10,991 sq km  
POPULATION 2,868,000  
MONEY Jamaican dollar

## CUBA



AREA 110,861 sq km  
POPULATION 11,087,000  
MONEY Cuban peso

## HAITI



AREA 27,750 sq km  
POPULATION 9,720,000  
MONEY Gourde

**T**HE West Indies are a large group of islands in the Caribbean Sea. Some islands are high and volcanic, others are low coral islands – but all of them are beautiful. Most West Indians have African ancestors: they were brought from West Africa as slaves, to work in the sugar and tobacco fields. And in Trinidad, workers came from India as well.

Most of the islands are now independent countries – and tourism is more important than farming in many places. Cruises around the islands are popular. Winter is the best time to visit; summer is very hot and humid, with the risk of hurricanes.

In recent years, many West Indians have emigrated to the UK from Commonwealth islands, to France from Guadeloupe and Martinique, and to the USA from Puerto Rico. The most important crops for export are tobacco, sugar, bananas and special fruit such as nutmegs from Granada. A few islands have developed their minerals, for example bauxite in Jamaica and oil in Trinidad.



▲ **Dutch colonial houses, Curaçao.** The island of Curaçao has been Dutch for many years. The colonists came from the Netherlands, and tried to build houses just like the ones at home. Several other small West Indian islands still have European connections.



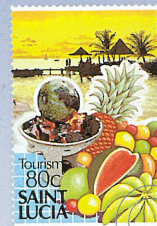
▲ **Coconut palms and beach, Barbados.** It is beautiful – but beware! The tropical sun can quickly burn your skin. And if you seek shade under the coconut palms, you might get hit by a big coconut! Even so, the West Indies are very popular with tourists – especially Americans escaping from cold winters.

### TOURISM – GOOD & BAD NEWS

Tourism is GOOD news because it brings money and jobs to many West Indian islands. The sunny weather means



tourists come all year. There is work in the hotels and restaurants. Farmers can sell more vegetables and a great variety of delicious fruit (left). Beautiful scenery is looked after so that tourists will come and visit – hot springs, waterfalls, old forts and churches as well



as coral reefs and lovely beaches. But tourism can also be BAD news ... pollution; noise; waste of water; and many local people do not want to be photographed by rich tourists who may not treat them as equals.

