

The flag of Jamaica (far left) has a meaning: GOLD stands for sunshine and natural resources; GREEN for farming and future hope; BLACK for hardships, past and present.

The West Indies used to be colonies of European countries. Today, most of the islands are independent, but still have close links with Europe.

Look at the map; can you spot\*:

- An island that is owned by the Netherlands?
- An island owned by the UK?
- An island that is part of France?
- A group of islands – half are owned by the UK; half by the USA?
- An island with two countries?
- The country with the most islands?

(\* Answers on page 97.)



▲ **Beware of the hurricane season!**

What a contrast to the peaceful beach (see picture, left)! Violent tropical storms are a danger every summer. Strong winds can reach over 300 kilometres per hour, with torrential rain. They uproot trees and wreck boats and buildings; floods damage crops, roads and bridges.



▲ **Cleaning harvested bananas.**

These bananas have been grown in Guadeloupe. They have to be cleaned before they can be sold. Many people here depend on banana farming to make a living. The bananas travel to other countries in large refrigerated ships.

