



# **MISSIONARY HANDBOOK**

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## VISION

North Texas Missions (NTM) is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization made up of men and women who have a heart for serving others, no matter where it takes them.

Founded in 2005, NTM provides trip opportunities so people can use their talents and skills to help people in countries that need it the most. Our mission has served in The Bahamas, Nicaragua and Honduras sharing the Gospel, providing medical and dental services, Vacation Bible School and sports related activities to thousands of men, women and children. In Honduras we have provided financial and building assistance to two orphanages, construction supplies for a school, financial support needed to rebuild the kitchen of two families. In Nicaragua, we have helped construct a home for the youth minister in Mateare.

As 2015 dawns, God continues to show His favor by allowing us to expand our ministry, vision and visibility.

These are exciting times as we see God change the lives of the people who serve as short term missionaries and in the lives of the people the Mission serves.

Please pray about your involvement, whether to serve on the mission field or to provide prayer or financial support. God has great plans for you and we look forward to the opportunity to join together to meet the physical and spiritual needs of others.

*"That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations"*

*Psalm 67:2 (NKJV)*

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your commitment to serving God with North Texas Missions. You are about to experience one of the most rewarding events in your lifetime. You will be part of something that will change the lives of the people in the country you are serving, as well as your own. This will take spiritual and physical preparation on your part. The following information will help make your trip successful.

Serving on a short term mission trip can be physically and mentally demanding due to the long hours and tropical climate. Due to these factors we ask that you are in good health and over the age of sixteen. Those under the age of sixteen must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. (Please contact North Texas Missions if you need to discuss an exception). We ask that you respect the policies and rules as well as the culture of the people you come in contact with.

Once you arrive in country, allow God to work through you for His glory. When you return home you will be a changed person and better equipped to minister to those in your local community.

It's possible that you do not feel comfortable asking people for money. You may want to pay for the trip on your own; however, the entire fundraising experience is easy and encouraging. You will learn in a very real and tangible way that God provides for His people! Remember that you cannot do it all on your own, even if you can afford to pay for the trip yourself, don't deny someone else the blessing and opportunity to share in the ministry by donating to your trip. Everyone is encouraged to ask friends and family to help support their trip. A sample letter is available on the website to help you get started [www.ntxmissions.org](http://www.ntxmissions.org)

If you have any questions regarding this team handbook or would like more information about North Texas Missions, please email **[info@ntxmissions.org](mailto:info@ntxmissions.org)**

## COSTS

The total trip costs for each trip is found on the Missions page of our website. A non refundable deposit of \$200 is due 90 days before departure date. Final payments are due approximately 45 days before departure date.

This cost includes the following:

- Airfare (originating from DFW, price may vary from other airports)
- Travel insurance
- Accommodations while in country.
- All meals (excluding meals on travel days)
- Ground Transportation
- Ministry or project funding (VBS, construction, evangelism...)
- Fun day activity
- Exit fee when leaving country (where applicable)

Once travel tickets have been purchased, the airlines have a non-refundable policy on all group purchases with the following exception - political or safety problems in the country of destination in which the United States has issued a travel advisory against going to that country. Most airlines will allow minor changes to correct a misspelled name on a ticket 48 hours prior to departure. Please contact your team leader immediately if any changes are necessary.

The Department of Homeland Security has issued new mandates in the Fall of 2009 which require the passengers name on the issued ticket to EXACTLY match the Passport. In addition, the nationality of the passenger (country issuing the passport), the gender and date of birth will be required for all tickets being issued.

Project Funding: Teams are responsible for funding the project or ministry activity while in country. The project costs will vary, but in most cases these are covered in the base cost.

Personal Expenses: Please use discretion in the amount of cash you carry. It is recommended that you take no more than \$100-\$150 for any personal expense. All trip expenses are covered throughout the week. Personal expenses would include souvenirs and travel related restaurant meals.

### Passports:

You must have a current passport in order to travel anywhere outside of the United State. If you already have a passport, **make sure it is current and does not expire within 6 months following the date of departure**. For non-US passport holders, please contact your team captain to determine if special Visa requirements are required for the country you are visiting. Additionally, non-US passport holders are required to have an expiration date no earlier than 6 months following the return date of your trip.

New passports cost about \$140 and take approximately 3-4 weeks to receive. Be sure to get the application process started immediately. Most post office locations provide passport services; however, please check the following website for more details:

[http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html).

**Vaccinations:**

Vaccinations vary by country. At a glance, the following vaccinations are needed. Please access the provided links to obtain additional information.

**Honduras, Nicaragua & Dominican Republic**

The following vaccinations are required:

<b>Hepatitis A</b>	Recommended for all travelers
<b>Typhoid</b>	Recommended for all travelers
<b>Yellow fever</b>	Required for travelers <b>arriving</b> from a yellow-fever-infected area in Africa or South America
<b>Hepatitis B</b>	Recommended for all travelers
<b>Rabies</b>	For travelers spending a lot of time outdoors, or at high risk for animal bites, or involved in any activities that might bring them into direct contact with bats
<b>Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)</b>	Two doses recommended for all travelers born after 1956, if not previously given
<b>Tetanus-diphtheria</b>	Revaccination recommended every 10 years

Additional information:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/nicaragua>

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/honduras>

**Bahamas**

The country of the Bahamas does not have any specific vaccinations; however, the following are recommended **but not required**:

<b>Hepatitis A</b>	Recommended for all travelers
<b>Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)</b>	Two doses recommended for all travelers born after 1956, if not previously given
<b>Tetanus-diphtheria</b>	Revaccination recommended every 10 years

Additional information:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/the-bahamas>

Check with your health care & insurance provider to see if the vaccinations are covered or available. If not, check with the following providers:

[http://www.co.collin.tx.us/healthcare\\_services/index.jsp](http://www.co.collin.tx.us/healthcare_services/index.jsp)

<http://www.co.denton.tx.us/dept/main.asp?Dept=33>

<http://passporthealthtexas.com/>

## TRAVEL INFORMATION

Your team leader will be managing the entire team's tickets and copies of all passports and applications.

Plan to arrive at the airport at least two hours before the set departure time.

- Bring your itinerary and **current original** passport
- Be sure your luggage has your name, address, and North Texas Missions tag on it
- Check luggage through to your final destination
- Keep your luggage claim ticket in case there are any problems upon arrival
- On the flight to your destination country the flight attendant will distribute two forms
  1. Customs Declaration Form (families use one form)
  2. "Country Specific" Migration Office Form
    - a. Purpose of visit should be listed as pleasure
    - b. You will be residing at "Private Residence"
      - i. Residence address to be provided to you prior to departure.
    - c. Port of Embarkation: The city you boarded the plane for your destination country (Houston, Miami, etc..)
    - d. Port of Disembarkation: The city where you arrive
    - e. Country of Departure – USA
    - f. Country of Destination
- Example of both forms used for Honduras are on the following pages

Upon your arrival in your destination country each person will go through Immigration one at a time. You will need to show your passport and turn in your tourist/visitor card. Immigration will keep a copy of each and return one along with your passport. **\*\* Be sure to keep this copy with your passport and don't lose it. It must be turned in upon departing \*\***

After clearing Immigration you will go to the baggage claim area and claim your baggage. It is a good idea to assign one or two people to wait in one place to collect the checked bags.

- Once all luggage is located the group will go through the customs/inspection line together
- Keep all claim tickets until everyone on the team has confirmed they have their luggage
- If you are missing any luggage please notify your team captain.

When departing the foreign country, follow the same procedure as above. When arriving in the US you will have to claim your luggage and carry it through customs. This will take place at the first port of entry in the US (Houston, Miami, etc..) Once you have cleared customs you will drop your luggage off at the airline check station, usually immediately after you pass through customs.

When traveling, the unexpected can happen. Even though you have prayed for protection do not take unnecessary risks by exposing yourself to danger. Listen to your team leaders and take their direction. **Never** wander off alone or without permission from mission representatives. If you encounter anyone in a negative situation, be smart about it and do not fight - surrender valuables. Remember nothing is more important than human life. Be prepared for any contingencies that may be necessary. Be flexible and understand you cannot always be in control of what is happening, but God is!

# CUSTOMS FORM EXAMPLE



## Customs Declaration

19 CFR 122.27, 148.12, 148.13, 148.110, 148.111, 1498; 31 CFR 5316

FORM APPROVED

OMB NO. 1551-0009

Each arriving traveler or responsible family member must provide the following information (only ONE written declaration per family is required):

1. Family Name **DOE**  
First (Given) **JOHN** Middle **JAY**
2. Birth date Day **21** Month **03** Year **79**
3. Number of Family members traveling with you **1**
4. (a) U.S. Street Address (hotel name/destination)  
**123 MAIN ST.**  
(b) City **FRISCO** (c) State **TX**
5. Passport issued by (country) **USA**
6. Passport number **123456789**
7. Country of Residence **USA**
8. Countries visited on this **HONDURAS**  
trip prior to U.S. arrival
9. Airline/Flight No. or Vessel Name **123**
10. The primary purpose of this trip is business: Yes No ☒
11. I am (We are) bringing:
 

(a) fruits, vegetables, plants, seeds, food, insects:	Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(b) meats, animals, animal/wildlife products:	Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(c) disease agents, cell cultures, snails:	Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(d) soil or have been on a farm/ranch/pasture:	Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12. I have (We have) been in close proximity of  
(such as touching or handling) livestock: Yes No ☒
13. I am (We are) carrying currency or monetary  
instruments over \$10,000 U.S. or foreign equivalent: Yes No ☒  
(see definition of monetary instruments on reverse)
14. I have (We have) commercial merchandise: Yes No ☒  
(articles for sale, samples used for soliciting orders,  
or goods that are not considered personal effects)
15. Residents — the total value of all goods, including commercial  
merchandise I/we have purchased or acquired abroad, (including gifts  
for someone else, but not items mailed to the U.S.) and am/are bringing  
to the U.S. is: \$ ☒  
Visitors — the total value of all articles that will remain in the U.S.,  
including commercial merchandise is: \$ ☒

Read the instructions on the back of this form. Space is provided to list all the items you must declare.

**I HAVE READ THE IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS FORM AND HAVE MADE A TRUTHFUL DECLARATION.**

*JOHN JAY DOE*

**7/15/09**

(Signature)

Date (day/month/year)

For Official Use Only:

CBP Form 6059B (01/04)



# IMMIGRATION FORM EXAMPLE



AIRLINE <--

PASSPORT # <--

DEPARTING CITY <--

BOLETA DE CONTROL MIGRATORIO DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE MIGRACIÓN HONDURAS, C.A.		INFORMATION SHEET HONDURAS MIGRATION OFFICE HONDURAS, C.A.	
LLENADO POR EL VIAJERO		TO BE FILLED OUT BY PASSENGER	
EMPRESA NAME OF TRANSPORTATION COMPANY DOE		No. 19- 1979320	
APELLIDO DE CASADA MARRIED NAME JOHN		PRIMER Y SEGUNDO APELLIDO FAMILY NAME DOE	
NOMBRES NAMES JOHN		NACIONALIDAD NATIONALITY US CITIZEN	
DIRECCIÓN ACTUAL O PERMANENTE HOME ADDRESS 123 MAIN ST.		SEX SEX <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F	
CIUDAD CITY FRISCO		PAIS COUNTRY USA	
TRANSITO TRANSIT <input type="checkbox"/>		TURISMO TOURIST <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
NEGOCIOS BUSINESS <input type="checkbox"/>		OFICIAL OFFICIAL <input type="checkbox"/>	
DEPORTES SPORTS <input type="checkbox"/>		REASON OF YOUR TRIP	
ESTUDIOS STUDIES <input type="checkbox"/>		CONVENCIÓNES CONVENTIONS <input type="checkbox"/>	
SALUD HEALTH <input type="checkbox"/>		RESIDENCIA RESIDENCE <input type="checkbox"/>	
OTROS OTHERS <input type="checkbox"/>			
TIPO DE TRANSPORTE TYPE OF TRANSPORTATION			
1 <input type="checkbox"/>		2 <input type="checkbox"/>	
3 <input type="checkbox"/>		4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5 <input type="checkbox"/>		6 <input type="checkbox"/>	
123456789		UNITED STATES	
NUMERO DE VISA O TARJETA DE TURISMO VISA NUMBER OR TOURISM CARD HOUSTON		ENTIDAD EXPEDIDORA DE VISA O TARJETA DE TURISMO VISA ISSUED BY SAN PEDRO SULA	
PUERTO DE EMBARQUE PORT OF EMBARKATION USA		PUERTO DE DESEMBARQUE PORT OF DESEMBARKATION HONDURAS	
PAIS DE PROCEDENCIA COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE		PAIS DE DESTINO COUNTRY OF DESTINATION	
PARA USO OFICIAL SOLAMENTE		FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY	
FECHA DE ENTRADA		FECHA DE SALIDA	
DELEGACIÓN E INSPECTOR DE ENTRADA		DELEGACIÓN E INSPECTOR DE SALIDA	
VIAJERO TRAVELER		TIPO DE PASAPORTE	
ADVERTENCIA PRESENTE ESTE DOCUMENTO A LA DELEGACIÓN HONDUREÑA DE MIGRACIÓN AL COMPLETAR SU VIAJE SIN VISA APROPIADA NO SE PUEDE TRABAJAR EN EL PAIS LA DIRECCIÓN		NOTICE PRESENT THIS DOCUMENT TO EMIGRATION OFFICER BEFORE LEAVING THE COUNTRY FOREIGNERS CAN NOT WORK IN HONDURAS WITHOUT SPECIAL VISA MANAGEMENT	

COED1 5/88  
00-0739-3-0168

## **CLIMATE & DRESS CODE**

Central America and the Caribbean are hot and humid! The climate is tropical, around 100 degrees during the summer months and 80-95 degrees during the winter months.

Remember, you are in a more modest culture, please be sure that your clothing and appearance reflects this.

### **Women:**

- Wear skirts, pants, or modest shorts to ministry activities.
- No spaghetti strap shirts.
- No tank tops during ministry activities.
- No questionable clothing (low neck lines, tight clothes, shirts that show midriff).
- Shorts may be slightly above the knee. No tight shorts.
- Bring a nice set of clothes for church on Sunday (no shorts). The church service will not be air conditioned so please dress with light clothing.

### **Men:**

- No cut-off t-shirts or tank tops during ministry activities.
- Wear pants or shorts & a presentable shirt for ministry activities.
- Bring a nice set of clothes for church on Sunday (no shorts)

### **Medical/Dental Trip**

- Scrubs are recommended for people working in the medical/dental areas
- Shorts are not allowed due to the nature of the trip

### **Construction**

- Jeans/long pants are required
- Boots are strongly recommended
- 2 pair of sturdy leather gloves
- High Deet content bug spray

## PACKING LIST

Before packing, please make sure you adhere to the airline requirements: Each bag may only be a maximum of 50 lbs and 62 linear inches (total length + width + height)

- Tag luggage with name and address in the event they are lost.
- Bring clothes that are cool, light and require little maintenance. Remember it will be hot and humid.
- No camouflage clothing allowed
- Pack enough clothes to last the entire trip. Clothes used for ministry can be used more than once. Washer and dryer are not available.
- Don't bring your best, most favorite clothes.
- It's a good idea to pack each days change of clothes in a water proof bag (eg. Ziplock).
- Bring shoes that can be worn every day. Make sure they are durable, comfortable and cool. It is recommended to bring 2 pairs of shoes.
- Slippers or shower shoes
- If possible, avoid bringing hair dryers, curling irons, clothes irons and other large items. It not only takes up space, but adds to the weight of your suitcase. Power requirements for Nicaragua, Honduras and the Bahamas use the same voltage and plug types as those in the United States.
- It is a good idea to use a back pack instead of a purse. A purse is easier to misplace or for someone to pick up.
- Bible
- Notebook or journal
- 2 water/drinking bottles to be used throughout the week.
- Hats and sunglasses
- Flashlight
- Pack hand sanitizer, sunscreen and mosquito repellent. **These are a must!**
- If you are packing snacks, pack them in a Ziploc bag. This will help guard against the humidity and insects.
- Bring a camera and extra batteries/memory cards as you will want to document your trip and share with friends and family.
- A poncho or rain jacket. (It can rain sporadically throughout the day)
- 2-3 bath towels and wash clothes – **Bahamas ONLY**
- 1 set of twin size sheets and pillow cases – **Bahamas ONLY**
- Bring your regular toiletries and 2 toothbrushes
- Modest swim suit for the excursion day. Tankinis are allowed.

## RULES & POLICIES

- No alcohol or tobacco of any type may be consumed throughout the entire trip
- Do not give personal gifts, money, etc. to anyone. All giving is done through structured programs and not on an individual basis.
- Keep valuables secured in your room.
- Do not leave cameras or other valuables lying around, please keep them secured. .
- Always travel in groups of 3 or 4. Never wander off from the group alone, especially females.
- No one is to leave the property without permission of the team leader.
- Curfew is at 11 pm – everyone should be in the dorms and music must be kept to a low volume.
- No one is to leave the school or sports camp without permission of the team leader.
- Men are not allowed in females rooms; Females are not allowed in men's rooms.
- Be considerate of others, especially those that want to sleep.
- Cell phones are available for emergency use.
- Everyone is expected to be present for all devotions, meals and scheduled activities unless otherwise excused by your team leader.
- Everyone is to make your own bed daily, and pick up items off the floor every morning. Do not leave damp towels or clothes lying on the floor, they attract insects.
- Do not drink water from faucets/spigots, use **ONLY** bottled water.
- Do not use the water from the faucets/spigots to brush your teeth, use **ONLY** bottled water.
- Any food items in your room should be kept in an airtight container to avoid insects.
- Report all illness, diarrhea, accidents, etc. immediately to team leader.
- Keep personal items in dorms rooms and not scattered throughout the team home. Specifically, in your suitcases or under your bed.
- Keep your suitcase closed when you are not using it, this will prevent any unwanted guest from crawling in while you are away.
- Where available, air conditioning will run at night only. All air conditioning should be turned off during the day.
- Modest conduct is expected for married and dating couples.



## HONDURAS INFORMATION

**Background:** Once part of Spain's vast empire in the New World, Honduras became an independent nation in 1821. After two and a half decades of mostly military rule, a freely elected civilian government came to power in 1982. During the 1980's, Honduras proved a haven for anti-Sandinista contras fighting the Marxist Nicaraguan Government and an ally to Salvadoran Government forces fighting leftist guerrillas. The country was devastated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998, which killed about 5,600 people and caused approximately \$2 billion in damage

**Location:** Central America, bordering the Caribbean Sea, between Guatemala and Nicaragua and bordering the Gulf of Fonseca (North Pacific Ocean), between El Salvador and Nicaragua

**Area:** total: 112,090 sq km, land: 111,890 sq km, water: 200 sq km

**Climate:** subtropical in lowlands, temperate in mountains

**Terrain:** mostly mountains in interior, narrow coastal plains

**Natural hazards:** frequent, but generally mild, earthquakes; extremely susceptible to damaging hurricanes and floods along the Caribbean coast

**Population:** 7,792,854

**Age structure:** 0-14 years: 38.1% (male 1,514,544/female 1,451,862) 15-64 years: 58.3% (male 2,278,508/female 2,267,527) 65 years and over: 3.6% (male 125,991/female 154,422)

**Median age:** 20.3

**Birth rate:** 26.93 births/1,000 population

**Death rate:** 5.36 deaths/1,000 population

**Infant mortality rate:** total: 24.03 deaths/1,000 live births, male: 26.97 deaths/1,000 live births, female: 20.94 deaths/1,000 live births

**Life expectancy at birth:** total population: 69.4 years, male: 67.86 years, female: 71.02 years

**Major infectious diseases:** degree of risk: high, food or waterborne diseases: bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever, vectorborne diseases: dengue fever and malaria  
water contact disease: leptospirosis

**Religions:** Roman Catholic 97%, Protestant 3%

**Languages:** Spanish, Amerindian dialects

**Country name:** Republic of Honduras

**Government type:** democratic constitutional republic

**Capital:** Tegucigalpa

**Independence:** September 15, 1821 (from Spain)

**Constitution:** January 11, 1982; effective January 20, 1982; amended many times

**Economy - overview:** Honduras, the second poorest country in Central America, has an extraordinarily unequal distribution of income and high unemployment. The economy relies heavily on a narrow range of exports, notably bananas and coffee, making it vulnerable to natural disasters and shifts in commodity prices; however, investments in the maquila and non-traditional export sectors are slowly diversifying the economy.

**Source:** [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)



## NICARAGUA INFORMATION

**Background:** The Pacific coast of Nicaragua was settled as a Spanish colony from Panama in the early 16th century. Independence from Spain was declared in 1821 and the country became an independent republic in 1838. Britain occupied the Caribbean Coast in the first half of the 19th century, but gradually ceded control of the region in subsequent decades. Violent opposition to governmental manipulation and corruption spread to all classes by 1978 and resulted in a short-lived civil war that brought the Marxist Sandinista guerrillas to power in 1979. Nicaraguan aid to leftist rebels in El Salvador caused the US to sponsor anti-Sandinista contra guerrillas through much of the 1980s. Free elections in 1990, 1996, and 2001, saw the Sandinistas defeated, but voting in 2006 announced the return of former Sandinista President Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra. The 2008 municipal elections were characterized by widespread irregularities. Nicaragua's infrastructure and economy - hard hit by the earlier civil war and by Hurricane Mitch in 1998 - are slowly being rebuilt, but democratic institutions face new challenges under the ORTEGA administration.

**Location:** Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Costa Rica and Honduras

**Area:** total: 130,370 sq km, land: 119,990 sq km, water: 10,380 sq km

**Climate:** subtropical in lowlands, temperate in mountains

**Terrain:** extensive Atlantic coastal plains rising to central interior mountains; narrow Pacific coastal plain interrupted by volcanoes

**Natural hazards:** destructive earthquakes; volcanoes; landslides; extremely susceptible to hurricanes

**Population:** 5,891,199

**Median age:** 22.1

**Birth rate:** 23.25 births/1,000 population

**Death rate:** 4.3 deaths/1,000 population

**Infant mortality rate:** total: 25.02 deaths/1,000 live births, male: 28.09 deaths/1,000 live births, female: 21.8 deaths/1,000 live births

**Life expectancy at birth:** total population: 71.5 years, male: 69.35 years, female: 73.75 yrs

**Major infectious diseases:** degree of risk: high, food or waterborne diseases: bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever, vectorborne disease: dengue fever and malaria water contact disease: leptospirosis

**Religions:** Roman Catholic 58.5%, Protestant 21.6%

**Languages:** Spanish, Miskito

**Country name:** Republic of Nicaragua

**Government type:** republic

**Capital:** Managua

**Independence:** September 15, 1821 (from Spain)

**Constitution:** 9 January 1987; revised in 1995, 2000, and 2005

## **NICARAGUA INFORMATION cont.**

**Economy - overview:** Nicaragua, the poorest country in Central America, has widespread underemployment and poverty. GDP fell by almost 3% in 2009, due to decreased export demand in the US and Central American markets, lower commodity prices for key agricultural exports, and low remittance growth - remittances are equivalent to almost 15% of GDP. The US-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) has been in effect since April 2006 and has expanded export opportunities for many agricultural and manufactured goods. Textiles and apparel account for nearly 60% of Nicaragua's exports, but increases in the minimum wage during the ORTEGA administration will likely erode its comparative advantage in this industry. Nicaragua relies on international economic assistance to meet internal- and external-debt financing obligations, however, foreign donors have curtailed this funding in response to November 2008 electoral fraud. In early 2004, Nicaragua secured some \$4.5 billion in foreign debt reduction under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, and in October 2007, the IMF approved a new poverty reduction and growth facility (PRGF) program.

**Source:** [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)



## BAHAMAS INFORMATION

**Background:** Lucayan Indians inhabited the islands when Christopher COLUMBUS first set foot in the New World on San Salvador in 1492. British settlement of the islands began in 1647; the islands became a colony in 1783. Since attaining independence from the UK in 1973, The Bahamas have prospered through tourism and international banking and investment management. Because of its geography, the country is a major transshipment point for illegal drugs, particularly shipments to the US and Europe, and its territory is used for smuggling illegal migrants into the US.

**Location:** Caribbean, chain of islands in the North Atlantic Ocean, southeast of Florida, northeast of Cuba

**Area:** total: 13, 880 sq km, land: 10,010 sq km, water: 3,870 sq km

**Climate:** subtropical in lowlands, temperate in mountains

**Terrain:** tropical marine; moderated by warm waters of Gulf Stream

**Natural hazards:** hurricanes and other tropical storms cause extensive flood and wind damage

**Population:** 307,552

**Age structure:** 0-14 years: 25.9% (male 40,085/female 39,959), 15-64 years: 67.2% (male 102,154/female 105,482), 65 years and over: 6.9% (male 8,772/female 12,704)

**Median age:** 28.7

**Birth rate:** 16.41 births/1,000 population

**Death rate:** 7.16 deaths/1,000 population

**Infant mortality rate:** total: 25.02 deaths/1,000 live birth, male: 28.09 deaths/1,000 live births, female: 21.8 deaths/1,000 live births

**Life expectancy at birth:** total population: 69.92 years, male: 67.48 years, female: 72.43 years

**Major infectious diseases:** degree of risk: low, food or waterborne diseases: bacterial diarrhea

**Religions:** Baptist 35.4%, Anglican 15.1%, Roman Catholic 13.5%, Pentecostal 8.1%, Church of God 4.8%, Methodist 4.2%, other Christian 15.2%, none or unspecified 2.9%, other 0.8%

**Languages:** English, Creole

**Country name:** Commonwealth of The Bahamas

**Government type:** republic

**Capital:** Nassau

**Independence:** 10 July 1973 (from the UK)

**Constitution:** 10 July 1973



## **BAHAMAS INFORMATION cont.**

**Economy - overview:** The Bahamas is one of the wealthiest Caribbean countries with an economy heavily dependent on tourism and offshore banking. Tourism together with tourism-driven construction and manufacturing accounts for approximately 60% of GDP and directly or indirectly employs half of the archipelago's labor force. Prior to 2006, a steady growth in tourism receipts and a boom in construction of new hotels, resorts, and residences led to solid GDP growth but since then tourism receipts have begun to drop off. The global recession in 2009 took a sizeable toll on the Bahamas, resulting in a contraction in GDP and a widening budget deficit. The outlook for 2010 is for slightly positive growth as tourism from the US returns, but sector investment is not expected to substantially increase. Financial services constitute the second-most important sector of the Bahamian economy and, when combined with business services, account for about 36% of GDP. However, the financial sector currently is smaller than it has been in the past because of the enactment of new and stricter financial regulations in 2000 that caused many international businesses to relocate elsewhere. Manufacturing and agriculture combined contribute approximately a tenth of GDP and show little growth, despite government incentives aimed at those sectors. Overall growth prospects in the short run rest heavily on the fortunes of the tourism sector.

**Source:** [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)



## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC INFORMATION

**Background:** The Taino - indigenous inhabitants of Hispaniola prior to the arrival of the Europeans - divided the island into five chiefdoms and territories. Christopher COLUMBUS explored and claimed the island on his first voyage in 1492; it became a springboard for Spanish conquest of the Caribbean and the American mainland. In 1697, Spain recognized French dominion over the western third of the island, which in 1804 became Haiti. The remainder of the island, by then known as Santo Domingo, sought to gain its own independence in 1821 but was conquered and ruled by the Haitians for 22 years; it finally attained independence as the Dominican Republic in 1844. In 1861, the Dominicans voluntarily returned to the Spanish Empire, but two years later they launched a war that restored independence in 1865. A legacy of unsettled, mostly non-representative rule followed, capped by the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas TRUJILLO from 1930 to 1961. Juan BOSCH was elected president in 1962 but was deposed in a military coup in 1963. In 1965, the United States led an intervention in the midst of a civil war sparked by an uprising to restore BOSCH. In 1966, Joaquin BALAGUER defeated BOSCH in an election to become president. BALAGUER maintained a tight grip on power for most of the next 30 years when international reaction to flawed elections forced him to curtail his term in 1996. Since then, regular competitive elections have been held in which opposition candidates have won the presidency. Former President Leonel FERNANDEZ Reyna (first term 1996-2000) won election to a new term in 2004 following a constitutional amendment allowing presidents to serve more than one term, and was later reelected to a second consecutive term. In 2012, Danilo MEDINA Sanchez was elected president.

**Location:** Caribbean, eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, east of Haiti

**Area total:** 48,670 sq km

**Terrain:** rugged highlands and mountains with fertile valleys interspersed

**Natural hazards:** lies in the middle of the hurricane belt and subject to severe storms from June to October; occasional flooding; periodic droughts

**Population:** 10,349,741 (July 2014 est.)

**Age structure:**

0-14 years: 28% (male 1,474,170/female 1,423,573)

15-24 years: 18.5% (male 974,688/female 937,103)

25-54 years: 39.3% (male 2,078,915/female 1,984,585)

55-64 years: 7.2% (male 376,175/female 371,152)

65 years and over: 6.9% (male 336,712/female 392,668) (2014 est.)

**Median age:** 27.1 years

**Birth rate:** 18.97 births/1,000 population (2014 est.)

**Death rate:** 4.5 deaths/1,000 population (2014 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:** 19.63 deaths/1,000 live births

**Life expectancy at birth:** 77.8 years

**Major infectious diseases:** bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever, dengue fever (2013)

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC INFORMATION continued

**Religions:** Roman Catholic 95%, other 5%

**Languages:** Spanish (official)

**Country name:** Dominican Republic

**Government type:** democratic republic

**Capital:** Santo Domingo

**Independence:** 27 February 1844 (from Haiti)

**Constitution:** many previous (38 total); latest proclaimed 26 January 2010; note - the Dominican Republic Government has a practice of promulgating a "new" constitution whenever an amendment is ratified (2013)

**Economy - overview:** The Dominican Republic has long been viewed primarily as an exporter of sugar, coffee, and tobacco, but in recent years the service sector has overtaken agriculture as the economy's largest employer, due to growth in telecommunications, tourism, and free trade zones. The economy is highly dependent upon the US, the destination for approximately half of exports. Remittances from the US amount to about 5% of GDP, equivalent to about a third of exports and two-thirds of tourism receipts. The country suffers from marked income inequality; the poorest half of the population receives less than one-fifth of GDP, while the richest 10% enjoys nearly 40% of GDP. High unemployment and underemployment remains an important long-term challenge. The Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) came into force in March 2007, boosting investment and exports and reducing losses to the Asian garment industry. The Dominican Republic's economy rebounded from the global recession in 2010-13, and the fiscal situation is improving. A tax reform package passed in November 2012 and a reduction in government spending helped to narrow the central government budget deficit from 6.6% of GDP in 2012 to below 3% in 2013. A successful government bond placement in 2013 helped finance the deficit.

**Source:** [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)