

# HURRICANE MARIA HITS CARIBBEAN ISLANDS THAT DEPEND ON TOURISM

From Dominica to Puerto Rico, Hurricane Maria has affected several Caribbean islands that mainly depend on tourism, some of these islands have already been hit by hurricane Irma two weeks ago.

Dominica, which is located between Martinique and Guadeloupe, is a former British colony that became independent in 1978, and its surface spreads over 750 sq. km. It is home for 73,000 people. **It was already devastated by Hurricane David in 1979 and the Tropical Storm Erika in 2015.**

Tourism is the main economic resource of the country, which seeks to develop ecotourism. The Morne Trois Pitons National Park, a tropical forest located on the slopes of a volcano, is classified as World Heritage by the UNESCO.

Located 6,700 km away from the metropolis and 120 km away from Martinique, where Maria only caused minor damage, the French department of Guadeloupe is an archipelago of about 1,700 sq. km.

The main island, made up of Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre, is dominated by the Soufrière volcano. The other highlights of the island are the Désirade Island and the Saintes and Marie Galante archipelago.

The Caribbean islands are a French overseas department since 1946, it had 400,186 inhabitants in 2014. It continues to suffer the consequences of the 2009 crisis characterized by strikes that affected the tourism-based economy and the public sector.

The British Virgin Islands is a territory of 106 sq. km with about 5,000 inhabitants located north of Guadalupe and southwest of Antigua. It is a British overseas territory colonized in 1632.

The island was dependant on tourism and agriculture. However, a series of eruptions in the 1990s made the island uninhabitable and destroyed much of its capital, Plymouth. More than half of the population was evacuated.

The Beatles ex-producer Sir George Martin had a studio there in which "Ebony and Ivory" (Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder), "Synchronicity" (The Police) and "Brothers in Arms" (Dire Straits) were recorded.

Saint-Kitts and Nevis is an archipelago comprising two islands located northwest of Guadalupe. This former English colony has been independent since 1983.

The territory where 60,000 people live has turned its economy towards tourism and financial services after having abandoned sugarcane production in 2005. Its economy, hit hard by the 2009 crisis, strongly

recovered with a growth of 4.9% in 2015.

Located east of Puerto Rico, this British territory where 28,000 people live is frequently cited for tax evasion issues. Montserrat, the US Virgin Islands and Saint Kitts and Nevis, the British Virgin Islands hold numerous offshore companies attracted by their advantageous taxation and flexible legislation.

**The archipelago, which is a favorite tourist destination, is made up of about fifty small islands, including the Necker Islands, which belong to the British millionaire Richard Branson. Hurricane Irma left nine people dead here.**

The US Virgin Islands are located east of Puerto Rico and represent a boundary between the Small and Greater Antilles. The three main islands are San Juan, Santo Tomas and Santa Cruz. These islands once colonized by Denmark were later bought by the United States in 1916. Its inhabitants are US citizens.

In the case of Puerto Rico, a former Spanish colony turned to American territory in the late 19th century, has 3.5 million inhabitants. The island has its own government since the 50's under the status of US insular area.

The island, which has a huge \$74 billion debt, declared the largest bankruptcy lawsuit ever launched for a US local entity in May 2017. Because of unemployment, almost one in ten people have left the island in the last ten years.

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