**Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis**

**Location**

Saint Kitts and Nevis are located in the northern section of the Eastern Caribbean, approximately 1,300 miles southeast of Miami, Florida USA. They are located approximately one-third of the way from Puerto Rico to Trinidad and Tobago. A three-km-wide channel known as The Narrows separates the two volcanic islands.

**Geography**

Saint Kitts is known around the world for their efforts to preserve the ecosystem. Nature provides lava formations, tropical forest areas, and seaside lagoons. Mount Liamuiga, a dormant volcano, is located at the island’s center and dominates the landscape. There are black, white, and golden beaches. The cities on Saint Kitts include Sadlers, Sandy Point Town, Cayon, and Basseterre (Federation’s capital). The cities on Nevis include Newcastle and Charleston. Saint Kitts is 168 sq km with the Great Salt Pond on the southern tip of the island. Nevis is 93 sq km. The lowest point is the Caribbean Sea at 0 m and the highest point is Mount Limamuiga at 1,156 m. The coastlines are described as the shape of a baseball bat and ball and are 153 km in total length.

**Climate**

The climate is tropical, tempered by constant sea breezes. There is little seasonal temperature variation with a rainy season from May to November. The hurricane season is from July to October.

**History**

Saint Kitts is a shortened name for the official name of St. Christopher which was given by Christopher Columbus when he first landed in 1493. There is controversy if the name was intended to honor Saint Christopher or if the name honors him. In 1623, Saint Kitts became Britain’s first colony in the West Indies. Saint Kitts was once described as the “cradle” or “Mother Colony” of the Caribbean.
Nevis was named after the Spanish term “nuestra senora de las nieves” or our lady of the snow. This naming was for the white cloud surrounding the island’s single peak; actually there is no snow on the island. Originally the French and English settled on the islands in the early 1600s. They fought and annihilated the local Carib Indians. For the next 200 years, the valuable sugar trade and the islands were an important pawn in the European struggle for the seas and the New World. The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis gained independence on September 19, 1923, as a two-island nation. This nation is part of the British Commonwealth. In 1998, a vote in Nevis on a referendum to separate from Saint Kitts fell short of the two-thirds majority needed. The effort of separating from Saint Kitts is still active today.

**Important Dates**

There is a Carnival each year that is a ten-day celebration. It officially opens December 24th followed by traditional Caribbean celebrations into the New Year including Calypso King and Queen competitions, the Miss Saint Kitts beauty and talent pageant, the regional Caribbean Queen Show, and many more contests. In June, there is the Saint Kitts Music Festival that includes a celebration of salsa, soul, soca, samba, reggae and jazz and concludes five days later with a joyous open-air gospel revival. Saint Kitts is annually involved in the Caribbean Cup. This is a multi-island bicycle race with the Saint Kitts leg called Cane Road Classic. The official holidays for the Federation include New Year’s Day, Carnival Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Labour Day, White Monday, Queen’s Birthday, August Monday, Culturama, Independence Day, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day.

**Population**

Inhabitants of St. Kitts call themselves Kittitians. Inhabitants of Nevis call themselves Nevisians. Today’s Federation population is approximately 46,000. These inhabitants are mostly descended from African slaves and indentured servants brought to the island to work sugar and tobacco crops. The population growth rate is about 4.0% per year. The life expectancy at birth for the total population is 71.86 years old.
Currency

The currency is the East Caribbean dollar (XCD). In 2003, the East Caribbean dollar per US dollar was 2.7. St. Kitts is the home of the Eastern Caribbean Central bank and the Eastern Caribbean Stock Exchange. These two financial institutions are two important pillars of the regional financial sector.

Education

The literacy rate for total population is 98%. The years of compulsory are nine years.

Language

The language of both islands is English.

Religion

The major religion is Anglican. Other religions include Protestant and Roman Catholic.

Agriculture

The land use is 16.67% arable land, 2.78% permanent crops and 80.55% other uses. Crops include sugarcane, rice, yams, vegetables, cotton, peanuts, tobacco, bananas, fish, and salt is also collected. The agriculture sector is dominated by its sugar crop, but activities such as tourism, exported-oriented manufacturing, and offshore banking have assumed larger roles in the nation’s economy. Agriculture only makes up 3.5% of the economy, with 25.8% contributed by industry, and 70.7% for services.

Trade

The Federation’s purchasing power parity is about $339 million. There is currently (’04) a 1.7% inflation rate. There are exports of commodities such as machinery, manufactured goods, food, and fuels totaling to approximately $70 million. The export partnerships are United State - 39%, Trinidad and Tobago - 15.4%, Canada - 9.2%, UK - 6.7%, and Denmark - 6.2%.

Food

Island dishes are generally spicy and offer an unusual combination of flavors. Bananas, coconuts, mango and passion fruit are used with spices and freshly picked herbs to create
marvelous sauces for beef, chicken, pork, and fish. Goatwater is a soup of stewed mutton or goat. Souse is a stew made with assorted parts of the pig. Both of these dishes are native to Saint Kitts and Nevis.

**Landmarks**

There are many landmarks to see at Saint Kitts and Nevis. At Saint Kitts there is the Old Road Bay, the location where Sir Thomas Warner began the first permanent European settlement in the Leeward Islands. There is also Sandy Point, the location where Thomas Warner and his small party made landfall in 1623. Frigate Bay Peninsula stretches like a neck while connecting the main body of Saint Kitts to the widened tip of the Southeastern Peninsula. There is also Wingfield Estate and Petroglyphs. This is where the Carib Indians lived for hundreds of years. Finally, Saint Kitts is the location of St. Thomas Church. This modest church is the tomb for the leading figure in the island’s colonial history, Sir Thomas Walter.

Nevis also has many landmarks. The Alexander Hamilton House is a replica of the birthplace of American statesman Alexander Hamilton. The Memorial Square is the location that honors those Nevisians who served in the World Wars I and II. The Horatio Nelson Museum is a captivating museum containing the largest collection of Nelson memorabilia in the West. Finally, the Jewish Cemetery is another landmark. This is a tangible reminder of a once vibrant community that existed on the island.

*Nidia Webster*