

CIA World Factbook–Style Country Report

Territory of the British Virgin Islands (BVI)





British Virgin Islands

Introduction

The **British Virgin Islands (BVI)** are a British Overseas Territory located in the northeastern Caribbean, forming part of the Virgin Islands archipelago. Renowned for their stable political environment, prosperous financial services sector, and world-class sailing waters, the territory combines a high-income service economy with a relatively small resident population. Tourism and offshore financial services dominate economic activity, while the islands maintain close constitutional and defense ties with the United Kingdom.

Geography

Location: Caribbean Sea, east of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

Geographic Coordinates: Approximately 18°30'N, 64°30'W

Area

- Total: **151 sq km**
- Land: 151 sq km

- Water: Negligible inland water

Coastline: Approximately 80 km

Major Islands

- Tortola
- Virgin Gorda
- Anegada
- Jost Van Dyke
- More than 50 smaller islands and cays

Terrain

- Mountainous volcanic islands (except Anegada, which is coral limestone)
- Highest point: **Mount Sage (521 m)** on Tortola

Climate

- Tropical marine
- Northeast trade winds moderate temperatures
- Hurricane season: June–November

Natural Resources

- Excellent natural harbors
- Fisheries
- Scenic coastal environments
- Coral reefs
- Marine biodiversity

Environmental Issues

- Coral reef degradation
- Hurricane damage
- Coastal erosion
- Freshwater limitations

- Climate change and sea-level rise
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People and Society

Population: Approximately **32,000**

Nationality

- Noun: British Virgin Islander
- Adjective: British Virgin Islands

Ethnic Groups

- African descent (majority)
- Mixed heritage
- European
- Hispanic
- South Asian
- Other expatriate communities

Languages

- English (official)
- Spanish widely understood within parts of the workforce

Religions

- Protestant (majority)
- Roman Catholic
- Seventh-day Adventist
- Methodist
- Anglican
- Other Christian denominations
- Small non-religious population

Urbanization

- Urban population: approximately 50%
- Largest settlement: **Road Town**

Education

- High literacy
 - Universal primary and secondary education
 - Many students pursue higher education abroad
-

Government

Country Name

- Conventional long form: Territory of the Virgin Islands
- Common name: British Virgin Islands

Capital

- **Road Town** (Tortola)

Administrative Divisions

The territory consists primarily of:

- Tortola
- Virgin Gorda
- Anegada
- Jost Van Dyke

Government Type

- Parliamentary democracy
- British Overseas Territory

Head of State

- **King Charles III**
- Represented locally by a Governor

Head of Government

- Premier

Legislature

- House of Assembly

Legal System

- English common law

Suffrage

- Universal adult suffrage
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Economy

Overview

The British Virgin Islands possess one of the Caribbean's highest per-capita incomes. Their economy rests upon two principal sectors:

- Offshore financial services
- Tourism

Financial services generate the majority of government revenues, while tourism supplies extensive employment throughout the islands.

GDP (Nominal)

Approximately **US\$1.2 billion**

GDP Per Capita

Approximately **US\$35,000–40,000**

Major Industries

- Offshore financial services
- Tourism
- Yacht chartering
- Marine services
- Construction
- Retail

Agriculture

Limited due to terrain

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Livestock

Exports

- Financial services
- Rum
- Fish products
- Small manufactured goods

Currency

United States Dollar (USD)

Energy

Electricity

- Diesel-generated power remains dominant
- Growing investment in solar energy

Renewable Energy

- Solar installations expanding
- Government pursuing greater energy resilience

Fuel Imports

Nearly all petroleum products imported.

Infrastructure

Roads

Well-developed paved road network, primarily on Tortola.

Airports

- Terrance B. Lettsome International Airport (Beef Island)

Ports

Major facilities include:

- Road Town
- West End
- Spanish Town (Virgin Gorda)

The territory is among the Caribbean's premier sailing destinations.

Telecommunications

- Modern mobile networks
 - Fiber internet expanding
 - High international connectivity
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Military and Security

Defense

The United Kingdom is responsible for defense.

Security Forces

- Royal Virgin Islands Police Force
- Customs
- Immigration
- Border security agencies

Strategic Considerations

The islands occupy an important position within northeastern Caribbean maritime routes and possess extensive yacht traffic requiring effective customs and maritime law enforcement.

Transportation

Major Airport

- Terrance B. Lettsome International Airport

Maritime Transport

Critical to:

- Tourism
 - Cargo
 - Passenger movement
 - Regional ferry services
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Communications

Modern communications infrastructure supports:

- Financial institutions
 - International banking
 - Government
 - Tourism
 - Digital commerce
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Health

Universal healthcare services supplemented by private providers.

Main medical facility:

- Dr. D. Orlando Smith Hospital (Road Town)

Residents requiring highly specialized care often travel to Puerto Rico or other regional medical centers.

International Relations

As a British Overseas Territory, external affairs and defense remain the responsibility of the United Kingdom, although the territory maintains substantial autonomy in domestic governance.

The BVI actively participate in regional Caribbean organizations and maintain close economic relationships with:

- United Kingdom
- United States
- Caribbean Community partners

Intelligence Assessment

Strategic Importance

Overall Strategic Significance: Moderate

Key considerations include:

- Major offshore financial center
- Significant Caribbean tourism destination
- Important regional maritime hub
- Extensive yacht registration and charter industry
- Stable British governance
- Strategic position within northeastern Caribbean sea lanes

Principal Intelligence Considerations

- Financial transparency and regulatory oversight
 - Hurricane resilience
 - Maritime security
 - Tourism recovery and sustainability
 - Climate adaptation
 - Offshore finance compliance with international standards
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Quick Facts

Category	Information
Capital	Road Town
Status	British Overseas Territory
Population	~32,000
Area	151 sq km
Currency	US Dollar (USD)
Official Language English	
Highest Point	Mount Sage (521 m)
Government	Parliamentary democracy under British sovereignty
Major Industries	Financial services, tourism
Defense	United Kingdom

ATLAS Intelligence Confidence Assessment

Category	Confidence
Political Stability	High
Economic Data	High
Security Assessment	High
Infrastructure	High
Strategic Outlook	High

Overall Assessment: The British Virgin Islands remain one of the Caribbean's most politically stable and economically prosperous territories. Their international importance derives less from geographic size than from their role as a global financial services jurisdiction, premier sailing destination, and strategically located maritime hub within the northeastern Caribbean. Continued resilience against hurricanes, evolving international

financial regulations, and sustainable tourism management will shape the territory's long-term outlook.