

Northern Marianas

Overview:

The Marianas is an archipelago made up by the summits of 15 volcanic mountains in the north-western Pacific Ocean. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is in political union with the United States.

Territory:

Includes 14 islands, including Saipan, Rota, and Tinian which are inhabited; and Farallon de Pajaros, Maug Islands, Pagan Island, Guguan, Agrihan Island, Sarigan Island, Anatahan Island, Asuncion Island and Farallon de Medinilla which are currently uninhabited due to volcanic activity. The southern islands are limestone with level terraces and fringing coral reefs; the northern islands are volcanic. Land: 477 sq km; Water: 0 sq km; Total: 477 sq km; Coast line: 1,482 km; Highest point: unnamed location on Agrihan 965 m.

Location:

Oceania, islands in the North Pacific Ocean, about three-quarters of the way from Hawaii to the Philippines.

Latitude and Longitude:

15 1' 2" N, 145 4' 5" E.

Time Zone:

GMT +10

Total Land Area:

477

EEZ:

200

Climate:

tropical marine; moderated by northeast trade winds, little seasonal temperature variation; dry season December to June, rainy season July to October.

Natural Resources:

arable land, fish. All the islands except Farallon de Medinilla and Urracas or Mangs (in the northern group) are more or less densely wooded, and the vegetation is luxuriant, much resembling that of the Carolines, and also of the Philippines, whence many species of plants have been introduced. Owing to the humidity of the soil cryptogams are numerous, as also most kinds of grasses. Agriculture is neglected, in spite of the exceptional advantages offered by the climate and soil. On most of the islands there is a plentiful supply of water.

According to the Bank of Hawaii's report in 2003, Rota, which escaped damage during World War II, could become a site for ecotourism, retreat facilities, and other meetings where world leaders could conduct their business in the idyllic settings of a pristine environment.

Mañagaha Island is an old patch reef that geological forces lifted above sea level 10,000 years ago. It's now covered with a fringing white-sand beach and has Saipan's best snorkelling. The clear surrounding waters have lots of colourful tropical fish and abundant coral, although much of the near-shore coral shows signs of being trampled on.

ECONOMY:

Total GDP:	
2000	900,000,000.00 USD
2005	557,000,000.00 USD

Per Capita GDP:	
2000	12,500.00 USD
2005	8,047.00 USD

% of GDP per Sector:			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

% of Population Employed by Sector			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2000	1.5%	47.2%	51.3%

External Aid/Remittances:

Extensive aid from the US. 2000 GDP of \$900 million includes US subsidy.

Growth:

Labour Force:	
2000	42,753

Unemployment	
Year:	Unemployment Rate (% of pop.)
2000	3.9%
2001	3.9%

Industry:

tourism, construction, garments, handicrafts. Industry; Number employed; % of Employed; Agriculture, forestry, fishing 623; 1.5%; Construction 2,785; 6.5%; Manufacturing 17,398; 40.7%; Wholesale trade 680; 1.6%; Retail trade 3,056; 7.1%; Transportation, com., 1,449; 3.4%; Information 603; 1.4%; Finance, insurance, r. estate 1,013; 2.4%; Professional, & related serv. 2,117; 5.0%; Education, health serv. 2,239; 5.2%; Arts, entertainment, recreation, accom., food services 5,834; 13.6%; Other services (not p.admin) 2,373; 5.6%; Public Administration 2,583; 6.0%; Total 42,753; 100.0.

Main incomes sources in 2005: Income sources: garment manufacturing, tourism (including commercial gambling), trade and services.

Niche Industry:

tourism, manufacturing

The US National Park Service American Memorial Park houses a 120-seat theater and 2,800 square foot exhibit space which tells the story of the Battle of Saipan and Tinian. There is a library and a Memorial Garden in memory of those killed during the battles.

Tinian, the Marianas' only gambling island, has the potential to attract Asian customers to its gambling and other entertainment facilities.

Tourism:

The Commonwealth's tourism is at an uncertain stage of change. It grew rapidly in the early 1990s, declined in the second half of the decade, and was stagnant as it entered the new millennium. The main reason for the weakness in tourist arrivals and receipts has been the weak Japanese economy, which has been in decline for more than a decade. The conflict in Iraq added to uncertainty, but perhaps only tangentially since there is no direct link to the commonwealth. Adding a great deal to travel uncertainty and causing Japanese and Korean tourists to stay home in the first half of 2003 was the SARS epidemic, which has since subsided.

Foreign temporary labourers are an integral part of the tourism economic sector (80 percent of indigenous labourers work for the CNMI government); leaving the private sector almost entirely staffed by temporary foreign workers and US mainland expatriates.

Fueled by the East Asian economic boom of the late 1980s and early 1990s, tourist traffic to the commonwealth tripled in less than a decade (1988- 96) from 245,545 to 736,117. With the onset of the Asian financial crisis in late 1997, tourist arrivals began to drop.

Tourist traffic recovered some lost ground in 1999-2000 when the total exceeded 500,000 once again, but recovery to the 1996 peak has not occurred. The impact of tourism extends well beyond airline carriers and hotels and restaurants. Tourist dollars partly support the commonwealth's retail trade, especially in the core urban area that caters more to tourists than to residents. By extension, it also contributes to the support of other services. When tourist numbers rise, their effect shows up in many segments of the economy. In the same way, contractions in tourist numbers leave a range of goods and service providers in financial stress.

A recent tourist market that holds both immediate and long-term potential is China. Tourists from China were such a small number in 1996 that they were lumped together with "other" markets. They increased haphazardly in the next few years, but averaged just over 2,200 per year from 1997 to 2001. In 2002, they increased nearly five-fold to 10,471.

Imports and Exports:	
Total value of Imports (2001): 214,400,000.	
Tot. Value of Imports	0.00 USD ()
From Eu:	
Import Partners (EU):	
Partners Outside EU:	
Import Partners:	United States, Japan
Tot. Value of Exports	(2006)
To Eu:	
Export Partners:	United States.
Partners Outside EU::	
Export Partners:	
Main Imports:	Commodities: food, construction equipment and materials, petroleum products.
Main Exports:	Garments.



TRANSPORTATION/ACCESS

External:

Number of Airports: 5

There are 5 air ports (3 with paved runways). The Saipan airport has international connections. 1 Helliport (2007)

Number of Main Ports: 2

Saipan and Tinian.

The Saipan port is a world class port, often harbouring US Navy ships and large cargo boats.

Internal:

Air

There are several daily flights between Saipan and Tinian and between Rota and Saipan or Guam.

Road:

There are 536 km of roads in CNMI (2004).

There's no public bus system on Saipan, though there are shuttle buses running between the major towns. Taxis are metered and privately owned.

Sea:

A ferry sails from Saipan's Charlie Dock to Tinian, and back.

Other Forms of Transportation:

Telephones, mainlines in use: 21,000 (2000). Cell phones: 20,500 (2004). International: country code - 1-670; satellite earth stations - 2 Intelsat (Pacific Ocean)

Radio broadcast stations: AM 1, FM 6, shortwave 1 (2005).

Television broadcast stations: 1 (on Saipan; in addition, 2 cable services on Saipan provide varied programming from satellite networks) (2006)

Internet country code: mp; Internet hosts: 5 (2007). Internet users: 10,000 (2003)

Economic Zones:**Energy Policy:**

Year	Total Energy Production (Mwh)	Type			Total Energy Consumption (Mwh)	Sector				
		Thermic (Mwh)	Geothermic (Mwh)	Other (Mwh)		Domestic (Mwh)	Commercial (Mwh)	Public Service (Mwh)	Industry (Mwh)	Public Lighting (Mwh)

Official Currency:

United States Dollar (USD)

Banking and Insurance:

Number of Banks and Credit Unions:

Number of Agricultural Credit Unions:

Number of Insurance Companies:

Several mainland banks have branches on CNMI with international connections, providing a wide range of financial services.

Financial Services:**Communications/E-Commerce:**

Economic data is available for the most part on public and private websites and publications.

Public Ownership:

Under the CNMI Constitution, only persons of Northern Marianas descent may own land in the CNMI. Leases of up to 55 years are available.

Land Use:

arable land: 13.04%; permanent crops: 4.35%; other: 82.61% (2001)

Inheritance. As islanders, Chamorros must deal with restricted land allocation to heirs. This problem has been ameliorated by the lessening need for land as a result of the growing cash economy in the towns. A form of primogeniture is practiced in which an oldest brother acts as a kind of corporate head of a sibling group that works its farming parcels collectively until other opportunities draw siblings away to other ventures. Distinctions among subsistence parcels, pastureland, government-issued homesteads, and residential lots provide additional options for distribution decisions, which typically are made public and implemented at a formal family meeting.

Agriculture/Forestry:

coconuts, fruits, vegetables; cattle. Coco-nut and areca palms, yams, sweet potatoes, manioc, coffee, cocoa, sugar, cotton, tobacco and mother-of-pearl are the chief products, and copra is the principal export. Agriculture is neglected, in spite of the exceptional advantages offered by the climate and soil. On most of the islands there is a plentiful supply of water.

Marine Activity:**Fishing:**

territorial sea: 12 nm; exclusive economic zone: 200 nm;

Marine Life:**Critical Issues:**

CNMI has active volcanoes on Pagan and Agrihan; typhoons (especially August to November); contamination of groundwater on Saipan may contribute to disease; development conflicts with clean-up of landfill, protection of endangered species.

JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES**Capital:**

Saipan

Political System:

Northern Mariana Islands is under US administration as part of the UN Trust Territory of the Pacific; the people of the Northern Mariana Islands decided in the 1970s not to seek independence but instead to forge closer links with the US. Negotiations for territorial status began in 1972. A covenant to establish a commonwealth in political union with the US was approved in 1975. A new government and constitution went into effect in 1978. Federal funds to the Commonwealth are administered by the US Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs.

The CNMI constitution provides for a governor, a lieutenant governor, a bicameral legislature (18 members in the House of Representatives and 9 members in the Senate), and a local court system including Superior and Supreme Courts.

The CNMI has an elected Resident Representative in Washington, D.C., who represents the Commonwealth before the Congress and the Federal



Government. This representative serves a 4 year term but does not have any voting rights.

Political Parties:

Democratic Party, Republican Party, Covenant Party

Important Legislation:

The Constitution of CMNI, ratified in 1978. This document outlines structures, powers, responsibilities, rights, and regulations for the operation of the government. Important because certain articles such as Article XXI: Gambling outlines specific guidelines of any gambling institution in CMNI.

Principal Taxes:

Employers of temporary workers pay taxes and fees based on the value added they create. That contribution, aggregated for all temporary workers, supports the public treasury and the provision of public goods and services.

Associated Power:

United States of America

Citizenship:

United States of America.

Paradiplomacy:

Interpol (subbureau).

HUMAN RESOURCES

According to the U.S. 2000 Census: 35.9% of the CNMI population was born on the islands; 64.1% born outside the islands. Of those born outside: 52.7% were born in Asia, the rest throughout the world.

Sex ratio male to female at birth: 1.06 male(s)/female

under 15 years: 1.097 male(s)/female

15-64 years: 0.686 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 1.072 male(s)/female

total population: 0.756 male(s)/female

2007			
Island	Area (km sq.)	Population	% of Total Population
Northern Marianas	477	80,362	100%

2000 employment: 42,753. Minimum wage: \$3.05.

Population:	
Year	Resident Population

Age of Population:	0-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65 and up
2005	15978	0	0	0	1,281

Migration:

2005: 8.92 migrant(s)/1,000 population

The majority of temporary workers are paid at a rate close to the CNMI minimum wage of \$3.05 an hour; some of them receive housing and food allowances that would raise their total income levels and local purchasing power.

Crude Birth Rate:	
2005	19.51%

Life Expedctancy:

(2005): total population: 75.88 years; male: 73.31 years; female: 78.61 years;

Crude Death Rate:	
2005	2.3%

Ethnicity:

Chamorro, Carolinians and other Micronesians, Caucasian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean.

The original inhabitants and dominant ethnic group of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (all the Marianas except Guam) in western Micronesia refer to themselves as Chamorros. The term chamorri was used to designate the upper caste at the time of Magellan's arrival in 1521. The Spaniards heard this as chamurres and understood it to mean "friend." By 1668, the term had shifted to chamorro ("bold"), because Chamorro men often wore a topknot of hair on an otherwise shaved scalp.

Ethnic Relations. Except for colonizers, for most of their history the Chamorro lived in ethnic isolation. The arrival of refugees from the Caroline Islands in the late nineteenth century did little to change that situation. Only since the creation of the CNMI and its attendant economic opportunities have Chamorros had to deal with large immigrant populations from Asian countries. The exposure of recent cases of labor exploitation may result in an improvement of social and economic relations in the growing multiethnic populations, especially in the urbanizing areas of Saipan.

Class Division:

Economic differentiation is emerging along with the commercial economy in general. However, there are no large class differentials with the exception of the migrant labor populations, which live in poor economic conditions relative to the native residents. The subsistence economy is stable and substantial. Increases in wealth and population size are beginning to take a toll, but the CNMI, though not egalitarian, is relatively homogeneous both socially and economically.



Languages:

English, Chamorro, Carolinian; note: 86% of population speaks a language other than English at home.

The official languages are English, Chamorro, and Carolinian, an Eastern Malayo-Polynesian language that is a combination of dialects from atolls in the area of Truk. Chamorro is closely related to Tagalog (Pilipino). After more than four hundred years of Western (Spanish, German, and English) and Asian (Japanese) colonial domination, Chamorro is untouched in its grammar, although major portions of the vocabulary have been transformed into variants of Spanish and English. The Chamorros and Carolinians are largely multilingual, speaking their native tongues, English, and Japanese. Carolinian is spoken mostly in the home and the immediate neighborhood, while Chamorro is used widely in communities throughout the islands. Guamanians consider the Chamorro of the CNMI, especially on Rota, a picturesque, almost sing-song dialect of their self-proclaimed standard language. Chamorros of the Northern Marianas generally are proud of their distinctive way of speaking.

Religion:

Christian (Roman Catholic majority, although traditional beliefs and taboos may still be found);

The Catholic Church and its calendar dominate Chamorro symbolic rituals. Every community has a saint's day, and the major seasonal holidays are occasions for family and community feasting. The most important identifying symbol, displayed on the flag, is the Latte stone. These carved limestone columns in their most modest form are four- to five-foot-tall supports designed to provide a raised foundation for living and ceremonial structures. Parallel double rows of eight to twelve much taller Latte pillars topped by separate capstones are all that is left of what must have been huge structures throughout the archipelago. Much about the Latte stones remains unknown. Whatever their actual significance to those who hewed them from the islands' limestone deposits, these stones have emerged as one of the most visible links to the Chamorros' past.

Literacy:

(1980): definition: age 15 and over can read and write; total population: 97%; male: 97%; female: 96%;

Education System:

11,753 students were enrolled in the CNMI's sixteen public and thirteen private schools in 1996-1997. The Northern Marianas College, an accredited two-year community college, is located on Saipan.

The CNMI Public School System consists of 20 campuses of learning for school-age children from the age of 6 to 18. Of these twenty campuses, twelve are elementary schools, three are junior high schools, four are senior high schools, and one secondary school in Tinian for grades 7-12. Kindergarten is being offered at all the elementary schools. In 1998, Dandan Elementary School was opened. It is also located at the eastern-side of the island. Dandan Elementary School primarily serves grades K-6th students from Dandan village and some San Vicente village students. Kagman Elementary School opened its doors to Kagman students and other identified zone areas in school year 2000-2001. Sinapalo Elementary School in Rota opened in school year 2001-2002.

In Saipan, three new secondary schools were opened in school year 2002-2003, beginning with Kagman High School in January 2002. In August 2002, Chacha Oceanview Junior High School and Saipan Southern High School started their first year of operation.

Total Pre-schools:()	
Total Primary Schools	
First Level:	
Second Level:	
Third Level:	
Total Secondary Schools:	
Total Professional Schools	
Universities:	

Number of Schools per Island:										
	Pre-school		Elementary			High-school		Prof.	University	
	Pub	Priv	1	2	3	Pub	Priv		Pub	Priv

Students Enrolled:					
Year:	Pre-School	Elementary	High-school	Prof.	University

Teachers							
Year	Pre-School	Elementary			High-School	Prof.	University
		1	2	3			

Medical Services:

The Department of Public Health is the sole provider of comprehensive health services in the CNMI. There are several small, private medical and dental clinics on Saipan, none on Rota or Tinian. Rota and Tinian have government-run health centers and each of the inhabited other islands has one dispensary. A dispensary has been opened in the heavily populated southern village of San Antonio on Saipan; a full-time nurse provides public health services (immunization, prenatal, referral services, etc.)

The Commonwealth Health Center is located on Saipan and is the principal health care facility in the CNMI. The hospital is a 76-bed inpatient, full service facility, and includes a 10-bed Psychiatric Unit and a 13-unit Hemodialysis service center. Recent expansion included a respiratory therapy unit

and CAT Scan unit. The Rota and Tinian Health Centers have holding beds, laboratory, x-ray, pharmacy, dental, emergency, and public health services.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

History:

The early history of the Mariana Islands is shrouded in the mists of antiquity but it is believed that the islands were first settled around 3,000 B.C. by an ancient seafaring people, prehistoric "Stone Age Vikings", who journeyed in outrigger canoes and eventually lost their navigational skills and were marooned. It is believed that they sailed across the vast expanse of the open Pacific, north and eastward from southeast Asia, possibly from what is now known as Indonesia. The people, who became known as Chamorros, developed unique construction skills which permitted to carve huge, mushroom-like capped pillars of stone from solid rock known today as Latte or Taga Stones. Their precise use remains one of the great mysteries of the Pacific to this day.

Ferdinand Magellan sighted the islands in March 1521 when he made his landfall at Guam. He claimed the islands for Spain and first christened the archipelago "Las Islas de las Velas Latinas" (The Island of the Latine Sails), because the triangular shape of the sails used native canoes were similar to those used on Mediterranean vessels. In anger over the islanders taking property from his ship, Magellan renamed the islands "Las Islas de los Ladrones", (The Islands of the Thieves), a place name which remained on maps for many years thereafter. In 1668 their name was changed a third time to Las Marianas in honor of Mariana of Austria, widow of Philip the 4th of Spain. Through an act of genocide committed in the 17th century by Spanish colonists against the local inhabitants, the Chamorro race was almost wiped out. In 1815 a new wave of people from atolls west and north of Truk (Chuuk) in the Eastern Carolines migrated to Saipan. The Carolinians developed unique sailing and navigational skills which, still today, are utilized by some to carry them vast distances over the open sea without the aid of charts or modern instruments. The islands were sold by Spain to Germany in 1899 and so remained under the German flag until the start of World War One in 1914 when the Japanese moved against the German administration in the islands and forced them out. Defeated Germany was stripped of all overseas possessions at the end of the war in 1919. The Mariana Islands were turned over to the newly created League of Nations to be administered as the Japanese Mandated Territory. Japan had become an ally of the United States, Great Britain and France shortly before the end of the war and was named as the Pacific area's administering authority. By 1919 the islands were being administered by Japan as a mandate under the League of Nations.

Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1935 after it had virtually annexed the Islands into the Empire. By 1936, a thriving fishing industry had developed as well as a sugar industry which occupied 68 percent of the arable land on Saipan, 80 percent on Tinian and 33 percent on Rota. The resident population grew to 23,800 on Saipan (of which only 3,222 were originally from the islands); 1,530 on Tinian (25 Chamorros) and 5,600 on Rota (791 Chamorros). By the time the dark clouds of war had gathered over the western Pacific, some 29,692 Japanese military personnel were garrisoned on Saipan. The islands were assaulted by American forces on June 15, 1944 and one of the most hotly contested battles of the entire war was fought on its sandy beaches and mountainous terrain. American forces gained control of the island on July 1944 and the construction of bases and airfields began. It was from such airfield on Tinian that the first nuclear weapon was dropped on Hiroshima by the B-29 aircraft Enola Gay hastening the end of hostilities. The airfields on Tinian, which in 1945 were the busiest in the world, are now largely abandoned.

The Northern Mariana Islands were not a permanent legal possession of Japan at the time of the war as it had only been entrusted to Japan under a mandate by a group of countries through their organization - the League of Nations. Therefore, the United States could not strip territory from defeated Japan at the conclusion of the hostilities since the islands were never recognized as permanent legal possession of Japan in the first place. On July 1947 the area was recognized as a Trust Territory by the United Nations. The United States Navy, and later the Department of Interior, became the administrator under a Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations Organization, the successor to the League of Nations. In 1952, upon signing the Treaty of Peace in San Francisco, Japan legally gave up all claims in the mandated islands formerly provided by the League of Nations and acknowledged the United Nations Agreement establishing the Trust Territory Of The Pacific Islands with the United States as the administering authority. The reconstruction of the economy of Saipan after the war was long in occurring with the result that the area was the last of the former battlefields of World War Two to recover from the devastation. This process did not really start until around 1978 some 33 years after the termination of World War Two.

The people of the Marianas were the first of all the former Trust Territory entities to decide their future political identity; they decided to enter into a Commonwealth arrangement in political union with the United States. In all of Micronesia they were the only island group to do so. On January 1978, the Northern Mariana Islands became self-governing in political union with the United States under the terms of a covenant negotiated between the two governments, and the area's first elected governor took office. For the first time after more than 300 years under the flags of Spain, Germany, Japan and the United States, the new Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands began its own destiny. It has been said that the Spanish brought Christianity to the islands; the Germans - copra commerce; the Japanese agricultural and industrial development and the Americans the concept of self-government. On May 28, 1986 the United Nations Trusteeship Council concluded that the United States had satisfactorily discharged its obligations to the islands. On November 4, 1986 the United States citizenship was conferred upon those people of the Northern Marianas that met the necessary qualifications. On December 22, 1990 the Security Council of the United Nations voted to dissolve the Trusteeship.

Referenda:

Recent Significant Events:

Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

Kinship is cognatic and bilateral. There are no corporate kin groups beyond the household and family, but extended kindreds permeate the society and shape social relationships to a large degree. Rarely does one travel to another island and not stay with relatives. The Catholic system of godparenthood further ramifies kinship networks by creating ritually defined fictive kinship relationships between children and the friends and colleagues of their parents.

Sources:

Lonely Planet Destinations: March 21, 2008. <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/northern-mariana-islands/sights/106627?list=true>

CIA The World Factbook, 6 March 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cq.html>.

CIA World Factbook. Available online. <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook> May 2005. Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Government. Available online. <http://www.gov.mp/> May 2005. Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) History. Available online. <http://www.cnmi-guide.com/history/> May 2005. Department of the Interior; Office of Insular Affairs. Available online. <http://www.doi.gov/oia> ; Office of Insular Affairs Statistics Online. Available online. <http://www.pacificweb.org/>; Pacific Regional Information System (PRISM). Available online. <http://www.spc.int/prism/index.htm>;

CNMI Public School System Central Office. <http://www.pss.cnmi.mp/PSSCentralOffice/index2.cfm>

US Census Bureau News Release, Census 2000 Northern Marianas, July 3, 2001. <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/cb01cn173.html>

CIA World Factbook. Field Listing-Sex Ratio, Mar. 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2018.html>

Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Economic Report, by Bank of Hawaii, October 2003. <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/resources/pidp/jcc/cnmi03.pdf>



Useful Links:

IslandStudies.ca
www.upei.ca
www.google.ca

Please address queries to:
Institute of Island Studies
University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI)
550 University Ave
Charlottetown, PE, Canada, C1A 4P3

Copyright 2007. Institute of Island
Studies, UPEI. Educational and
Non-Commercial Use Only