

# Tourism in numbers 2008-2012

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## Introduction

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic experience which involves the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal, business or professional purposes. The tourism industry generates substantial economic benefits to the local economy. It provides foreign exchange without exporting tangible goods out of the country. It increases export earnings from services and the rate of growth of the economy. It generates employment. It brings about investment in infrastructure and most certainly contributes to government revenues.

In this article a general view will be given in numbers on the tourism industry in Curaçao and how its position is compared to other countries in the Caribbean region.

A classification of a traveler (tourist/visitor) will be given so there is a better understanding who is actually a tourist. The data is primarily based on data that the Curaçao Tourist Bureau (CTB) has gathered together with data that the Central Bank of Curaçao and St. Maarten (CBCS), Curaçao Hospitality and Tourism Association (Chata) and the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) has compiled. The focus will be on the years 2008 to 2012 with an emphasis on the last year, as long as the data is available. The methodology that is used among the sources of data is also different; consequently there may be a few discrepancies.

The data will be divided in

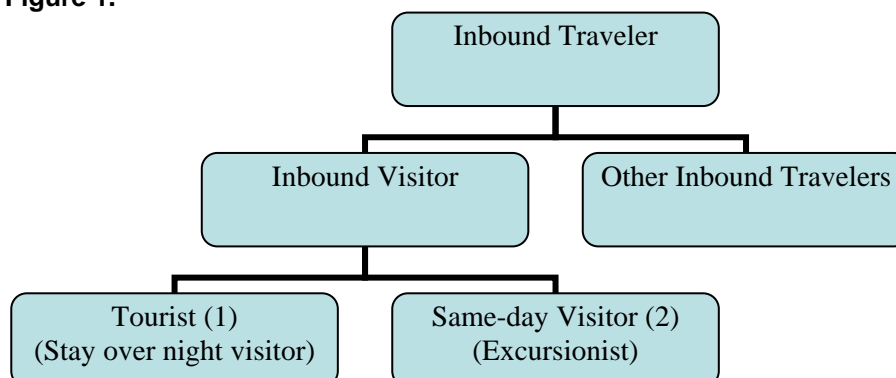
- Volume characteristics data which entail the number of visitors (arrivals) and overnight stays.
- Trip characteristics which involve length of stay, motive of stay, period of stay, and place of stay.
- Accommodation data (hotels and lodgings).

## Classification of travelers

The inbound traveler is classified to the reference country as inbound visitors and other inbound travelers (see figure 1). Inbound visitors are classified, either as tourists or excursionists; tourists are further classified as nationals residing abroad but visiting the reference country and other non-residents visiting the reference country, and finally all inbound visitors are classified according to the main purpose of their trip.

Other inbound travelers are not included in tourism. They are characterized by the reason for which they are excluded from visitors: either (a) being in an employer-employee relationship (border, seasonal and other short-term workers) or (b) being within the usual environment (all other situations e.g. long-term students).

Figure 1.



## Definitions<sup>13</sup>

*Visitor:* any person travelling to a place other than that of his/her usual environment for less than 12 months and whose main purpose of trip is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. (*Recommendations on Tourism Statistics, Part One, para. 20*)(*para 2.4*)

*Inbound visitors:* the tourism of non-resident visitors within the economic territory of the country of reference. (*para 2.61*)

*Stay over night visitors:* visitors, who stay one or more nights in the place visited. (*para 2.19*)

*Same day visitors:* visitors, who visit a place for less than one night. (*para 2.19*)

## Volume characteristics

In this section the data entails the number of visitors (arrivals) and overnight stays. An overview will be given of the general development in these aforementioned areas.

### Stay over visitors

The development in the number of stay over visitors between 2008 and 2012 has been fluctuating; however for 2012 an improvement has been attained. For Curaçao there has been an increase of 8 percent in visitors in 2012 in comparison to 2011.

Generally mid-December through March are the most popular vacation months (high season) for the North Americans, and the prices drop significantly from end-April through end-June and July till mid-December (low season). The highest peaks of visitors visiting the island have been in November and December 2008, and also August and December of 2012 (Table 1).

The development seen in the months November/December 2008 is due to the sudden increase of Venezuelan tourist. Curacao's proximity to Venezuela and its duty-free merchandise shops, which are much more economical, were the main attractions. The inflation in Caracas however was running at more than 32%. Currency controls imposed by the Venezuelan government in 2003, aimed at stemming capital flight, and required Venezuelans to obtain dollars through a government agency for different purposes which include travelling abroad. Restrictions in Venezuela became tighter with the introduction of the new currency known as the 'bolívar fuerte' in 2008. This action led to the decrease in the number Venezuelan tourist in 2009 and 2010.

For the months of August/September from 2011-2012 the amount of stay over visitors has catapulted to a higher position, this is due to the tourists who visit the North Sea jazz festival that is held in this period.

<sup>13</sup> Eurostat, OECD, WTO, UNSD, *Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework*, (Luxembourg, Madrid, New York, Paris, 2001), 13, 16, 29.

**Table 1: Total Stay Over Visitor stats overview (excl. excursionist)**

Month	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Change % 2011-2012
January	29317	32379	28067	30083	34293	14
February	33646	31658	26912	31338	35122	12
March	35321	30001	29772	33029	35752	8
April	30997	31178	25986	34249	34921	2
Mei	26602	26329	26558	28047	30616	9
June	26123	28191	23072	28912	31317	8
July	28325	29815	29845	33137	35815	8
Augustus	30135	30923	30767	36406	39075	7
September	25698	27334	26784	31144	33105	6
October	33165	32406	32116	32459	34355	6
November	46667	33382	29435	33386	35468	6
December	62848	33107	32337	37921	39824	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>408844</b>	<b>366703</b>	<b>341651</b>	<b>390111</b>	<b>419663</b>	<b>8</b>

Source: CTB

### Stay over visitors by origin

The majority of visitors to Curaçao are originated from USA, the Netherlands and Venezuela (Table 2). Tourism from the USA has been steadily growing with the exception of 2009 and 2012 in which there was a slight dip in overnight visitors.

In the beginning of 2010 Venezuela was confronted with a devaluation of their local currency which led to tightened restrictions on access to foreign currency. These foreign developments had a negative impact on the local tourism sector. As a result, the number of Venezuelan tourists in Curaçao dropped significantly. By 2011 the number of Venezuelan visitors has been progressively growing, and the number of Dutch visitors has encountered a fall in 2012.

**Table 2: Visitors by Origin**

Year	Total visitor	Visitors by Origin								
		USA	Canada	Venezuela	Other America	Aruba	Other Caribbean	Netherlands	Other Europe	Rest of the World
2008	408844	44525	7244	148890	23930	16848	23461	113696	23051	7199
2009	366703	36716	6483	105635	25560	16721	19059	126952	22323	7254
2010	341651	49487	7619	44353	30923	18827	19585	140189	23662	7006
2011	390111	63334	8791	61564	35297	20452	20678	141546	27622	10827
2012	419663	61408	9687	82520	39738	21557	17851	136976	36027	13899

Source: CTB & CBCS

## Overnight stays

Stay over night is the most important indicator that measures the nights a tourist stays in a country. The tourist is classified as an overnight visitor, if his/her *trip* includes an overnight stay (stay over night). January, July and December are the highest grossed stay over months in 2012 (see table 3). Since 2009 there is a growth trend in the stay over nights. The total number of nights spent in a country is influenced by the number of visitors and their average length of stay.

Month	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Change % 2011-2012
January	266365	229953	248520	288543	350973	22
February	269750	238603	227024	270253	318505	18
March	259105	216122	229445	270919	307946	14
April	235748	229999	217886	274530	302086	10
Mei	206583	189678	208293	219335	260763	19
June	220211	215871	200729	235227	261048	11
July	260040	257925	293126	308350	332324	8
Augustus	233982	247036	266233	289435	324008	12
September	198948	186475	222950	234187	284608	22
October	230468	210380	256451	254438	290609	14
November	265390	227451	234287	244839	275677	13
December	331933	275011	283499	295334	359550	22
<b>Total (YTD)*</b>	<b>2978523</b>	<b>2724504</b>	<b>2888443</b>	<b>3185390</b>	<b>3668097</b>	<b>15</b>

Source: CTB

\*YTD = yield to date

## Cruise tourism

The cruise tourist can be considered as a same-day visitor (excursionist). The cruise tourist generally stays only a day on the island. The amount of passengers that has come to the port of Curaçao in 2012 was 472286 (table 4). This is about 18 percent more cruise passengers than the year before. In 2010 there was a decrease in cruise passengers of about 8 percent compared to 2009.

Cruise calls refer to the amount of cruise ships that have docked in the harbor. The amount of calls in 2012 (226) is less than the year before (246), notwithstanding this information the amount of cruise passengers have increased. The increase of cruise passengers is due to the fact that cruise ships, that are visiting have more passenger capacity.

Year	Cruise passengers	Cruise calls	Change % Cruise passengers
2008	355121	210	4
2009	417324	234	18
2010	382697	220	-8
2011	400596	246	5
2012	472286	226	18

Source: CTB

## Trip characteristics

The trip refers to the travel by a person from the time of departure from his/her usual residence until he/she returns: it thus refers to a round trip. A trip is made up of visits to different places. In this section a view will be given the main characteristics of the trip. Some examples are the length of stay, motive of stay, period of stay, place of stay. Some data for this section are available up to 2011 and not all characteristics will be covered.

### Length of stay

Year	Nights	Visitors	Length of stay (avg.)
2008	2978523	408844	7
2009	2724504	366703	7
2010	2888443	341651	8
2011	3185390	390111	8
2012	3668097	419663	9

Source: CTB

The **average (avg.) length of stay** (table 5) for a number of holiday trips is calculated by dividing the total number of nights spent by the total number of visitors. The number of overnight stays, which reflects both the length of stay and the number of visitors, is considered a key indicator for accommodation statistics. The length of stay in Curaçao has progressively been increasing every year. In 2012 there's average length of stay of 9 nights

### Motive of stay

Based on the main purpose of their visit, tourists (overnight visitors) and same-day visitors may be classified in the following categories<sup>14</sup> (Recommendations on Tourism Statistics, Part One, para. 44):

- Leisure, recreation and holidays;
- Visiting friends and relatives;
- Business and professional;
- Health treatment;
- Religion, pilgrimages;
- Other.

The motive of stay (purpose of visit) categories is adjusted to the local situation according to surveys done by Curaçao Tourist Board. Therefore the categories in the survey do not match the aforementioned list of

	2004	2005	2006	2011
Vacation	75	67	52	81
Family & Friends	17	16	20	5
Business	7	8	16	6
Other:				
Honeymoon	-	1	4	na
Diving	-	1	4	na
Conference	-	-	1	1
	n=506	n=869	n=1012	n=1325

Source: CTB & Virtual Curaçao

standard categories. The survey has been done for the years 2004-2006 and 2011. The most common motive of stay in 2011 has been for vacation reasons (table 6). A major drop in 2006 has been due to a shift in travelling motives, like family & friends (20%) and for business reasons (16%).

<sup>14</sup> Eurostat, OECD, WTO, UNSD, *Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework*, (Luxembourg, Madrid, New York, Paris, 2001), 17.

## Period of stay

The Curaçao travel season is divided into a high season, which runs from mid-December to mid-April, and a low season, which encompasses the rest of the year. In general, the winter season is busier than the summer. Carnival season, from January through February, brings in considerable crowds. In most cases the occupancy rates (table 7) for the year show a higher occupancy in the first half of the year than the second.

## Place of stay (Accommodation data)

Between the years 2008 and 2012 the hotel industry experienced a variable occupancy rate of visitors. The average hotel occupancy rate has maintained a level above 70 percent for these years (table 7). The highest occupancy rates are seen in 2008 where the peak was 93 percent. In 2012 the hotel average occupancy rate (occ. rate) was about 70 percent.

Occupancy rates are predictors of cash flow, and they provide a method by which the performance of various hotels can be compared. Evidently, investors like to see high occupancy rates. Low occupancy rates can indicate that the hotel cash flow has a problem.

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
January	90	82	72	80	73
February	93	83	75	86	79
March	90	80	75	82	79
April	84	73	69	75	74
Mei	81	67	69	69	72
June	81	70	66	73	72
July	83	68	68	74	74
Augustus	90	76	75	77	72
September	80	74	71	71	65
October	81	76	76	72	64
November	85	79	77	80	65
December	83	70	69	76	56
<b>Average Occ. rate</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Chata

The primary place of stay for overnight visitors by accommodation type in 2011 is in large hotels, which was about 72 percent (table 8), followed by apartments & small hotels with about 14 percent and then by family & friends (10%)<sup>15</sup>.

In Curaçao there is no official classification of hotels, resorts or apartments. Even so a large hotel can be considered a 3 to 5 star hotel which provides accommodations, meals, and other services for travelers and tourists. Apartments & small hotels can be considered 1 or 2 star accommodations which provide limited range of amenities and services. A resort is a full-service lodging facility that provides access to or offers a range of amenities and recreation facilities to emphasize a leisure experience. Resorts serve as the primary provider of the guests' experience, often provides services for businesses and meetings and are characteristically located in vacation-oriented settings.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> CTB & Virtual Curaçao: *Report on the Curaçao visitor Survey 2011*

<sup>16</sup> Center for Resort and Hospitality Business, University of Memphis | Kemmons Wilson School of Hospitality and Resort Management, *Resort Definition & Classifications A Summary Report to Research Participants*.  
<http://caribbeanhotelassociation.com/source/Members/DataCenter/Research-UofMemphis.pdf>

**Table 8: Occupancy by type of accommodation (%)**

	2004	2005	2006	2011
Large hotels	47	49	46	72
Resort	9	8	6	
Apartments & small hotels	19	22	27	14
Family & friends	25	21	21	10
Other	-	-	-	4
	n=506	n=869	n=1012	n=1270

Source: CTB & Virtual Curaçao: Report on the Curaçao visitor Survey 2011

### Accommodation data

**Table 9: Total Hotel Rooms 2011**

	Rooms
Large hotels	4978
Smaller hotels/guesthouses	130
Apartments	600
<b>Total rooms</b>	<b>5708</b>

Source: CTB (<http://www.curacao.com/Corporate/Hotel-Development>)

According to the research done by CTB<sup>3</sup>, the majority of stay over visitors settled in one of the large hotels in Curaçao (72%). Of the US visitors 87% stayed in large hotels, 60% of Dutch visitors stayed over in large hotels and bungalow type resorts (smaller hotels). The figures show that the US visitors are more inclined to stay in a hotel, while the Dutch prefer a bungalow type hotel.

Curaçao has different types of lodgings from the large to high-end hotels, to smaller hotels/guesthouses and apartments. They vary in size and cost. The amount of rooms in the hotel industry has progressively been increasing each year. In 2011 the total amount of rooms available for lodging has been 5708 rooms.

### Caribbean outlook

Within the Caribbean, the generally positive outlook varies from one country to the next. The Dutch-speaking islands (led by Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten) have done moderately well in 2012, with a 5.6 percent increase in arrivals, while the Spanish-speaking islands (Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and the Mexican resorts of Cancún and Cozumel) did even better, with a 6 percent increase in 2012. Curaçao had a 4.9 percent value added in the 2012 economic growth.

For the Caribbean region overall all four key hotel performance indicators in 2012 were positive. Overall occupancy has risen with 7.1 percent, average daily rates has gone up with 4.8 percent and total room revenues by 8.9 percent, while revenue per available room (RevPAR) climbed with 12.4 percent.

### Conclusion

Tourism has experienced growth and a deepening diversification has become one of the fastest growing economic sectors on the island in 2012. The years before 2012 have not always shown an increase, tourism numbers have been fluctuating, however the figures are unrelenting. In 2012 the total of stay over visitors and stay over nights has increased respectively with 8 and 15 percent. Tourists have been staying longer bringing the average length of stay to 9 nights. Cruise tourism has increased with an astounding 18 percent. Each year more rooms are being added to the hotel industry bringing the room capacity to a total of 5708. This growth goes hand in hand with a increasing diversification and competition among other destinations. The dynamics in tourism have turned it into a key driver for socio-economic progress, but this does not take away that tourism is a vulnerable sector. The business volume of tourism is taking its position in our diversified economy where the refinery and the financial sector play an important role. Aside from all these positive accolades towards the Curaçao tourism numbers, it's important that decision makers have a vision and set out a multiple year plan in which tourism continuously is moving to a higher level.