

A horrible history

The history of the Caribbean is very important for understanding what it's like today. The actions of European colonists in the 1500s completely transformed the culture and land use on the islands.

THEM

Plantations and slavery

European colonists made the indigenous people of the Caribbean work for them on huge farms called plantations. They grew valuable crops like sugar and tobacco to sell back to Europe. Many indigenous people died because of diseases brought over by the settlers.

A huge number of workers were needed on the plantations, so millions of people were kidnapped from Africa and forced to work as slaves.

Calypso music grew from African music brought over by slaves. Slaves weren't allowed to talk to each other so they communicated through Calypso music instead.

The slaves knew they'd never get back to Africa, but they did their best to keep their culture alive, for example, through traditional music, dancing and stories.

A combination of cultures

Over half the Caribbean population are descended from African slaves. This means African culture influenced Caribbean food, music and religion. The influence of European settlers can also be seen in Caribbean culture.

Salsa music and dancing originated in Cuba and has both African and Spanish influences.

Cricket was introduced to the Caribbean by British colonists. It's very popular in the Caribbean, and a big part of the culture.



A land of many languages...

Haitian Creole and Papiamentu are two of the official languages in the Caribbean. They're mixtures of European and African languages. Spanish, English, French and Dutch are also official languages because of the European colonists who settled there.