Dawgen GLOBAL

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CARIBBEAN SERVICE DESK · SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN

Doing Business in Aruba

A practical guide to establishing, operating and growing a business in Aruba

CONTENTS

01	Aruba at a glance	3
02	Why Aruba	4
03	Choosing a business structure	5
04	Setting up: step by step	6
05	Tax at a glance	7
06	Employing people	8
07	Banking, currency and property	9
08	Incentives, trade and customs	10
09	Regulators and compliance calendar	11
10	Your first 90 days: checklist	12
11	How Dawgen Global helps	13

FOREWORD

Aruba combines one of the Caribbean's most successful tourism economies with the institutions and legal tradition of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Investors are drawn to Aruba for good reason: political stability, a currency pegged to the US dollar, a multilingual workforce and a location south of the hurricane belt. Opportunity sits alongside complexity. Establishment permits, notarial formalities, tax and work permits all need careful handling from the first day.

This guide sets out what you need to know in plain language: how to choose a structure, how the set-up process works, what taxes apply, how to employ people, and which incentives may be available. It is written for investors, entrepreneurs and regional and international groups considering Aruba.

We serve clients in Aruba through Dawgen Global's Caribbean Service Desk, managed from our headquarters in Kingston, and we are ready to help you turn a plan into a well-run, compliant business.

Dr. Dawkins Brown, Ph.D., MCMI, ACFE

Executive Chairman, Dawgen Global

> **How to use this guide**
>
> This guide gives a practical overview of establishing and running a business in Aruba. It is general information, current to October 2026, and is not a substitute for advice on your circumstances. Rates and rules change; speak to us before you act.

OVERVIEW

01 Aruba at a glance

A constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands off the coast of South America, with an economy built on tourism, services, logistics and trade.

CAPITAL

Oranjestad

Commercial and government centre

STATUS

Kingdom of the Netherlands

Autonomous country within the Kingdom since 1986

LANGUAGES

Dutch and Papiamento

Official languages; English and Spanish widely spoken

CURRENCY

Aruban florin (AWG)

Pegged at AWG 1.79 to US$1; foreign exchange rules apply

LEGAL SYSTEM

Dutch civil law

Final appeal to the Supreme Court of the Netherlands

TIME ZONE

UTC−4

Atlantic Standard Time all year; no daylight saving

PROFIT TAX

22%

2% for qualifying free zone companies

TURNOVER TAXES

7% combined

BBO, BAVP and BAZV on local supplies and imports; no VAT

TRADE LINKS

EU OCT, Kingdom

EU overseas country and territory; not in CARICOM

Leading sectors

Tourism and hospitality · Real estate and construction · Retail and distribution · Financial services · Logistics and free zone trade · Aviation and maritime services · Renewable energy · Creative industries · Knowledge services

Gateways

Queen Beatrix International Airport has direct flights to North America, Europe and the region, with US preclearance. The Aruba Ports Authority runs the Oranjestad cruise port and the Barcadera cargo port.

Public holidays

About a dozen public holidays a year, including Betico Croes Day (25 January), National Anthem and Flag Day (18 March), King's Day (27 April) and Carnival Monday.

INVESTMENT CLIMATE

02 Why Aruba

Stable institutions, a dollar-linked currency and a mature tourism economy make Aruba a dependable base for service businesses.

Strategic location

Aruba lies just north of the Venezuelan coast and south of the main hurricane belt, a short flight from Miami, Panama and Bogotá. US preclearance at the airport simplifies travel to the United States.

Multilingual workforce

Most residents speak Papiamento, Dutch, English and Spanish, which suits hospitality, customer service and trade with both the Americas and Europe. The University of Aruba and vocational schools supply professional and technical skills.

Kingdom framework

Company, contract and property law follow the Dutch civil law tradition, with notarial deeds and public registers. Courts sit within the Kingdom's common judicial system, giving investors a familiar and independent route to resolve disputes.

A recovering, reforming economy

Tourism drove a strong recovery after 2020, and Aruba received about 1.5 million stay-over visitors in 2025. Central government debt fell from about 116% of GDP in 2020 to about 69% at the end of 2024, according to the IMF, under fiscal rules supervised within the Kingdom.

Government policy aims to diversify the economy beyond tourism, with new incentives from 2026 for start-ups and for investment in Oranjestad and San Nicolas.

Where the opportunities are

Sector	Examples of opportunity
Tourism	Hotels and resorts, medical, cultural, sport and adventure tourism, and supply chains for food and services
Real estate	Residential, mixed-use and urban regeneration projects in Oranjestad and San Nicolas
Logistics	Free zone distribution, maritime and aviation logistics
Knowledge economy	Digital, creative and professional services
Sustainability	Renewable energy, circular economy and agriculture

DEACI

The Department of Economic Affairs, Commerce and Industry (DEACI) issues business establishment permits and publishes economic data. It reported a record 880 new business permits in 2025.

LEGAL VEHICLES

03 Choosing a business structure

Most investors use a VBA or an NV, both incorporated by notarial deed. Overseas companies may instead register a branch. The right choice depends on liability, tax, financing and exit plans.

Vehicle	Key features	Typical use	Main obligations
VBA (limited liability company)	Flexible private company; separate legal entity; shareholders' liability limited; incorporated by notarial deed	Most operating businesses and subsidiaries of foreign groups	Commercial Register filings; profit tax returns; annual financial statements
NV (public limited company)	Traditional company with a more formal governance and capital regime	Larger businesses, regulated entities and established groups	As for a VBA; stricter rules on capital and reporting
Branch of a foreign company	Registered with the Chamber of Commerce; not a separate legal entity	Projects, contracts and market entry	Establishment permit; 22% tax on Aruban profits
Partnerships (VOF and CV)	General or limited partnership; general partners personally liable	Professional practices and family businesses	Commercial Register; partners taxed on their share of profits
Sole proprietorship	Individual trading in their own name; unlimited liability	Small owner-managed businesses	Establishment permit where required; income tax
Foundation	No members or shareholders; assets dedicated to a stated purpose	Charities, asset holding and family arrangements	Notarial deed; registration; tax depends on activities

Foreign ownership

Foreign investors may own 100% of an Aruban company. New businesses generally need an establishment permit, and regulated activities such as banking, insurance, money transfer and trust services need a licence from the Centrale Bank van Aruba.

Beneficial ownership

Notaries, banks and other service providers must identify the individuals who ultimately own or control a company under anti-money laundering rules. Keep ownership records up to date and report changes promptly.

GETTING STARTED

04 Setting up: step by step

Companies are formed by a civil-law notary and registered with the Chamber of Commerce. Most new businesses also need an establishment permit; bank accounts and permits usually take longest.

1 **Plan the structure and name** — WEEK 1

Choose the vehicle, shareholding and managing directors, and check that the proposed name is available in the Commercial Register.

2 **Incorporate before a notary** — WEEK 1–3

An Aruban civil-law notary prepares and executes the deed of incorporation with the articles, after identity and source-of-funds checks.

3 **Obtain an establishment permit** — WEEK 2–8

Apply to DEACI under the Business Establishment Ordinance (Vestigingsverordening Bedrijven), and register the business with the Chamber of Commerce.

4 **Open a bank account** — WEEK 2–8

Banks apply full know-your-customer checks on the company, directors and beneficial owners. Allow extra time where owners are overseas.

5 **Register for tax and social insurance** — WEEK 3–6

Register with the Departamento di Impuesto for profit tax, turnover tax and wage tax, and as an employer with the Sociale Verzekeringsbank (SVB).

6 **Obtain licences and permits** — VARIES

Apply for sector licences, building permits where you will build or alter premises, and work and residence permits from DIMAS for foreign staff.

7 **Set up accounting and compliance** — BEFORE TRADING

Put in place bookkeeping, payroll, annual financial statements, a tax and filing calendar, data protection controls, and anti-money laundering controls where your sector requires them.

Documents you will usually need

Certified passport and proof of address for each director, shareholder and beneficial owner; evidence of the source of funds; a business plan for the establishment permit; and, for a branch, certified constitutional documents and an extract from the home commercial register. Foreign documents may need an apostille and a sworn translation.

TAXATION

05 Tax at a glance

Aruba taxes resident companies on worldwide income and non-residents on Aruban-source income. There is no VAT; turnover taxes apply instead. The headline rates are below.

Business taxes	
Profit tax	22% on companies and branches, including capital gains; participation exemption for qualifying holdings
Special rates	2% for qualifying free zone companies; 6% to 10% for oil refinery and terminal profits
Turnover taxes	BBO 2.5%, BAVP 1.5% and BAZV 3%: 7% combined on local supplies and on imports
Tourist levy	12.5% on hotel and resort stays, plus a fixed environmental levy per room
Transfer tax	3% on real estate value up to AWG 250,000 and 6% above
Land tax	Annual; 0.6% for companies and non-residents; 0% to 0.6% for residents by value
Foreign exchange commission	1.3% on payments by residents to non-residents

Individuals	
Tax-free amount	AWG 30,000 a year; in 2026 no income tax on income up to AWG 64,930
Income tax rates	21%, 42% and 52% in bands above the 0% band (2026)

Withholding tax (non-residents)	Rate*
Dividends	10%; 5% to companies in the Kingdom
Interest	Nil
Royalties and fees	Nil

*Domestic rates. The Tax Arrangement for the Kingdom of the Netherlands covers Aruba, Curaçao, the Netherlands and Sint Maarten. Aruba and Suriname announced treaty talks in 2025.

Recent changes

The 2023 reform cut profit tax to 22%, abolished the imputation payment company regime (transition ended in 2025 for most structures) and extended turnover taxes to imports. Income tax rates fell in 2025. From 2026, new incentives apply to start-ups and designated areas. A broad-based VAT has been discussed but not introduced, and the OECD global minimum tax has not been adopted.

PEOPLE

06 Employing people

Employment law follows the Dutch civil law model and protects employees strongly, particularly on dismissal. Employers must register with SVB, withhold wage tax and premiums, and observe minimum standards.

Minimum standards

- **Minimum wage:** AWG 11.58 an hour from 1 January 2026 for employees aged 18 and over, about AWG 2,007 a month for a 40-hour week
- **Overtime:** paid at a premium set by labour law or collective agreement
- **Vacation:** statutory paid annual leave; collective agreements often give more
- **Sickness:** SVB sickness insurance replaces lost wages for insured employees
- **Maternity:** paid pregnancy and maternity leave, with SVB benefit
- **Dismissal:** generally needs a permit from the Department of Labour, except in probation, by agreement or for urgent cause
- **Severance:** cessantia payment for qualifying employees dismissed through no fault of their own, based on service

Statutory payroll contributions

Contribution	Employee	Employer
Wage tax	0% to 52%	—
AOV/AWW (pensions)	5%	10.5%
AZV (health insurance)	1.6%	8.9%
Sickness insurance (ZV)	—	2.65%
Accident insurance (OV)	—	0.25% to 2.5%

Premiums apply up to annual maximum wages, published each year. Rates are unchanged for 2026. Supplementary pension obligations may also apply.

Bringing in foreign staff

Work and residence permits

Foreign nationals need a residence permit for work from DIMAS, applied for with the employer's support, before starting work.

Labour market test

Employers must usually show that no suitable local candidate is available, and the post must meet wage and sector conditions.

Dutch nationals

Dutch nationals do not need a work permit but must register with DIMAS and meet the conditions for residence.

HR essentials from day one

Give every employee written terms of employment, keep accurate time, pay and leave records, register each employee with SVB, and adopt a staff handbook covering conduct, grievances, data protection and health and safety. Because dismissal is tightly regulated, clear records matter from the start.

MONEY AND ASSETS

07 Banking, currency and property

Banking and finance

Aruba has commercial banks, insurers, pension funds and money transfer companies, all supervised by the Centrale Bank van Aruba (CBA).

- **Fixed currency:** pegged at AWG 1.79 to US$1 since 1986; US dollars are widely accepted
- **Foreign exchange rules:** payments abroad go through licensed banks under CBA rules
- **Foreign exchange commission:** 1.3% on payments by residents to non-residents
- **Foreign currency accounts** are available, subject to CBA rules
- **Capital markets:** there is no local stock exchange; finance comes mainly from banks
- **Compliance:** expect thorough anti-money laundering and know-your-customer checks

Financial reporting

Companies prepare annual financial statements under internationally accepted standards, usually IFRS.

Land and property

Foreign nationals and companies may hold property in Aruba. Much land is government land granted on long lease (erfpacht), with annual ground rent; freehold also exists. Transfers are made by notarial deed and entered in the public registers.

Typical costs on a property purchase	
Transfer tax	3% up to AWG 250,000 and 6% above, usually paid by the buyer
Notary and registration	Fees for the deed and registration
Long lease rent	Annual ground rent on leasehold land
Land tax	Annual, up to 0.6% of value

Before you build

Construction needs a building permit, and land use must fit the island's spatial development plan. Sale of shares in a real estate company and transfers of economic ownership can also attract transfer tax.

GROWTH LEVERS

08 Incentives, trade and customs

Aruba offers targeted incentives, including free zones and new regimes from 2026, alongside close ties within the Kingdom and with the European Union.

Key incentive regimes

Regime	What it offers
Free zones	2% profit tax for qualifying companies, turnover tax exemption on foreign sales and duty relief on goods for re-export
Designated areas (from 2026)	Up to 10 years' exemption from profit tax and dividend withholding tax, and two years' partial transfer and turnover tax relief, for investment in Oranjestad and San Nicolas
Start-up incentives (from 2026)	Five-year incentives for start-ups in niche tourism, knowledge economy, logistics, agriculture, circular economy and creative industries
Transparent company	Tax transparency for qualifying companies with economic substance

Eligibility and conditions apply to each regime. We can assess which incentives fit your project and prepare the applications.

Market access

- **European Union:** as an overseas country and territory, Aruba has preferential access for qualifying goods
- **Kingdom of the Netherlands:** close legal, tax and transport links with the Netherlands, Curaçao and Sint Maarten
- **United States:** US border preclearance at the airport supports trade and travel
- **Region:** Aruba is not a CARICOM member, so CARICOM trade terms do not apply

Customs

The Customs Department (Departamento di Aduana) handles imports and exports. Import duty is charged on the customs value at Aruba's own tariff rates, plus the 7% combined turnover taxes since August 2023, and excise on products such as fuel, alcohol and tobacco.

COMPLIANCE

09 Regulators and compliance calendar

Who regulates what

Body	Role
Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Commercial Register
DEACI	Business establishment permits
Departamento di Impuesto	Profit tax, wage tax, turnover taxes, land and transfer tax
Departamento di Aduana	Imports, exports and duties
Centrale Bank van Aruba	Banks, insurance, pensions, trust services, foreign exchange and AML supervision
Financial Intelligence Unit (MOT)	Unusual transaction reporting
SVB and AZV	Social insurance and health insurance
DIMAS	Admission, residence and work permits
Department of Labour	Labour standards and dismissal permits
Department of Public Works	Building permits

Key filing dates

When	What
Within 15 days of month-end	Turnover tax return and payment for the previous month
Each month	Wage tax and social premiums withheld for the previous month
When dividends are paid	Dividend tax return, filed online
31 May	Provisional profit tax return and payment (five months after year-end)
30 November	Final profit tax return, with the six-month extension
End of February	Individual income tax returns, unless extended

Dates shown are for a company with a December year-end. Late filing and payment attract penalties and interest, which build quickly.

Anti-money laundering

Financial institutions and designated non-financial businesses, including notaries, lawyers, accountants and real estate agents in certain activities, must meet anti-money laundering obligations, supervised by the CBA, and report unusual transactions to the MOT.

ACTION PLAN

10 Your first 90 days: checklist

Use this checklist to track the essential steps from decision to first trading day.

Days 1–30: establish

- [ ] Agree business plan, structure and ownership
- [ ] Check the company name in the Commercial Register
- [ ] Gather KYC and source-of-funds documents
- [ ] Instruct an Aruban civil-law notary
- [ ] Execute the deed of incorporation
- [ ] Apply to DEACI for an establishment permit
- [ ] Register with the Chamber of Commerce
- [ ] Apply to open business bank accounts

Days 31–60: register and license

- [ ] Register with the Departamento di Impuesto
- [ ] Register as an employer with SVB
- [ ] Apply for sector licences and building permits
- [ ] Apply to DIMAS for permits for foreign staff
- [ ] Assess eligibility for free zone or 2026 incentives
- [ ] Lease premises and confirm permitted use
- [ ] Arrange insurance cover

Days 61–90: operate

- [ ] Set up the accounting system and chart of accounts
- [ ] Set up payroll, wage tax and premiums
- [ ] Issue written employment contracts
- [ ] Build the tax and filing calendar
- [ ] Put AML and data protection policies in place
- [ ] Agree year-end and audit arrangements

Ongoing

- [ ] Monthly turnover tax returns
- [ ] Monthly wage tax and premiums
- [ ] Annual profit tax return and financial statements
- [ ] Keep Commercial Register details current
- [ ] Renew licences and permits on time

YOUR PARTNER

11 How Dawgen Global helps

One Dawgen Global team supports you through our Caribbean Service Desk, managed from our headquarters in Kingston.

Market entry and structuring

Choice of vehicle, group and tax structuring, feasibility studies and business plans.

Incorporation and corporate secretarial

Coordination with notaries, establishment permits, registers and Commercial Register filings.

Tax advisory and compliance

Registrations, planning, turnover taxes, wage tax, returns, transfer pricing and tax audits, through our Caribbean Tax Service Desk.

Accounting and payroll outsourcing

Bookkeeping, management accounts, payroll and a Virtual CFO.

Audit and assurance

Statutory audits, reviews and special-purpose reporting for lenders and parent companies.

HR, immigration and legal support

Employment contracts, HR policies, work permits and legal process support, with our panel of attorneys.

Risk and compliance

AML programmes, data protection compliance, internal audit and governance.

Technology and cyber

Systems selection, digital transformation, cybersecurity and AI governance.

Incentive applications

Free zone and incentive assessments and applications.

Start with a conversation

Tell us your plans for Aruba, and we will set out the steps, timeline and costs. Some regulated services are performed by affiliated firms; we will advise you of the arrangements when you make a request. Fees are tailored to each client's circumstances and set out in an engagement letter. Email **aruba@dawgen.com** or **info@dawgen.global**, or call (876) 926-5210.

Talk to the Aruba Caribbean Service Desk

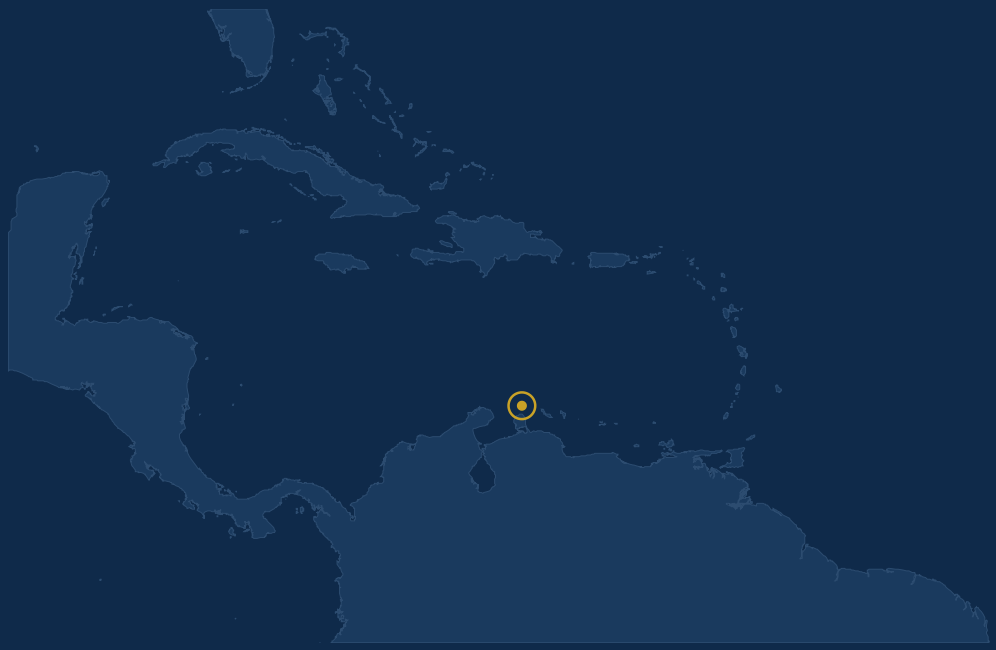
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Key official sources

- Departamento di Impuesto (impuesto.aw)
- Centrale Bank van Aruba (cbaruba.org)
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry Aruba (arubachamber.com)
- Government of Aruba, including DEACI, DIMAS and the Department of Labour (gobierno.aw)
- Sociale Verzekeringsbank Aruba (svbaruba.org)
- Free Zone Aruba (freezonearuba.com)
- Aruba Ports Authority (arubaports.com)
- International Monetary Fund, 2025 Article IV statement on Aruba (imf.org)



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