Dawgen GLOBAL

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CARIBBEAN SERVICE DESK · EASTERN CARIBBEAN

Doing Business in Saint Lucia

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

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FOREWORD

Saint Lucia combines a world-class tourism brand with a member state of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, a stable currency and a growing base of services, construction and investment activity.

Investors choose Saint Lucia for good reason: an English-speaking jurisdiction in the heart of the Eastern Caribbean, with two airports, two seaports, a currency pegged to the US dollar and access to the OECS and CARICOM markets. Opportunity sits alongside complexity. Registration, tax, land holding, employment and licensing rules 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 Saint Lucia.

We serve clients in Saint Lucia 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 Saint Lucia. 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 Saint Lucia at a glance

A Windward Islands state in the Eastern Caribbean, with an economy built on tourism, construction, services and agriculture.

CAPITAL

Castries

Commercial and government centre; Vieux Fort is the southern hub

POPULATION

About 180,000

Diaspora in the UK, US and Canada

LANGUAGE

English

Official language; Kwéyòl widely spoken

CURRENCY

Eastern Caribbean dollar (XCD)

Pegged at EC$2.70 to US$1 by the ECCB

LEGAL SYSTEM

Mixed civil and common law

Final appeal to the Caribbean Court of Justice

TIME ZONE

UTC−4

Atlantic Standard Time all year; no daylight saving

CORPORATE INCOME TAX

30%

No capital gains tax; no tax on dividends

VALUE ADDED TAX

12.5%

Reduced rates for tourism; registration above EC$400,000 a year

TRADE AGREEMENTS

OECS, CARICOM, EU, UK

OECS Economic Union; CSME; EU and UK EPAs

Leading sectors

Tourism and hospitality · Construction and real estate · Agriculture and agro-processing · Light manufacturing · Financial services · Global services and ICT · Renewable energy · Creative industries · Logistics

Gateways

Hewanorra International Airport at Vieux Fort handles long-haul flights to North America and the UK and is being redeveloped; George F. L. Charles Airport in Castries serves regional routes. Port Castries and Port Vieux Fort handle cargo and cruise traffic.

Public holidays

Thirteen public holidays a year, including Independence Day (22 February), Emancipation Day (1 August) and National Day (13 December).

INVESTMENT CLIMATE

02 Why Saint Lucia

A strong tourism brand, a stable currency and membership of the OECS and CARICOM make Saint Lucia a practical base in the Eastern Caribbean.

Strategic location

Saint Lucia sits at the centre of the Windward Islands, with direct flights to Miami, New York, Toronto and London and short regional hops to the rest of the OECS, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago.

Stable currency and region

As a member of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, Saint Lucia shares the Eastern Caribbean dollar, fixed to the US dollar since 1976, and a single central bank. OECS nationals may live and work freely across the member states.

Familiar legal framework

Commercial and company law follow English models, while property and civil matters draw on a civil code. Final appeal lies to the Caribbean Court of Justice. Foreign nationals may own land with an Alien Landholding Licence.

An economy in transition

Tourism drives growth, employment and foreign exchange, supported by public investment in roads, the airport and housing. Government is working to modernise tax administration and digital public services, and the IMF has urged a fiscal rule to bring public debt towards the regional target.

The Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange gives listed companies access to regional capital.

Where the opportunities are

Sector	Examples of opportunity
Tourism	Hotels and villas, attractions, wellness, yachting and supply chains for food and services
Construction	Housing, tourism developments, infrastructure and building materials supply
Agriculture	Agro-processing, food security, import substitution and export crops
Energy	Solar and other renewable generation, storage and energy efficiency
Global services	Shared services, software, digital services and the creative economy

Invest Saint Lucia

Invest Saint Lucia is the national investment promotion agency. It advises investors on opportunities and incentives and helps with approvals and introductions to government agencies.

LEGAL VEHICLES

03 Choosing a business structure

Most investors use a company incorporated under the Companies Act. Overseas companies may instead register as an external company. The right choice depends on liability, tax, financing and exit plans.

Vehicle	Key features	Typical use	Main obligations
Private company limited by shares	Separate legal entity; shareholders' liability limited to their shares; at least one director; registered office in Saint Lucia	Most operating businesses and subsidiaries of foreign groups	Annual return to ROCIP; corporate income tax returns; beneficial ownership information
Public company	Can offer securities to the public; may list on the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange; stricter disclosure	Larger businesses raising capital	Audited financial statements; securities law and listing rules
External company (branch)	Overseas company registered with ROCIP to carry on business in Saint Lucia; not a separate legal entity	Projects, contracts and market entry by foreign companies	Registration with ROCIP; 30% tax on Saint Lucia profits; branch filings
Partnership	General or limited partnership; general partners may be personally liable	Professional practices and family businesses	Business name registration; partners taxed on their share of profits
Sole trader	Individual trading in their own name or a registered business name; unlimited liability	Small owner-managed businesses	Business name registration; personal income tax
Non-profit company	No share capital; profits applied to its objects	Charities, associations and non-profits	Annual return; non-profit compliance

Foreign ownership

Foreign investors may own 100% of a Saint Lucia company in most sectors, but a foreign-owned company needs an Alien Landholding Licence to hold land. Regulated activities, such as banking, insurance, money services and telecommunications, need a licence before trading starts.

Beneficial ownership

Companies must keep up-to-date information on the individuals who ultimately own or control them and provide it to the Registrar on request. The former international business company regime is closed to new entrants.

GETTING STARTED

04 Setting up: step by step

Companies are registered with the Registry of Companies and Intellectual Property (ROCIP). Incorporation is quick once documents are ready; bank accounts, licences and land approvals usually take longer.

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

Choose the vehicle, shareholding and directors, and search and reserve the proposed name with ROCIP.

2 **Incorporate with ROCIP** — WEEK 1–2

File the articles of incorporation with notices of the directors and registered office, usually through a Saint Lucia attorney-at-law.

3 **Open a bank account** — WEEK 2–6

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

4 **Register for tax and NIC** — WEEK 2–4

Register with the Inland Revenue Department for a taxpayer identification number, and for VAT if annual taxable supplies will exceed EC$400,000. Register as an employer with the National Insurance Corporation.

5 **Obtain licences and permits** — VARIES

Apply for a trade licence and sector licences, development approval where you will build, an Alien Landholding Licence to hold land, and work permits for foreign staff.

6 **Plan for data protection** — BEFORE TRADING

Businesses that collect and use personal data must follow the Data Protection Act, 2011, including its rules on consent, security and disclosure.

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

Put in place bookkeeping, payroll, IFRS-compliant reporting, a tax and filing calendar, 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; bank or professional references; a registered office address in Saint Lucia; and, for an external company, certified constitutional documents, a certificate of good standing from its home registry and details of a local person authorised to accept service.

TAXATION

05 Tax at a glance

Saint Lucia taxes resident companies on worldwide income and non-residents on Saint Lucia-source income. There is no capital gains tax. The headline rates are below.

Business taxes	
Corporate income tax	30%, including branches; no branch remittance tax; losses carried forward six years, set against up to 50% of a year's income
VAT	12.5% standard; 10% and 7% on tourism supplies, as the IRD determines; registration above EC$400,000 a year
Health and Citizen Security Levy	2.5% on imports and on certain services
Stamp duty on property	2% from the buyer; 2.5% to 5% from a resident seller and 10% from a non-resident seller
Property tax	Annual, 0.4% (commercial) and 0.25% (residential) of market value; residential tax suspended to the end of 2026
Customs	Duty under the CARICOM Common External Tariff, plus a customs service charge and excise on some goods

Individuals	
Personal allowance	EC$25,000 a year; pension income exempt from 2025
Income tax rates	15% on the first EC$15,000 of chargeable income; 20% on the next EC$15,000; 30% above EC$30,000

Withholding tax (non-residents)	Rate*
Dividends	Nil
Interest	15%
Royalties and management fees	25%

*Domestic rates. Saint Lucia's only double tax treaty is the CARICOM agreement, which may reduce these rates for payments to member states. Residents withhold 10% on payments to contractors above EC$10,000.

Recent changes

The 2025/26 budget made pensions tax-free and raised child, mortgage interest and other allowances from 2025. The 2026/27 budget added no new taxes, extended the tax amnesty to December 2027 and proposed a cut in the rate on overdue tax from 12.5% to 6%. VAT relief on building materials now runs to 30 November 2030.

PEOPLE

06 Employing people

The Labour Act sets minimum standards on wages, hours, leave and termination. Employers must register with the National Insurance Corporation, deduct PAYE and pay contributions monthly.

Minimum standards

- **Minimum wage:** EC$6.52 an hour (EC$1,131 a month) since 1 October 2024
- **Hours:** 40-hour standard week; overtime at premium rates
- **Vacation:** 14 working days' paid leave a year, 21 days after five years' service
- **Sick leave:** paid sick leave after qualifying service, with NIC sickness benefit
- **Maternity:** at least 13 weeks' leave, with NIC maternity benefit
- **Notice:** rises with length of service, unless the contract gives more
- **Severance:** payable on redundancy after qualifying service (Labour Act), by years worked

Statutory payroll contributions

Contribution	Employee	Employer
Income tax (PAYE)	15% / 20% / 30%	—
National Insurance Corporation	5%	5%

NIC applies to insurable earnings up to EC$5,000 a month, so each side pays at most EC$250 a month. There are no other payroll taxes. PAYE and NIC are remitted monthly.

Bringing in foreign staff

Work permits

Foreign nationals need a work permit, applied for through the Department of Labour, unless exempt. Employing a foreign national without one is an offence.

OECS and CARICOM nationals

OECS nationals may work freely under the OECS Economic Union. Qualified CARICOM nationals in approved categories may work under a CARICOM Skills Certificate.

Citizenship by investment

The Citizenship by Investment Programme offers citizenship to approved investors, from a US$240,000 contribution to the National Economic Fund or a US$300,000 approved investment.

HR essentials from day one

Give every employee written terms of employment, keep accurate time, pay and leave records, register each employee with NIC, and adopt a staff handbook covering conduct, grievances, data protection and health and safety. Most disputes we see start with missing paperwork, not bad intentions.

MONEY AND ASSETS

07 Banking, currency and property

Banking and finance

Saint Lucia has commercial banks, credit unions, insurers and money services businesses. Banks are supervised by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank; other financial institutions by the Financial Services Regulatory Authority.

- **Fixed currency:** the Eastern Caribbean dollar has been pegged at EC$2.70 to US$1 since 1976
- **Payments abroad:** exchange control law remains in place, but banks routinely process trade and investment payments; keep records of capital brought in
- **US dollar accounts** are widely available
- **Capital markets:** the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange lists equities and government debt
- **Compliance:** expect thorough anti-money laundering and know-your-customer checks

Financial reporting

Companies prepare financial statements under IFRS, or IFRS for SMEs where eligible, and file them with their tax returns.

Land and property

Non-citizens, and companies they control, need an Alien Landholding Licence to buy or lease land beyond set limits. Land is held under a registered title system, so title searches are straightforward.

Typical costs on a property purchase	
Alien Landholding Licence	Fee of 7.5% of the property value
Stamp duty	2% from the buyer; 2.5% to 5% from the seller (10% if non-resident)
Legal fees	Agreed with the attorneys for each party
Property tax	Annual, 0.25% to 0.4% of market value

Before you build

Development needs approval from the Development Control Authority. Larger, coastal or sensitive projects may need an environmental impact assessment.

GROWTH LEVERS

08 Incentives, trade and customs

Saint Lucia offers incentives mainly through sector and project legislation, alongside preferential access to regional and international markets.

Key incentive regimes

Regime	What it offers
Fiscal incentives	Income tax holidays and duty relief for approved manufacturing and other qualifying enterprises
Tourism incentives	Duty, VAT and tax concessions for approved hotel and tourism projects
Free zones	Duty and tax relief for approved export-oriented businesses in designated free zones
Special development areas	Concessions for approved investment in designated areas
Targeted deductions	Recent budgets added relief for cybersecurity and ICT training, after-school care, recycling and special education donations

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

Market access

- **OECS Economic Union:** free movement of goods and people across the member states
- **CARICOM Single Market and Economy:** duty-free trade in qualifying goods, with a Common External Tariff on imports
- **CARIFORUM–EU and CARIFORUM–UK Economic Partnership Agreements:** preferential access to Europe
- **Caribbean Basin Initiative:** duty-free access to the United States for many products

Customs

The Customs and Excise Department handles imports and exports through its electronic declaration system. Duty is charged on the customs value at tariff rates, plus the customs service charge, the 2.5% Health and Citizen Security Levy, VAT and, for certain products, excise tax.

COMPLIANCE

09 Regulators and compliance calendar

Who regulates what

Body	Role
ROCIP	Company and business registration, annual returns, beneficial ownership
Inland Revenue Department	Income tax, VAT, PAYE and property tax
Customs and Excise Department	Imports, exports and duties
Eastern Caribbean Central Bank	Commercial banks and the currency
Financial Services Regulatory Authority	Insurance, credit unions, money services and international financial services
Financial Intelligence Authority	Anti-money laundering reporting
National Insurance Corporation	Social security contributions and benefits
Department of Labour	Work permits and labour standards
Citizenship by Investment Unit	Citizenship by investment applications
Development Control Authority	Planning and development approvals

Key filing dates

When	What
Monthly	PAYE and NIC for the previous month; withholding tax on payments to non-residents
21st of each month	VAT return and payment for the previous month
25 March, 25 June, 25 September	Corporate income tax instalments, each one-third of the previous year's tax
31 March	Corporate income tax return and balance of tax (calendar year-end); individual returns
Each year	Annual return to ROCIP

Corporate returns are due within three months of the year-end. Late filing and payment attract penalties and interest, which build quickly.

Anti-money laundering

Financial institutions and designated non-financial businesses, including real estate agents, attorneys and accountants in certain activities, must meet obligations under the Money Laundering (Prevention) Act and report suspicious transactions to the Financial Intelligence Authority.

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
- [ ] Search and reserve the company name
- [ ] Gather KYC documents for directors and owners
- [ ] Appoint a Saint Lucia attorney-at-law
- [ ] File incorporation documents with ROCIP
- [ ] Register with the IRD for a taxpayer number
- [ ] Record beneficial ownership information
- [ ] Apply to open business bank accounts

Days 31–60: register and license

- [ ] Register for VAT if above the EC$400,000 threshold
- [ ] Register as an employer with NIC
- [ ] Apply for trade and sector licences
- [ ] Apply for work permits for foreign staff
- [ ] Apply for an Alien Landholding Licence if needed
- [ ] Assess eligibility for incentives
- [ ] Lease premises and arrange insurance cover

Days 61–90: operate

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

Ongoing

- [ ] Monthly PAYE, NIC and VAT filings
- [ ] Corporate tax instalments
- [ ] Annual tax return and financial statements
- [ ] Annual return to ROCIP
- [ ] 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

Company formation, statutory registers, annual returns and beneficial ownership filings.

Tax advisory and compliance

Registrations, planning, VAT, PAYE, returns 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

Incentive, land licence and permit applications.

Start with a conversation

Tell us your plans for Saint Lucia, 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 **stlucia@dawgen.com** or **info@dawgen.global**, or call (876) 926-5210.

Talk to the Saint Lucia Caribbean Service Desk

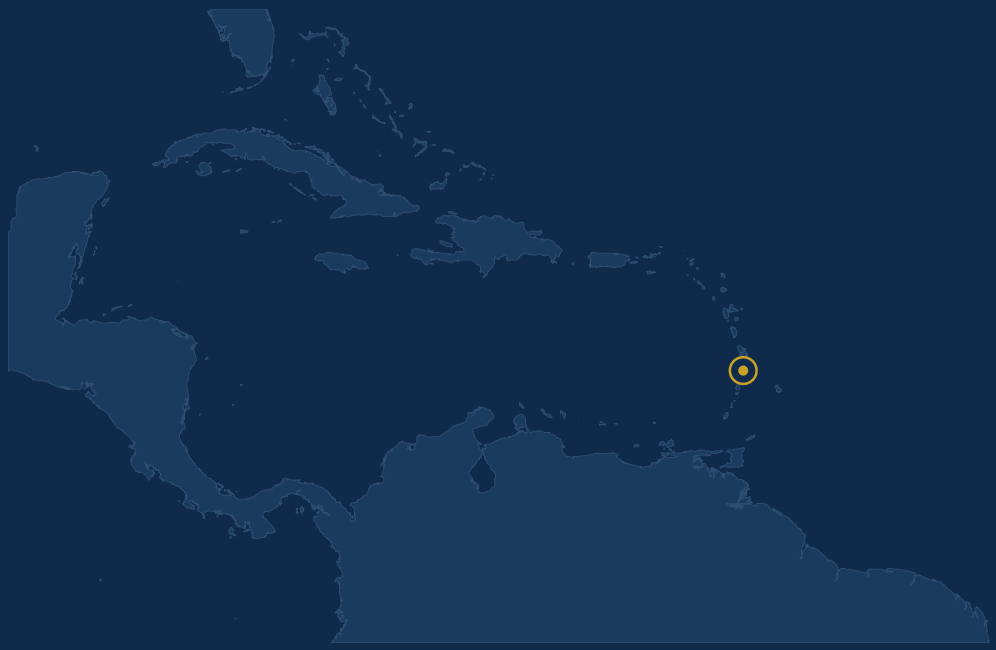
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Key official sources

- Inland Revenue Department (irdstlucia.gov.lc)
- Registry of Companies and Intellectual Property (rocip.gov.lc)
- Invest Saint Lucia (investstlucia.com)
- National Insurance Corporation (stlucianic.org)
- Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (eccb-centralbank.org)
- Citizenship by Investment Unit (cipsaintlucia.com)
- Department of Finance (finance.govt.lc)
- Government of Saint Lucia (govt.lc)



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