

# CAPE VERDE

**Status:** Island Republic off the northwest coast of West Africa  
**Population:** 539,560 (2016)  
**Area:** 1,557 square miles  
**Currency:** 100 Centavos = 1 Cape Verdean Escudo. 1CVE = .011 US\$.

Cape Verde – the Republic of Cabo Verde, as it is officially known – is an arid, volcanic archipelago of 10 islands in the North Atlantic, roughly 400 miles west of Dakar. When Portuguese explorers first arrived around 1456, the islands were uninhabited. In 1862, the Portuguese established a settlement on Santiago Island, which claims to be the first permanent European settlement in the tropics.

Hopes of turning the colony into a prosperous agricultural settlement like Madeira faltered due to the paucity of rainfall, but Cape Verde’s location on the South Atlantic trade routes positioned it well for the lucrative slave trade. With the banning of slavery, Cape Verde fell on hard times. The economy also was hit by the opening of the Suez Canal, in 1869, which curtailed its role in provisioning steam ships for the Asian trade. Frequent droughts brought famine. The persistent and serious economic problems led to a diaspora. Many Cape Verdeans found work on whaling ships and a number of those ultimately immigrated to New England.

In an unsuccessful attempt to blunt nationalism in its colonies, Portugal, in 1951, made Cape Verde and other colonies “overseas provinces.” But Lisbon resisted their independence until after the 1974 overthrow of the authoritarian regime of Antonio Salazar. Cape Verde was granted its independence on July 5, 1975. Since independence, the country has evolved into one of the most stable democracies in Africa and has enjoyed considerable economic progress.

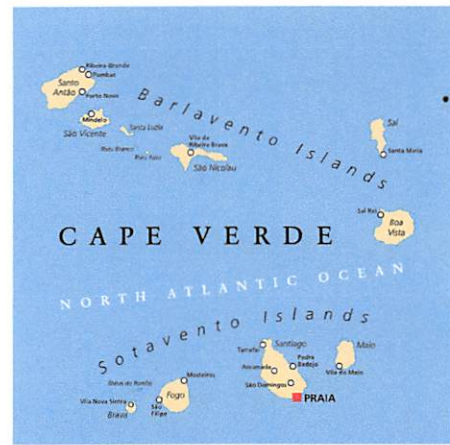
The first post office in the islands was established in 1851, when the British set up a postal agency on the island of St. Vincent in the group’s Barlavento Islands group to service the South American trade. That agency remained open until 1880. Portugal introduced its own stamps on July 1, 1853, but it was more than a decade before the stamps began to be issued for the colonies. Cape Verde received its first postage stamps in 1877 – a relatively long set of nine values depicting the Crown of Portugal. Cape Verde stamps were used in Portuguese Guinea from 1877 until 1881 when it was administratively separated and received its own stamps.

Until 1953, Cape Verdean stamps were inscribed simply “Cabo Verde.” In 1953, the stamp commemorating the centenary of Portuguese stamps bore the additional inscription “Ultramar Portugal,” or overseas Portugal, reflecting Cape Verde’s new status as an overseas province. That was soon modified to “Republica Portugal” which remained on Cape Verde stamps until 1975.

For a couple of years after independence, stamps were typically inscribed “Republica Cabo Verde.” Since 1985, the inscription has primarily been “Cabo Verde.”

Today, the Cape Verde post office seems to function well. Its stamp issues are conservative and all stamps seem to be available to the public. ☺

**A cover from June 25, 1960 features two stamps – the 1953 Arms of Colonies honoring the centenary of Portuguese stamps, Scott 296 (right) – and the first-day-of-issue Prince Henry the Navigator stamp, Scott 304.**



The first stamps issued in 1877 feature the Crown of Portugal, Scott 1.



The figure of Ceres appears on 60 stamps in four sets issued in 1914, Scott 146.



King Carlos I is found on 23 stamps issued from 1898 to 1903, Scott 44.



The low value of nine stamps released in 1886 featuring King Luis I of Portugal, Scott 15.



World War I had ended, but recovery money was still needed so overprinted war tax stamps were created in 1921, Scott 194.

