

Virtual visas: Barbados says to open first 'metaverse' embassy

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Barbados, shown in this file photo, plans to open an embassy in the metaverse.

Tiny Caribbean nation Barbados has laid claim to establishing what it says will be the first diplomatic embassy in the metaverse—a virtual reality version of the internet.

The announcement was sparse on details, but Barbados said this week that clients would be able to get consular services virtually once the project is up and running.

Authorities on the island of just under 300,000 people did not offer a start date, but noted they have signed a deal with metaverse platform Decentraland and are finalizing agreements with two others.

Metaverse has become a buzzword for the future of the internet, especially since [social media](#) giant Facebook has made a multi-billion-dollar push to build the [digital world](#) where people feel as if they are face-to-face using virtual reality technology.

"Barbados looks forward to welcoming the world in its metaverse embassy," said Senator Jerome Walcott, the nation's [foreign minister](#).

Barbados, which has moved to become a republic and withdraw Britain's Queen Elizabeth II as head of state, said it would maintain physical embassies as well.

"In some ways, it's super cutting edge and innovative. In other ways, they just happen to be the first movers, and good for them, but everyone's going in this direction," said Rabindra Ratan, a Michigan State University associate professor of media and information.

"It's kind of like having a new type of website, except this website exists in a three-dimensional space that feels a bit embodied and you can access it through a [virtual reality headset](#)," he added.

Barbados' announcement and its enthusiasm for the trendy technology is also a tool for the small nation to have a voice in the diplomatic arena, its political leaders noted.

In a similar tech-embracing vein, the Central American country of El Salvador adopted bitcoin as its official currency alongside the dollar in October.

As for the metaverse, it already exists in some forms, like the virtual worlds linked to video game platforms, such as Roblox.

But the world's largest social network, which renamed its [parent company](#) "Meta," is betting big on the idea and has announced plans to hire 10,000 people in Europe to work on building it.

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