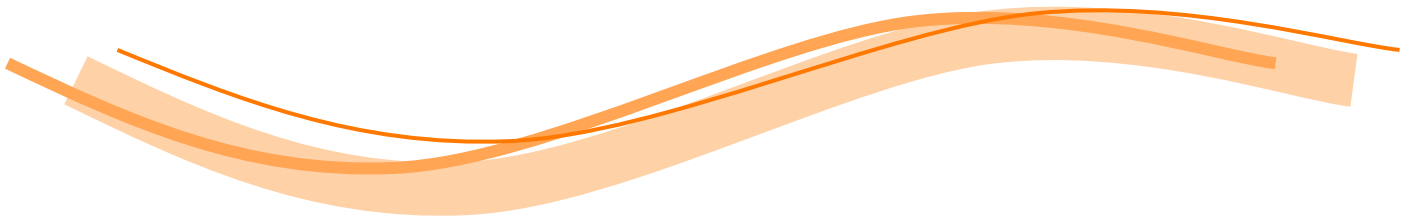




ANTIGUA





ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

When it comes to warm tropical islands - two have always got to be better than one! And this is certainly the case with beautiful Antigua and Barbuda! Antigua boasts secluded coves and powdery soft beaches. And the beaches of Barbuda are a gorgeous pink colour. But the beach is just the beginning! This is a destination where you can immerse yourself in the excellent snorkeling and watersports. Feast on local delicacies. Partake in the culture...enjoy the fabulous duty free shopping...re-live the history and bask in the perfect climate.

Antigua and Barbuda are situated in the Eastern Caribbean. Separated by only a few nautical miles, they part of the Leeward Islands and are east-southeast of Puerto Rico. Their sheltered position ensures a near-perfect climate of low rainfall and humidity combined with more sunshine than most other Caribbean islands. They are also cooled by trade winds – the same winds that made Antigua and Barbuda such an important port for sailing ships of the British colonies by the end of the 18th century.

Antigua is the more sophisticated island with a rich collection of historical sites side-by-side with a vibrant culture that is definitely twenty first century Caribbean. Antigua is typified by the lively and colourful capital city of St. John's. Barbuda, on the other hand, is the get-away-from-it-all island. Deserted strands made for beachcombing, a couple of exclusive resorts, great scuba diving and the world's largest frigate bird sanctuary make a visit to this pristine island an unforgettable experience.

There are 365 beaches on Antigua, one for each day of the year. The great majority rest inside the calm, protected waters of the island's Caribbean side. All are open to the public, and so the challenge posed to a visitor is not how to gain access to the best of them but simply which one to choose!

Barbuda has the deep blue Atlantic on one side with wild beaches full of driftwood and shells, and the Caribbean Sea on the other, perfect for swimming and snorkelling, and with plenty of opportunities to see turtles, rays, sharks, barracuda and many other varieties of tropical fish undisturbed in the turquoise water. Barbuda's smooth coastline is edged with long pink and white sand beaches protected by barrier reefs. In fact, the pristine pink beaches of the southwestern shore stretch as far as ten miles without interruption.

Antiguan cuisine reflects the island's rich cultural heritage. Expect spicy

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Creole dishes to rub shoulders with traditional English fare, along with culinary influences from the four corners of the globe. Dining in Antigua is about being relaxed. And don't forget to sample Cavalier rum – in its raw state, or as the staple in most rum-punches and rum-based cocktails served around the island.

The specialty dish of Antiguan cuisine is known simply as "goat water". Don't be steered away by the name -- this native dish is mouth-watering. A spicy stew seasoned with hot peppers, cloves and cinnamon, it is known to have people coming back for more. Also Antiguan are especially proud of their national dish - known as 'fungi and pepperpot', it is a thick vegetable stew.

Fresh spiny lobster, conch, oysters and red snapper dishes encompass all the flavors of the Caribbean and seafood lovers will delight in the many raw bars scattered along the island's coastline. Also not to be missed is the delicious, extra-sweet, Antigua black pineapple. And be sure to make time at least once for the English legacy of traditional high-tea.

The people of Antigua and Barbuda are warm and welcoming and there is a tradition of excellent hospitality on the islands. As well as it's many blessing from Mother Nature, it is this friendly, relaxed atmosphere, coupled with high standards of service, that puts Antigua and Barbuda among the world's top destinations for romantic escapes, vow renewals, weddings and honeymoons...

The way to the locals' hearts is through cricket - Antiguan are more than a little devoted to the game! The sport is played everywhere and at any time, though main matches have a tendency to be held on Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. The cricket season lasts from January to July. The island has historically been a very strong contributor to West Indian and international cricket, and the Antigua Recreation Ground is one of the finest places in the Caribbean to take in a local, regional, or international match. The most well-known of Antigua's sports legends is Vivian Richards, who ranks among the greatest cricketers of all time. Devotees of the game can visit the Antigua and Barbuda Museum in St John's for a look at Vivian Richards' cricket bat.

And best of all - it is easy to get to Antigua and Barbuda. In peak season WestJet has 2 flights per week and Air Canada has 4 flights per week to Antigua. So that is a great start for your vacation planning.

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	Both Air Canada Vacations and Westjet Vacations can also book both your flight and hotel. Antigua and Barbuda offers everything from highly luxurious and exclusive all inclusive resorts and Caribbean Hotels to small boutique hotels, intimate inns and private villas.
Location	Antigua (pronounced An-teega) and Barbuda are located in the middle of the Leeward Islands in the Eastern Caribbean, roughly 17 degrees north of the equator. To the south are the islands of Montserrat and Guadeloupe, and to the north and west are Nevis, St. Kitts, St. Barts, and St. Martin.
Geography	Antigua, the largest of the English-speaking Leeward Islands, is about 22 kms long and 18 kms wide, encompassing 281 square kms. Its highest point is Boggy Peak (1319 ft.), located in the southwestern corner of the island. Barbuda, a flat coral island with a smaller area, lies approximately 50kms due north. The nation also includes the tiny uninhabited island of Redonda, now a nature preserve.
Name	Christopher Columbus during his second Caribbean voyage (1493), sighted the island in passing and named it after Santa Maria la Antigua, the miracle-working saint of Seville.
Population	The current population for the nation is approximately 90,000 and its capital is St. John's on Antigua.
Language	English
Currency	2.02 Eastern Caribbean Dollars to one Canadian Dollar (Sept 2015) There is a departure tax of \$28. (2015)
Tipping	Most hotels and restaurants also add a 10 percent service charge in lieu of tipping.
Government	Parliamentary democracy under a federal constitutional monarchy.
Documentation	All Canadian visitors to Antigua and Barbuda must be in possession of a valid passport and an onward or round trip ticket.
Time zone	Antigua is on Atlantic Standard Time year-round. During the fall and winter, noon in Toronto or Montreal equals 1 p.m. on the island. During daylight saving time in the U.S., the hour is the same on the Eastern Seaboard as it is on the island.
Health	There are several general practitioners and specialists on the island, a hospital and a private clinic. No vaccinations are required unless the visitor is arriving from an endemic area. Recompression chambers are available by air ambulance at nearby Saba and in St. Thomas. Pharmaceutical services are widely available.
Safety tips	Usual precautions are advised.

CLIMATE	
General climate	Temperatures generally range from the mid-seventies in the winter to the mid-eighties in the summer. Annual rainfall averages only 45 inches, making it the sunniest of the Eastern Caribbean Islands, and the

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	northeast trade winds are nearly constant, flagging only in September. Low humidity year-round.
Today's weather	30 Centigrade and sunny (23 rd Sept 2015)
Best time to visit	Canadian wintertime!

GETTING THERE	
Flying time	In peak season this winter (2015/2016) Westjet have 2 flights per week and Air Canada have 4 flights per week to Antigua. So that is a great start to your vacation planning. Both Air Canada Vacations and Westjet Vacations can book both your flight and hotel. Antigua and Barbuda offers everything from highly luxurious and exclusive all inclusive resorts and Caribbean Hotels to small boutique hotels, intimate inns and private villas. And of course your Travel Agent can help – whether you visit with them or prefer an online Travel Agency such as Expedia. Flight time is about 5.5 hours.
Cities	St John's The skyline of St. John's, the capital and largest city of Antigua and Barbuda, is dominated by the magnificently evocative white baroque towers of St. John's Cathedral. Built in 1845, the church is now in its third incarnation, as earthquakes in 1683 and in 1745 destroyed the previous structures. The towers are the first sight of Antigua for about half of the island's visitors each year, many of whom arrive by boat. With its recently completed cruise ship dock and several hotels, St. John's is a lively hub for shopping and dining.
Distances	The sister island of Barbuda lies 50 kms northeast of Antigua; Antigua is only 25 km wide, so nowhere is too far away!
Ferries	The Barbuda Express is an innovative wave-piercing design giving maximum passenger comfort at high speed and a journey time of 90 minutes in nearly all weather conditions. It runs 5 days a week between St John's and Barbuda.
Car Rental	Renting a car is an ideal way to discover more of Antigua while on your vacation. The cost is about US\$50 per day. In addition to a valid driver's license from your country of residence, or an international driver's license, a permit to drive in Antigua is required. The rental agency can assist you in getting this temporary license, which costs approximately US\$12 and is valid for three months. Don't forget that driving here is on the left side of the road! There's plenty to see, such as Fig Tree Drive: Antigua's most picturesque drive meanders from the low central plain of the island up into the ancient volcanic hills of the Parish of Saint Mary in the island's southwest quarter. The none-too-smooth road passes through an area of lush vegetation and rainforest and rises to the steep farmlands around Fig Tree Hill (figs are what Antiguan call bananas) before descending to

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	the coastline again. Along the way are banana, mango, and coconut groves, as well as a number of old sugar mills and pleasant little churches.
Buses	There is limited local bus service on the island but taxis are available throughout Antigua.

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>Island accommodations range from comprehensive resort facilities and luxury hotels to smaller more intimate boutique guesthouses and cottages. With 60 hotels and over 3,000 rooms on the island, there is a property to suit every taste and budget. Here are some All inclusive examples –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa Voted "World's Most Romantic Resort" 14 years in a row, Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa is on one on Antigua's best and most famous beach, Dickenson Bay. This all-inclusive Antigua resort allows you to savor the sophistication of a fine European Hotel in the Six-Star, all-suite Mediterranean Village. - Blue Waters and The Cove Suites Antigua Blue Waters is a premium resort situated in extensive tropical gardens with cascading bougainvillea, hibiscus and shady palm trees. The property features two secluded beaches, which makes it one of the Caribbean's best island escapes. A small, intimate property that boasts three restaurants, four bars, a new spa, and seven swimming pools. - Coco's Hotel Coco's is an authentic 3 star Small Oceanfront Resort featuring individual, Caribbean-style wood cottages. There are no TV's in room. Exclusive full table waiter service at all meals, no buffet, afternoon tea served at the beach bar.
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Lifestyles	
Kids	Exploring the forts and Nelson's Dockyards is fun for the kids with plenty of space to run around. The nature trails are a gentle way to introduce children to the nature of the island.
Teens	Stingray City and swimming with dolphins are always popular. The many water sports available from the resorts and beaches around the island will keep even the most active teens busy all week.
Romance	There really are some perfect hotels for romantic vacations... Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa - voted "World's Most Romantic Resort" 14 years in a row. A 27-acre site situated on one of the

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	<p>island's most beautiful beaches, Dickenson Bay. The resort offers hillside villas-by-the-sea at a Six-Star, all-suite Mediterranean Village. At eleven world-class restaurants, a global team of master chefs caters to your every culinary need - in stunning settings that are on-the-beach casual or white-gloved chic.</p> <p>Hermitage Bay - all inclusive, 5-star boutique hotel with twenty seven individual suites set in beautiful tropical gardens on the beach and hillside of a stunning natural bay. Focus on wellness so things like luxurious organic treatments in the Garden Spa and regular yoga, meditation and pilates classes on the spa deck.</p>
<p>Honeymoons & Weddings</p>	<p>Antigua & Barbuda is among the world's top ten destinations for weddings and honeymoons for a combination of two reasons. First all the natural benefits – sunset walks on pink sand beaches....secluded coves.....lush rainforest and spectacular scenery..... a delightful climate.... and naturally warm and hospitable people</p> <p>Secondly it is the fact that Antigua knows how to do things right when it comes to vow renewals, weddings and honeymoons. They have lots of experience of making your special day perfect.</p> <p>Hotels offer various affordable packages from which the bride and groom can choose. The catering, flowers, photography and music – even cake and champagne – will be well taken care of. And, besides the nuptials, couples get a tropical holiday thrown in for good measure with the ultimate in pampering and relaxation.</p> <p>Your wedding venue can be a tropical garden, the courtyard of your hotel, on the beach or out sailing – anything you desire. The honeymoon will be just as unique and you can always come back next year to celebrate your first anniversary or, in the future, renew your vows.</p>
<p>Zoomers</p>	<p>This is an ideal Caribbean destination for Zoomers, blending first class resorts with a vibrant island culture, all available in one stop shopping with two of Canada's leading tour operators.</p>
<p>UNIQUES</p>	<p>Barbuda</p> <p>Activities on Barbuda are appropriately relaxed, including beachcombing (on the northeastern Atlantic coast), fishing and hunting and, at the island's resorts, golf, tennis, snorkeling, diving, or simply soaking up the sun and the calm. Points of interest include the Frigate Bird Sanctuary, the truly noteworthy pink and white sand beaches, and an abundance of shipwrecks and beautiful reefs. Barbuda can be reached easily from Antigua, either by air (a 20-minute flight, twice daily) or by boat (in three hours). The island is home to the luxurious K-Club, Coco Point Lodge and Hotel Palmetto resorts, as well as to a number of other hotels and comfortable guest houses.</p>

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<p>Surprising</p>	<p>Betty's Hope Sugar Plantation Betty's Hope was the first large sugar plantation on Antigua, and its success led to the island's rapid development of large-scale sugar production. Although the only surviving structures are two stone sugar mills and the remains of the stillhouse, the site's importance in Antiguan history has prompted the government to begin developing it as an open air museum. About a hundred stone windmill towers dot the Antiguan landscape, and the two restored examples at Betty's Hope provide a dramatic sense of the way these mills must have dominated the island during the hundreds of years that sugar production was the dominant industry. Betty's Hope was built by Sir Christopher Codrington, who came to Antigua in 1674 from Barbados, and was named for his daughter</p>
<p>History</p>	<p>Antigua's history of habitation extends as far back as two and a half millenia before Christ. The first settlements, dating from about 2400 B.C., were those of the Siboney (an Arawak word meaning "stone-people"), peripatetic Meso-Indians whose beautifully crafted shell and stone tools have been found at dozens of sites around the island. Long after the Siboney had moved on, Antigua was settled by the pastoral, agricultural Arawaks (35-1100 A.D.), who were then displaced by the Caribs--an aggressive people who ranged all over the Caribbean.</p> <p>The earliest European contact with the island was made by Christopher Columbus during his second Caribbean voyage (1493), who sighted the island in passing and named it after Santa Maria la Antigua, the miracle-working saint of Seville. European settlement, however, didn't occur for over a century, largely because of Antigua's dearth of fresh water and abundance of determined Carib resistance. Finally, in 1632, a group of Englishmen from St. Kitts established a successful settlement, and in 1684, with Codrington's arrival, the island entered the sugar era.</p> <p>It was during William's reign, in 1834, that Britain abolished slavery in the empire. Alone among the British Caribbean colonies, Antigua instituted immediate full emancipation rather than a four-year 'apprenticeship,' or waiting period; today, Antigua's Carnival festivities commemorate the earliest abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean.</p> <p>Emancipation actually improved the island's economy, but the sugar industry of the British islands was already beginning to wane. Until the development of tourism in the past few decades, Antiguan's struggled for prosperity. The rise of a strong labour movement in the 1940s, under the leadership of V.C. Bird, provided the impetus for independence. In 1967, with Barbuda and the tiny island of Redonda as dependencies, Antigua became an associated state of the Commonwealth, and in 1981 it</p>

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	achieved full independent status on 1st November which is now celebrated on the island as Independence Day.
Books	Frommer's Caribbean
1000 Places to see before you die	Antigua Sailing Week and Curtain Bluff; K-Club, Barbuda
Must Sees	The friendly Antiguan school children, dressed in their colourful uniforms and the Sunday church services around the island.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	<p>In Antigua and Barbuda – activities have to start with the water! And since before the days of Horatio Nelson Antigua has always been about sailing. From races and regattas to sunset cruises and yacht charters – Antigua has it all.</p> <p>All those beaches and the clear, warm blue waters also make for great watersports! Indulge in Kitesurfing, Jet Skiing, Windsurfing, Kayaking and more. The snorkeling and diving is superb - Antigua and Barbuda are almost completely surrounded by well-preserved coral reefs, walls, and shipwrecks. The southern and eastern coasts of Antigua, and virtually the entire coast of Barbuda, are surrounded by shelves, providing excellent conditions for spectacular shallow diving and snorkeling.</p> <p>The coral encrusted walls and jumbles of boulders create a myriad of hiding places for all types of Caribbean reef fish. Larger marine life such as turtles, stingrays, barracuda, jacks, permit, nurse sharks and morays are regularly seen here too.</p> <p>A short boat ride on calm water will take you to Stingray City. Here you can feed and interact with Southern stingrays in their natural habitat and learn about these amazing animals from your experienced guide. The calm, clear, shallow waters make this easy and fun for everybody.</p> <p>Antigua is also known for fabulous deep sea fishing. Marlin, tuna, kingfish, wahoo, barracuda and even shark are found in the Atlantic fishing grounds of Antigua. Bone, Tarpon and Snook fishing is also available. Choose from a range of engine fishing boats for a half day, three quarter-days or full day charter.</p>
Cricket	<p>Antiguans are more than a little devoted to cricket. The island has historically been a very strong contributor to West Indian and international cricket, and the Antigua Recreation Ground is one of the finest places in the Caribbean to take in a local, regional, or international match. Devotees of the game can visit the Antigua and Barbuda Museum for a look at the infamous cricket bat of Vivian Richards, native Antiguan, former captain of the West Indies Cricket Club, and one of the</p>

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	<p>greatest batsmen of all time. Matches can be found almost anywhere on the island, at almost any time, with the season running from January to July.</p> <p>Antigua has hosted part of the ICC Cricket World Cup in the impressive Sir Vivian Richards Stadium. At a cost of \$54 million, the stadium has a seating capacity of 10,000</p>
Golf	<p>The beauty of Antigua is a wonderful backdrop for golf! There are two golf courses on the Antigua: an 18-hole, 70-par course at the Cedar Valley Golf Club and another at Jolly Harbour.</p>
Fishing	<p>Many anglers visit Antigua just for the big-game fishing offshore, where wahoo, tuna, and marlin abound. The Obsession (tel. 268/464-3174) is a 15m Hatteras Sportfisherman with excellent equipment. You can battle the big ones in a featured "fighting chair." For the day, the Obsession charges from US\$850, a fee that is shared by all the passengers (usually at least nine). A competitor of similar size, the Nimrod (tel. 268/460-1568) is captained by Terry Bowen, who knows where to find the best catches. In addition to fishing charters, you can arrange for the Nimrod to circle the island or go on sunset cruises. A full around-the-island tour costs US\$1,300, with a half-day going for US\$775. This price is usually divided among at least 10 passengers. The best deep-sea fishing charter is Overdraft (tel. 268/464-4954; www.antiguafishing.com), a large 12m fiberglass boat that goes in hunt of dolphin (the fish), shark, barracuda, wahoo, and other creatures of the deep. Captain Frank Hart knows his fishing grounds. Up to six fishermen are accommodated at one time; a 4-hour charter costs US\$495, and an 8-hour charter goes for US\$790.</p>
Riding	<p>There are several horse riding stables in Antigua</p>
Hiking	<p>The best hiking tours in Antigua are given by Tropikelly Trails (tel. 268/461-0383). The trail leads from the hamlet of Wallens Estate, in the tropical rainforest on the south side of Antigua, and climbs to the top of Signal Hill. Most of the popular hikes lead to one or another of the island's many hilltop fortifications: Fort George sits atop Monk's Hill, and Fort Barrington (captured by the French in 1666) is on the promontory at Deep Bay. The Historical and Archaeological Soc frequently arranges group hikes.</p>
Cycling	<p>Take a sunset bicycle ride to Darkwood Beach - Bike Plus top offers Mountain Bikes for rent.</p>
Adventure Tours	<p>Eco-tourism is all the rage. The best and most thrilling eco-adventure in Antigua is the Rainforest Canopy Tour, headquartered at Fig Tree Drive in Wallings (www.antiguarainforest.com). Think Tarzan in a harness in a high-altitude, vertigo-challenged transit on an interconnected series of twin cables high above the island's treetops. The tour is recommended only for the physically fit and those with no</p>

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	<p>undue fear of heights. The shortest of the nine cables stretches for 91m, the longest 107m above a gorge. Four options range in price from \$30 to \$110, timed at 30 minutes to 2 hours. The most popular costs \$80, lasting 90 minutes. At the end, you have to climb 170 steps to your original point of departure. Daily departures are at 9am, 11am, 1pm, and 3pm; call for a reservation.</p> <p>In a less daunting adventure, you can take an Antigua Adventures tour (tel. 268/726-6355). The cost is \$90 per person. The tour takes you around the lush island in air-conditioned comfort, visiting a sugar mill, national parks, Nelson's Dockyard, Falmouth Harbour, and Shirley Heights, among other attractions.</p>
Watersports	<p>Antigua celebrates the Antigua Sailing Week in April – it's one of the top regattas in the world. Six days of challenging racing run and plenty of full social activities. Held under the auspices of the Antigua Hotels and Tourist Association.</p> <p>www.sailingweek.com</p> <p>Parasailing is gaining popularity on Antigua. Facilities are available during the day, Monday to Saturday, on the beach at Dickenson Bay.</p> <p>Windsurfing: most of the major resorts along the beach rent windsurfing equipment. The best outfitters are Sea Sports (tel. 268/462-3355) at Dickenson Bay.</p>
Diving	<p>The Antigua Scuba Center is friendly little dive centre operating out of English Harbour on the beautiful south coast of Antigua. Antigua's south coast is quite rugged: rocky cliffs plunge straight down into the ocean and that means....There's great diving with drop offs and mini walls galore. The favourable underwater landscape is only the beginning: the coral encrusted walls and jumbles of boulders you will see create a myriad of hiding places for all types of Caribbean reef fish which congregate in numbers. Larger marine life such as turtles, stingrays, barracuda, jacks, permit, nurse sharks and morays are regularly seen here. South Antigua's abundant marine life is truly one of the diving world's little surprises</p> <p>Antigua's Indigo Divers operates 7 days a week offering guided diving tours and scuba</p>

CULTURE	
Arts	<p>Harmony Hall, in Brown's Bay at Nonsuch Bay, is the center of the Antiguan arts community. Exhibits change throughout the year, but the annual highlights are the Antigua Artist's Exhibition and the Craft Fair, both in November. The sugar mill tower around which Harmony Hall is built has been converted to a bar and provides its patrons with one of the island's best panoramic views, including a fine prospect of Nonsuch Bay.</p>
Music	<p>There are several different musical forms featured during Carnival. Calypso, the oldest, has its roots in slavery; a common explanation of its</p>

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	<p>origins is that it began as a way for slaves, who were forbidden to speak in the fields, to communicate with each other. It is a polyglot, improvisational form that depends largely upon the skill of a soloist, (the calypsonian) who weaves the sounds of many cultures into a lyrical whole. Calypso competitions have long been a highlight of Carnival.</p> <p>Steel drum music was created when the bamboo percussion instruments traditionally used to back up calypso were replaced by hammered steel pans cut from oil drums. Whereas there is no dispute that the steel pan was developed in Trinidad, the indigenous development of the steel band in Antigua and Barbuda was an outgrowth of the iron bands which were prominent at Christmas time. Steel drum music has been an important part of Carnival since that time, and Antigua is home to many of the Caribbean's finest steel bands.</p> <p>Soca is a musical form that grafts the slower beat of American soul music to the upbeat tempos of calypso. Soca began in the 1970s, and by the middle of the 1980s it had become an integral feature of Carnival. Another musical form popular on Antigua is reggae. Although it originated in Jamaica, reggae has been incorporated into the Antiguan music scene for years.</p>
<p>Museums</p>	<p>Museum of Antigua and Barbuda This charming museum tells the story of Antigua and Barbuda from its geological birth through the present day. A cool oasis in the middle of St. John's, the museum contains a wide variety of fascinating objects and exhibits, ranging from a life-size replica of an Arawak dwelling to the bat of Viv Richards, one of the greatest cricket players of all time.</p>
<p>Festivals</p>	<p>Antigua Carnival: July/August Carnival is a ten-day festival of colorful costumes, beauty pageants, talent shows, and especially good music. The festivities, which celebrate emancipation, are exciting and extensive, ranging from the Party Monarch and Calypso Monarch competitions of Calypsonians, the Panorama steel band competition, and the spectacular Parade of Bands to the Miss Antigua Pageant and the Caribbean Queen's Competition. In addition to these major events, the nonstop revelry of this eleven-day carnival includes innumerable smaller festivities, including local concerts, food fairs, parades, and cultural shows.</p> <p>Barbuda Carnival is at the end of May and beginning of June. A Seafood and Fishing Festival is held in September each year.</p>

<p>ATTRACTIONS</p>	
<p>Beaches</p>	<p>There are 365 beaches on Antigua, one for each day of the year. The great majority rest inside the calm, protected waters of the island's Caribbean side. All are open to the public, and so the challenge posed to</p>

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	<p>a visitor is not how to gain access to the best of them but simply how to locate the beach that suits one's taste. Exploring on your own is the best way to do this, although it is wise to bring a companion along to particularly isolated locations. Antiguans are understandably reluctant to divulge their own favorites, so here are a number of good starters. Be sure to acquire specific directions before you go.</p> <p>Northwest Coast: Dickenson Bay and Runaway Bay, located along the island's developed northwestern coast, are the place to go for those who want the fully-loaded resort beach experience. The beaches most convenient to St. John's are Fort James, a locally-popular public beach, and Deep Bay. Galley Bay attracts surfers during the winter months and a joggers during the evening. The series of four crescent beaches at Hawksbill are also highly regarded, one of which is nudist.</p> <p>Southwest and South Coast: The beaches of the hilly southwest corner of Antigua are generally less developed than those around St. John's further north. On the road that winds along this coast are Fryes Bay, Darkwood Beach, and the beaches around Johnsons Point. Rendezvous Bay and especially Doigs Beach, both located on the central southern coast at Rendezvous Bay, are especially quiet beaches worth the rough travel necessary to reach them. Pigeon Point, near English Harbour Town, is a convenient balm after a day at Nelson's Dockyard.</p> <p>East Coast: On the southeast corner of the island is Half Moon Bay, now a National Park and a good choice for a family outing. Long Bay, on the easternmost point of the island, is another good choice for families, as it is completely protected by its reef.</p> <p>On Barbuda: Barbuda's smooth coastline is edged with long pink and white sand beaches protected by barrier reefs. In fact, the pristine pink beaches of the southwestern shore stretch as far as ten miles without interruption. The beaches of the island's eastern shore, facing the Atlantic, are somewhat rougher, although they are outstanding for beachcombing.</p>
<p>Wildlife</p>	<p>In Antigua and Barbuda there are lots of opportunities to enjoy unspoiled nature. And perhaps the most famous example of that is the Frigate Bird Sanctuary in Barbuda. Accessible only by boat, it is the largest bird sanctuary in the Caribbean. The sanctuary is home to over 5,000 frigate birds but the reserve also attracts about 150 other species of birds such as herons, cormorants, and pelicans. The yellow Barbuda Warbler is known locally as the Christmas Bird and is the only one of its kind in the world.</p> <p>Along the rugged northeast coast of Antigua, the dramatic scenery of</p>

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	<p>Indian Town National Park features some rewarding hikes and excellent birding. More than 36 bird species roost in the park among the acacia trees, while the eastern point of the park is believed to have been an Arawak campsite.</p> <p>The park also encompasses the natural limestone Devil's Bridge - a beautiful seaside geological formation sculpted over the centuries by the pounding surf. At high tide, waves force geysers of water through blowholes in the nearby rock.</p> <p>The unspoiled nature in Antigua and Barbuda lends itself to many eco adventures. For instance, take an Island Safari jeep tour which takes you off-road through the lush and rugged heights of Body Pond.</p> <p>Or lace up your hiking boots and take an off-road trail or head for the hills of the lush rainforest on the south-west coast of Antigua. To get your adrenaline pumping you can conquer the expansive and expertly designed zip line and rope challenge course of the Antigua Rainforest Company.</p> <p>And one last way to see the beautiful nature of Antigua and Barbuda is on a spectacular helicopter tour. Experience the breath-taking vistas as you soar above the stunning landscape. Whether you circle Antigua on a guided tour, take a trip to untamed Barbuda or look into the eye of Montserrat's volcano, a helicopter ride is guaranteed to be a highlight of your holiday.</p> <p>Enchanting 'Stingray City' Antigua, fringed and protected by its own reef is where the delightfully calm, crystal-clear waters make possible an actual swim with the rays. The unbeatable scenery and pristine coral reef encircling the area enhance this amazing experience, second to none in the world.</p>
<p>Parks</p>	<p>Nelson's Dockyard Although St. John's has long been Antigua's capital city, the island's historic heart is across the island at English Harbour. One of the finest natural harbours in the Caribbean, and located at a highly strategic position, English Harbour was used by Admirals Nelson, Rodney and Hood as a secure home for the British Navy during the Napoleonic wars. Today, Nelson's Dockyard forms part of a designated national park, complete with a museum, shops, hotels, restaurants and a yacht haven. The park embraces the whole of English Harbour and Shirley Heights.</p> <p>Indian Town National Park Indian Town Point, on the eastern extremity of the island, is thought to have been an Arawak campsite prior to the arrival of European colonists.</p>

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	<p>Devil's Bridge, a large, natural limestone arch on the shoreline of Indian Town Point, offers one of the most spectacular sights on the island. At high tide, the rougher waves of the Atlantic force enormous geysers of water through boreholes in the rocks near the bridge. Guided tours of the site are available.</p>
<p>Gardens</p>	<p>Contact Caribrep for a floral garden tour of Antigua.</p>
<p>Historical Sites</p>	<p>When you think about the history and culture of Antigua and Barbuda, you have to begin with St John's, which is now the capital and cruise ship port of the nation. Looming above the skyline of St John's are the white neo-Baroque towers of St. John's Cathedral. Built in 1845, the church is now in its third incarnation, as earthquakes in 1683 and in 1745 destroyed the previous structures.</p> <p>For an overview of the island's history, a good place to start is the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda in the 18th century former Court House in St John's. This charming museum tells the story of Antigua and Barbuda from its geological birth through the present day. A cool oasis in the middle of St. John's, the museum contains a wide variety of fascinating objects and exhibits, ranging from a life-size replica of an Arawak dwelling to the bat of Viv Richards, one of the greatest cricket players of all time.</p> <p>As early as the 18th century Antigua was an important part of trade route between Europe and the Americas. Fort James and Fort Barrington were built during this period to protect the city from the French. English Harbour, one of the finest natural harbours in the Caribbean, and located at a highly strategic position, was used by Admirals Nelson, Rodney and Hood as a secure home for the British Navy during the Napoleonic wars.</p> <p>Today, Nelson's Dockyard at English Harbour forms part of a designated national park. The restored marina with beautiful old stone warehouses encompasses hotels, restaurants, shops, galleries, and museums. Both the Admiral's House Museum and Dockyard Museum trace the site's history from the 17th century to the present.</p> <p>Shirley Heights affords a quite stunning view of English Harbour. This rambling array of gun emplacements and military buildings is best known today for absolutely breathtaking views. From the Heights one can look far out over English Harbour, and on Sunday afternoons the view is accompanied by barbecue, rum punch, and the strains of steel band and reggae music.</p> <p>As well as its strategic naval position, the British were drawn to Antigua and Barbuda to establish sugar plantations. Sir Christopher Codrington</p>

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	<p>started the first large sugar plantation and he called it Betty's Hope after his daughter. Although the only surviving structures are two stone sugar mills and the remains of the stillhouse, the site's importance in Antiguan history has prompted the government to develop it as an open air museum.</p> <p>About a hundred stone windmill towers dot the Antiguan landscape, and the two restored examples at Betty's Hope provide a dramatic sense of the way these mills must have dominated the island during the hundreds of years that sugar production was the dominant industry.</p>
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OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	<p>Shopping in Antigua is a uniquely Caribbean experience. The capital city, St. John's, is the Mecca with two duty free shopping areas, vendor's malls and markets with local handiwork and stores carrying clothing, accessories and household items.</p> <p>The Arts & Crafts Market is a delightful and colourful gathering of local artists actively working in their small shops and producing 100 percent Antiguan products. Some items are actually made on the spot for you to see – natural vegetable based soaps; artwork done with fish scales and sea shells; leather craft, old-time straw hats as well as items made of canvas and other natural fabrics. You can even have a local dress made for you while you wait!</p> <p>On Friday and Saturday mornings, be sure to visit the vibrant farmers market in St John's. Folk crafts, colorful tropical fruits, and a buzzing crowd make for a lively morning.</p> <p>Sea View Farm Village is a great experience. Antiguan folk pottery dates back at least to the early 18th century, when slaves fashioned cooking vessels from local clay. Today, folk pottery is fashioned in a number of places around Antigua, but the centre of this cottage industry is Sea View Farm Village.</p> <p>Souvenirs from your Antiguan holiday could include local pottery, a bottle of locally aged Antiguan rum or some local fiery and spicy pepper sauce. Also stock up on guava jelly and pineapple jam for souvenir gifts.</p>
Markets	<p>The most colorful sight of St. John's is the Saturday morning market, when many islanders come into the capital to hawk everything from birds and luscious fruits to beautiful flowers and handicrafts. The sights, sounds, and smells of Antigua are at their photographic best here from</p>

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	<p>8am to noon. However, don't snap a picture of any market person without asking permission first. Most of them will want you to tip them for the privilege of photographing them. The public market lies on Market Street at the southern end of St. John's, at the point where it intersects with All Saints and Valley roads</p>
<p>Nightlife</p>	<p>Antigua has some of the best steel bands in the Caribbean. Most nightlife revolves around the hotels. If you want to roam Antigua at night looking for that hot local club, arrange to have a taxi pick you up. Steel bands, limbo dancers, calypso singers, folkloric groups -- there's always something happening by night on Antigua. Your hotel can probably tell you where to go on any given night. The following clubs are reliable hot spots.</p> <p>The best place to be on island on Sunday afternoon is the bar and restaurant at the Shirley Heights Lookout at Shirley Heights. Beginning at 4pm, a barbecue is offered here, followed by a reggae and steel-pan band for dancing later in the evening. Celebrities such as Chuck Norris, R&B singer Bobbie Brown and Sting have joined in a weekly be-in that sometimes evolves into the island's largest and most free-form social event. Many locals arrive on any late afternoon, grab a sundowner, and head for the patio in the rear for a sweeping view over the arid landscapes surrounding English Harbour and Antigua's most spectacular sunset. Sunday's \$5.60 cover charge includes the first drink.</p> <p>Antigua's hippest nighttime venue is The Coast, Heritage Quay, St. John's, drawing both islanders and visitors to its precincts where they are entertained by Antiguan live bands, especially techno music, in a raucous setting of good times with plenty of drink and local specialties. No admission is charged.</p> <p>Another venue is Rush Nightclub & Connors Sports Bar, Runaway Bay, open Thursday to Saturday. Doors open nightly and the cover is \$3.70 on Thursday and Saturday, rising to \$9.30 on Friday. Resident DJs entertain the mostly young crowd with hip hop, soca, reggae, and R&B music.</p> <p>At English Harbour, the joint is always rocking at Abacadabra Restaurant & Disco-Bar, Nelson's Dockyard www.theabacadabra.com Trattoria such as homemade pastas and fresh seafood, even lobster from an aquarium, launch the night, which becomes a dance party as the evening progresses. There's always something happening here: live jazz, reggae performances, even costume parties.</p>
<p>Casinos</p>	<p>The best and most elaborate gambling joint on island is Grand Princess Casino, Jolly Harbour , spread across three floors, offering a lot more</p>

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	<p>than gambling. You can dine in the first-class Bellagio Restaurant, patronize an Internet cafe, get down in a dance club, enjoy flashy Las Vegas entertainment in a lounge, or even work out at the rooftop fitness center. A small but flamboyant alternative is the St. James's Club at Mamora Bay. Other action is found at King's Casino on Heritage Quay, the only casino in St. John's proper. Entrance is free and no ID is required. You must be 18 to play.</p>
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CUISINE	
Food	<p>The specialty dish of Antigua cuisine is known simply as: goat water. Don't be steered away by the name -- this native dish is mouth-watering. A spicy stew seasoned with hot peppers, cloves and cinnamon, it is known to have people coming back for more. Most every restaurant or roadside stand serving goat water prides itself on their own special recipe. The stews vary, but all are invariably hearty and full of flavor. And, as it is a local staple, is always reasonably priced.</p> <p>Also Antiguans are especially proud of their national dish, known as 'fungi and pepperpot', it is a thick vegetable stew. West Indian zest melds with international fare to create a mélange of tastes for every palate. Dining in Antigua is about being relaxed. Take in the harbor view before a breakfast of extra-sweet Antigua black pineapple.</p> <p>And don't neglect to make time for a traditional high-tea.</p>
Drinks	<p>Rum production in Antigua today has come a long way since the era when the first rums produced were concocted by individuals making home brews from molasses. In the 1950s, Antigua's very own Cavalier produced its first rum; a full-bodied aged rum called Cavalier Muscovado Rum. In the 1960s Cavalier Antigua Rum, a lighter-bodied rum, was born. Today, Cavalier is a staple in most rum-punches and rum-based cocktails served around the island. It's a great gift idea to take home from a vacation in Antigua and Barbuda. For something a bit less potent, the island also brews its own ice cold beer, Wadadli. The brewery's flagship product is a pale lager named after the Antigua word for beer. Order an Antiguan Smile (a delectable punch made from rum, crème de banana and pineapple juice).</p> <p>Visit the street vendor at the corner of St. Mary's and Market Streets in St. John's for ultra-sweet Antiguan Black pineapple. He'll cut it in chunks and put it in a plastic bag, so you can quench your thirst and appetite while strolling around.</p>
Restaurants	<p>Some favorite island restaurants are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Hemingway's Caribbean Cafe, opposite the cruise ship pier, is ideally situated in St. John's center. Try the terrific flying fish sandwiches

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	<p>and conch salad.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Home uses only the freshest ingredients to create authentic West Indian dishes that include local fish, fruit and vegetables, plus herbs from their own garden. · Julian's Alfresco on Runaway Bay offers a fine fusion of flavors, from Thai to Cajun, set amidst lush, tropical gardens. · Le Bistro in Hodges Bay is exceptional by any standards, mixing French chic with Caribbean zesty flavors. <p>George in St John's: Antiguan hospitality, a finely honed cuisine, and a laid-back atmosphere cause a never-ending stream of foodies to head to the home of owner Philip George-John. In his restored Georgian family manse, the host will feed you well and show you a good time. Many of the daily specials are based on long-standing Antiguan recipes. The ingredients are fresh, and everything is prepared with loving care. The best time to go for an authentic experience is on Saturday, when island specialties are served, including "goat water," souse, "conch water," and pepperpot stew. To finish off, try the creamy rice pudding. Antiguans take their ribs seriously and George-John prepares the best on island. The ribs are slow roasted with a caramelized passion-fruit and pineapple glaze.</p>
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MORE INFO	
Brochures	<p>Antigua and Barbuda Department of Tourism & Trade 60 St. Claire Avenue East, Suite 304, Toronto, Ontario M4T 1N5 Tel: 416-961-3085</p>
Online	<p>Website: www.visitantiguabarbuda.com Email: info@antigua-barbuda-ca.com Connect with Antigua and Barbuda on facebook: https://www.facebook.com/AntiguaBarbuda Follow Antigua and Barbuda on Twitter: https://twitter.com/antiguabarbuda</p>
Travel Show Magic Moment	<p>This is a Travel Show magic moment on Antigua from one of my many visits to the island: <i>"It is Sunday morning in the bustling Caribbean capital town of St John's and I have joined the colourful and jovial throng of local Antiguans who are heading to church in all their Sunday-best finery. As we walk the streets, the vibrant island culture is almost tangible and stalls of local exotic fruits and strange-looking tropical fish add a further unique and pungent sense to the experience. Ahead of our group soars the striking twin white towers of St. John's Cathedral which was built in the early years of Queen Victoria's reign. These are a warm and embracing people. As we climb the steps to the Cathedral, conversation comes easily, even though I am a stranger and obviously a visitor. I am welcomed into their midst like a long-lost relative and I am swept into the</i></p>

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	<i>church in a jolly gaggle of young and old, men, women and children of the island. I no longer feel just like a tourist. I feel as if I belong..."</i>
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