Antigua and Barbuda

Location

Antigua and Barbuda is located in the Caribbean Sea, about seventeen degrees north of the equator. It is in the middle of the Leeward Islands, bordered on the north and west by St. Martin, St. Barts, St. Kitts, and Nevis, to the south by Montserrat and Guadaloupe, and to the east by the Atlantic Ocean. Antigua and Barbuda is made up of three islands: Antigua, Barbuda, and Redonda. Antigua is the largest of the three and is fourteen miles long and eleven miles wide – 108 square miles. Barbuda is thirty miles north of Antigua and is 68 square miles in area. Redonda lies to the southwest of Antigua and is only 0.6 square miles.

Geography

The island of Antigua’s lowest point is sea level and its highest point is Boggy Peak at 1,319 feet, most likely formed from volcanic activity. Barbuda is a flat coral island that houses a frigate bird sanctuary. It also has deer, guinea fowl, pigeons, and wild pigs. Both Antigua and Barbuda islands have many beaches with pink or white sand that receive protection by coral reefs. Redonda is an uninhabited rocky islet used as a nature sanctuary. The capital and largest city of Antigua and Barbuda is St. John’s, located on the island of Antigua.

Climate

Due to its existence in the Leeward Islands, the country experiences constant northeast trade winds that lessen only in September. There is low humidity year-round and an average annual rainfall of 45 inches. In the winter, the temperature is in the mid-seventies and in the summer in the mid-eighties. It can be classified as a tropical maritime climate.
History

Antigua and Barbuda was first inhabited by the Siboney as early as 2400 BC. The Arawaks, who traveled north from Venezuela, replaced them around 35 A.D. The Arawaks named Antigua Wadadli, meaning land of oil, mostly likely in reference to the oil from the eucalyptus trees. These were the people who brought agriculture to Antigua and Barbuda and raised crops such as corn, sweet potatoes, chilies, guava, tobacco, cotton, and the famous “Black” pineapple. By 1100 A.D. most of the Arawaks were replaced by the fierce Caribs, who conquered much of the Caribbean.

Christopher Columbus discovered Antigua in 1493 and named it after the Santa Maria la Antigua church in Spain. The island was left to the natives until 1632 when the English came from St. Kitts to establish a settlement. The French ruled briefly in 1666. In 1674, Sir Christopher Codrington came to Antigua to see if it could be used as a sugar cane plantation, like other islands in the Caribbean. The first operation was set up in 1684 and flourished. Barbuda was used to supply food for the plantations’ slaves and overseers and was home to the Codrington estate. Horatio Nelson came in 1784 to develop British naval facilities at English Harbor on Antigua. It remains an important entry point to the Caribbean to this day.

Slavery was abolished in 1834. The islands became independent on November 1, 1981 with Elizabeth II ruling as Queen of Antigua and Barbuda and first prime minister Vere Cornwall Bird, for whom the airport is now named. Antigua and Barbuda is the 157th member of the United Nations.

Important Dates

Antigua and Barbuda have several public holidays including: New Years Day (January 1), Good Friday (date changes every year), Easter Monday (date changes
every year), Labor Day (May 4), Whit Monday (June 1), J’Ouvert Morning (August 3),
Last Lap (August 4), Independence Day (November 1, but can be recognized on a
different day if it falls on the weekend), National Heroes Day (December 9), Christmas
Day (December 25), and Boxing Day (December 26).

Population

Antigua and Barbuda has a population of 84,091 people and an annual growth
rate of 1.3%. The median age is about 30 years. The infant mortality rate is seventeen
deaths per 1,000 live births. The life expectancy at birth is 74 years. About 91% of the
population is black or mulatto, 4.4% mixed, 1.7% white, and 2.9% other.

Currency

The Eastern Caribbean dollar is used in Antigua and Barbuda. It is represented
by the $ and the code XCD or EC$. It is similar to the United States dollar in coin
denominations. The $1 is used in the form of a coin and not as paper money. There are
bank notes for 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 dollars. The exchange rate has been fixed since
1976 with the U.S. dollar at US$1 = EC$2.7.

Education

The literacy rate in Antigua and Barbuda is over 90%. There is a government-
owned state college and several other colleges and universities, along with some
international schools. A national mandate was established in 1998 to make Antigua and
Barbuda the best provider of medical services in the Caribbean. There are now two
medical schools, the American University of Antigua (AUA) and The University of Health
Sciences Antigua (UHSA).

Language
English is the official language. There are some local dialects, the major one being Antiguan Creole. This dialect mixes its British and African origins and is spoken by the lower socioeconomic classes. Some Spanish is spoken in the areas that have high immigration from the Dominican Republic.

**Religion**

There are a variety of religions, the most popular being Anglican with about 25.7% of the population. The rest is broken down as follows: Seventh Day Adventist 12.3%, Pentecostal 10.6%, Moravian 10.5%, Roman Catholic 10.4%, Methodist 7.9%, Baptist 4.9%, and Church of God 4.5%. Other Christian religions make up 5.4%, other religions 2%, and no religion 5.8%. There is no religious persecution and religion is a freedom guaranteed in the Constitution.

**Agriculture**

Agriculture only makes up 3.8% of the GDP. This is because of the limited freshwater supply and most of the labor force being drawn to tourism. Most of the agricultural production is for domestic consumption. Some crops produced are cotton, bananas, coconuts, cucumbers, mangoes, and sugarcane. There is some livestock production.

**Trade**

Antigua and Barbuda export petroleum products, bedding, handicrafts, electronic components, transport equipment, food, and live animals. It imports food, live animals, machinery, transport equipment, manufactures, chemicals, and oil. In 2005, 48.9% of its imports came from the United States and 7.7% of its exports went to the United States. Antigua and Barbuda is part of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative so it can export to the
United States duty-free. It is also a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

**Food**

Most of the food is standard Caribbean items. The tourism industry has prompted many restaurants to open and offer more of an international cuisine. One of the more popular and distinctively Antiguan dishes is Dukuna. Made from grated sweet potatoes (the white kind, not the U.S. version of the sweet potato), flour, and spices, it is a sweet, steamed dumpling. A staple food is fungi, a cooked paste made with cornmeal and water.

**Landmarks**

There are several interesting locations to visit while in Antigua and Barbuda. English Harbor has a great history of being a leader in the maritime enterprises of the British. Nelson’s Dockyard, named after Horatio Nelson, has been restored and is the only Georgian dockyard in the world. Nearby English Harbor is Shirley Heights, an old military lookout point. Sea View Farm Village offers a chance to revisit the early 18th century and the folk pottery made by slaves. There is Harmony Hall Art Gallery and the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda to visit as well.

**Sports**

Much of the culture of Antigua and Barbuda is British and the sports are no exception. The national sport is cricket and it is very prevalent. The 2007 World Cricket Cup was played in the West Indies and eight matches were held at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in St. John’s. Soccer (called football on the islands) is another common sport. Athleticism is accepted overall and many famous athletes have come from or
represented Antigua and Barbuda. On the Olympic stage, most compete in the track and field events. Sailing, diving, and other water sports are popular too.

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