

NORTH AMERICA · BEACHES · ISLANDS · HISTORY



# Antigua and Barbuda

Antigua's tourist board counts 365 beaches, and the coastline makes the claim feel plausible, but the island also holds the Caribbean's best-preserved Georgian naval dockyard at English Harbour. Barbuda, its flat, quiet sister island, adds pink-tinged sands and one of the world's largest frigatebird colonies. Come between December and April for dry weather and calm seas.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Antigua and Barbuda and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 13 March 2026.

|                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  CAPITAL<br>St. John's                     |  CURRENCY<br>East Caribbean dollar (XCD)<br>£1 ≈ EC\$3.61 |  LANGUAGE<br>English, Antiguan Creole                     |  BEST TIME<br>Dec–Apr                |
|  DAILY BUDGET<br>£75–£380<br>£££ Expensive |  PLUGS<br>Type A, B<br>230V · adapter needed              |  FLIGHT FROM LONDON<br>8h 50m direct<br>~£480–£950 return |  TIME ZONE<br>UTC-4<br>standard time |

Antigua is a low, dry island about 20 km across, ringed by reef-sheltered bays on the Caribbean side and wilder Atlantic beaches to the east. Most first trips split time between a beach base on the west coast — Dickenson Bay, Jolly Harbour or the coves around Valley Church — and the historic south, where English Harbour, Nelson's Dockyard and Shirley Heights fill a full day. Barbuda, about 45 km north, is a separate world: a single village, Codrington, a huge lagoon and empty beaches, best seen on a day trip by ferry or as a two-night escape.

Antigua is not a cheap island. Much of the accommodation is in all-inclusive resorts, and independent travellers pay for that through high room rates and restaurant prices on a par with London's. Hiring a car or using the cheap minibuses gives you freedom the resort crowd misses: the Sunday sunset party at Shirley Heights, a rum punch at a beach shack, Saturday morning at the St John's market. Winter brings cruise ships, sometimes several at once, so check the port schedule before planning a day in town. All beaches are public by law, which surprises visitors used to private resort strands elsewhere.

## Top 5 highlights

1

HISTORY

Nelson's Dockyard

Horatio Nelson served here in the 1780s, and the restored Georgian dockyard at English Harbour, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2016, still works as a marina. Wander the stone storehouses, the small museum and the pillars of the old boat house.

2

HISTORY

Shirley Heights

This restored lookout and gun battery above English Harbour gives the island's classic view across the dockyard and Falmouth Harbour. On Sunday evenings a steel band and reggae sound system draw a crowd for sunset and a barbecue.

3

## BEACH

**Half Moon Bay**

A crescent of pale sand on the Atlantic coast, usually far quieter than the west-coast resort beaches. Swimming is calmest behind the reef, while the open stretch can turn rough when the trade winds blow hard.

4

## WILDLIFE

**Barbuda's Frigate Bird Sanctuary**

Boats cross Codrington Lagoon to one of the world's largest colonies of magnificent frigatebirds, where males inflate scarlet throat pouches during the winter courtship season. Combine it with Barbuda's long, empty, pink-tinged beaches.

5

## NATURE

**Devil's Bridge**

A natural limestone arch on Antigua's eastern edge, where Atlantic rollers have hollowed the rock and blowholes spray on rough days. It is a short stop, but the wild coast around Indian Town Point feels very different from the calm west.

**Biggest cities**

## LARGEST CITY

**St. John's**

≈ 22,000 people

The capital's cruise pier, Heritage Quay and twin-towered St John's Cathedral fill a morning; the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda, in the 1750 courthouse, explains the island's sugar and slavery history.

## 2ND LARGEST CITY

**All Saints**

≈ 3,800 people

Antigua's largest village sits inland on the road to English Harbour. It is a working community of shops and churches rather than a sight, though you will pass through it heading south.

## 3RD LARGEST CITY

**Bolans**

≈ 2,100 people

A village on the south-west coast road close to Jolly Harbour, with Ffryes and Darkwood beaches just south; useful for supplies if you are staying on this side of the island.

St John's is the only town; the next-largest settlements are villages of 2,000–4,000 people (2011 census).

**When to go to Antigua and Barbuda**

Best time: **Dec–Apr.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

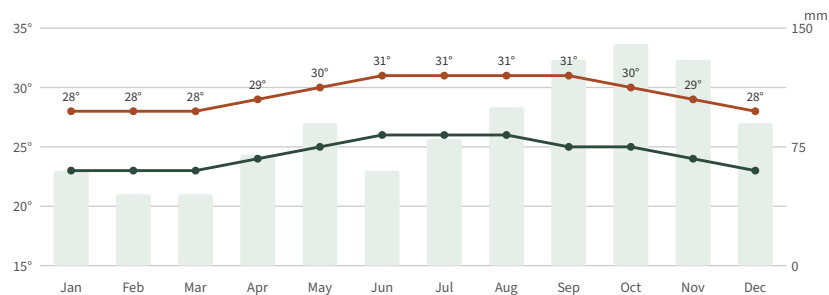
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

**Average climate in St. John's**

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



# Festivals & events

|         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Apr–May | <b>Antigua Sailing Week</b><br>One of the Caribbean's biggest regattas, based at English Harbour and Falmouth Harbour in late April or early May, with racing by day and parties ashore by night.                                   |
| Apr     | <b>Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta</b><br>Schooners, tall ships and vintage wooden yachts race off English Harbour each April, and the Concours d'Elegance in Nelson's Dockyard lets you admire them up close.                        |
| Jul–Aug | <b>Antigua Carnival</b><br>Calypso and soca contests, pageants and costumed bands fill late July, climaxing with J'ouvert on the first Monday of August, when bands parade through St John's from before dawn to mark emancipation. |

## How much does Antigua and Barbuda cost?

|                                                                                          |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SHOESTRING<br><b>£75</b><br>per person / day<br>≈ EC\$271<br>hostels, street food, buses | MID-RANGE<br><b>£170</b><br>per person / day<br>≈ EC\$613<br>3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis | COMFORTABLE<br><b>£380</b><br>per person / day<br>≈ EC\$1,371<br>4-star+, guided trips, private transfers |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

## Food to try

### Fungee and pepperpot

The national dish: fungee is cornmeal stirred with okra into a firm, polenta-like ball, served with pepperpot, a thick stew of salted meat, greens and vegetables.

### Ducana and saltfish

Grated sweet potato and coconut, spiced and boiled in a banana leaf, served with saltfish and chop-up, a mash of aubergine, okra and greens.

### Antigua black pineapple

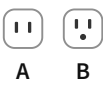
A small, intensely sweet pineapple grown on the island's south-west slopes; it even appears on the national coat of arms.

## Getting around

Privately run minibuses leave St John's from the West Bus Station (for the south and west) and the East Bus Station (for the east); they are cheap and stop on request, but thin out in the evening and on Sundays. Taxis use government-set fares, so confirm the price first. Car hire needs a temporary local permit, arranged by the rental firm; drive on the left. The Barbuda Express catamaran, run by Sea Bridge Ferries, takes about 90 minutes.

## Practical information

### PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-A/B adapter

### DIALLING CODE

+1-268

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **999** or **911** (ambulance, fire, police)

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

### TIME ZONE

UTC-4 (standard time)

#### TAP WATER

Varies — bottled or filtered is safer

#### DRIVING

On the left

#### TIPPING

A 10% service charge is often added to restaurant bills; leave a little extra for good service, and tip taxi drivers and guides around 10%.

#### ETIQUETTE

Dress modestly away from the beach — swimwear in shops, banks or the streets of St John's draws disapproval. Greet people with a 'good morning' or 'good afternoon' before asking anything.

#### MAIN AIRPORTS

V. C. Bird International Airport (ANU), St. John's

## Visas & entry for Antigua and Barbuda

Shown for a British passport.

**No visa needed**

You can visit Antigua and Barbuda without a visa. On entry, you'll be allowed to stay for a maximum period of 90 days.

Visitors must be able to show an onward or return ticket in order to enter the country.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

## Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

#### RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

#### SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue

Bat lyssavirus

#### YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

#### MALARIA

**No malaria risk**

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

## Public holidays in Antigua and Barbuda

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026

Independence Day

Mon 2 Nov 2026

Independence Day (observed)

|                 |                                 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Wed 9 Dec 2026  | Sir Vere Cornwall Bird Snr. Day |
| Fri 25 Dec 2026 | Christmas Day                   |
| Sat 26 Dec 2026 | Boxing Day                      |
| Mon 28 Dec 2026 | Boxing Day (observed)           |
| Fri 1 Jan 2027  | New Year's Day                  |
| Fri 26 Mar 2027 | Good Friday                     |
| Mon 29 Mar 2027 | Easter Monday                   |
| Mon 3 May 2027  | Labour Day                      |
| Mon 17 May 2027 | Whit Monday                     |
| Mon 2 Aug 2027  | Carnival Monday                 |
| Tue 3 Aug 2027  | Carnival Tuesday                |

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

## Know before you go

Hurricane season runs from June to November, peaking in September and October, when many small hotels and restaurants close for several weeks.

Prices are often quoted in US dollars as well as East Caribbean dollars, which are pegged at EC\$2.70 to US\$1 — always ask which currency a price is in.

Book Barbuda through a tour or an arranged local guide: the frigatebird boats, taxis and beach lunches all need organising ahead on an island with few services.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice ([gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](https://gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)) and TravelHealthPro ([travelhealthpro.org.uk](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk)). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.