

Antigua

(Special Caribbean Itineraries)

Encircled by protective reefs and blessed with sheltered anchorage, Antigua (say “an-TEE-ga”) boasts **365 beaches** for sunning, and fair harbors for sailing. Alas that you’ll have but eight hours in port—you’ll have to take in a new beach every minute to see them all (or come back and spend a year visiting a new beach every day!)

Ruined fortresses, old sugar plantations, and modern, beach-front resorts reflect a **rich history and a prosperous present**. With the tourist economy responsible for 75% of the island’s income, you’ll find pleasant shopping opportunities right at the pier, but a jaunt across the island will take you back to the glory days of Britain’s Royal Navy. Whether you stay close to port in St. John’s, or head for historic English Harbour (Nelson’s Dockyard), you’ll find first-rate beaches less than 10 minutes away by taxi. If history isn’t your thing, the island offers a rich selection of water sport-based activities, from sailing and snorkeling to stingray swims.

Although named by Columbus, European settlers didn’t arrive in Antigua until the mid-1600s. The first settlements were those of the Siboney (an Arawak word meaning “stone-people”), who date from about 2400 B.C. After the Siboney came the Arawaks, who were agricultural by nature. The Arawaks were displaced by the Caribs, an aggressive people. The earliest European contact came with Columbus’ second Caribbean voyage in 1493, but European settlements didn’t take root for another century due to the lack of fresh water and the Carib resistance. While the island was home to very prosperous sugar cane plantations, the British Navy prized the island for its **easily protected, safe harbors**. English Harbour was the British Navy’s base of operations in this part of the Caribbean. Captain Horatio Nelson spent several unhappy years here, and many a man-o’-war was overhauled in what’s now called “Nelson’s Dockyard,” naturally hidden from any enemy warship cruising by. With the exception of a brief occupation by the French, the island remained firmly under British rule until 1981, when it achieved full independence.

Size: 14 miles (23 km.) long by 11 miles (18 km.) wide

Climate: Subtropical

Temperatures: 81°F (26°C) to 87°F (30°C)

Population: 68,000

Busy Season: Late December to April

Language: English

Money: E. Carib. Dollar (1 = 37 U.S. cents)

Time Zone: Atlantic (no DST)

Transportation: Walking, taxis, cars

Phones: Dial 1- from U.S., dial 911 for emergencies

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Making the Most of Antigua

GETTING THERE

Your ship docks at **Heritage Quay** (pronounced “key”), in the heart of Antigua’s capital city, St. John’s. This pier, and nearby Redcliffe Quay, are the town’s principal tourist shopping destinations, mixtures of renovated old buildings and fresh construction. If shopping and casino gaming are your only interests, you can do it all right on Heritage Quay. You’ll also find a tourist information booth on the pier, and plenty of taxis awaiting your fare. On the 10-night holiday itinerary, the Magic lists an “all ashore” time at 7:30 am and an all-aboard time at 6:00 pm. The 10-night S. Caribbean itinerary lists an earlier “all aboard” time of 4:30 pm, while the 11-night itinerary shows a later “all aboard” time of 7:30 pm. Your actual “all ashore” and “all aboard” time may differ, particularly if you stop at this port because of bad weather elsewhere.

GETTING AROUND

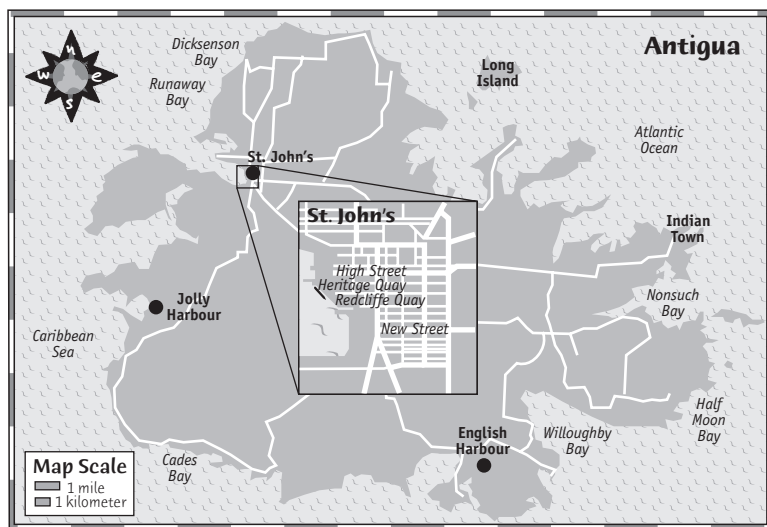
The shops and restaurants at the pier, and Redcliffe Quay, are all within **walking distance** of the pier. Redcliffe Quay is about a 10 minute walk from the ship. • Taxi fares to English Harbor (Nelson’s Dockyard) and many of the most worthwhile beaches will cost more than \$20 for up to four passengers. Rates are set by the government, and drivers are required to carry an official rate card. Be sure to agree on the fare before you hop in. • Antigua is another island where car rentals are not advisable. Antigua’s 60 miles of paved roads are in poor repair, you’ll be driving British-style (on the left), and you must pay \$20 for a local driving permit. If you do decide to drive, please drive with care and note that there are very few road signs—be sure to have a good map handy. • As nearly all points of interest are likely to be visited by shore excursions, excursions remain, as always, your safest bet.

SAFETY

There’s **safety in numbers** on Antigua. With so many remote, unguarded beaches, beach crime is a serious concern. Bring the bare minimum with you if you set off in search of secluded sands. Leave valuables back on the ship and keep your Key to the World card, I.D., cash, and credit cards in a secure location on your person, such as a waterproof case. As always, do not carry large amounts of cash or jewelry. With most decent shopping so close to the pier, you should have no problems getting your packages safely onboard. Vendors near the pier can be pushy about selling their goods or services—a firm “no thank you” will do the trick. As mentioned above, Antiguans drive on the left-hand side of the road—don’t forget this when crossing the street.



Touring Antigua



ANTIGUA MAP

St. John's is hardly the richest of port towns, if you're looking for a walking tour. There are a handful of **historic sites** to visit, including the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda on Long Street, just two blocks north and a few inland from Heritage Quay. In addition to worthwhile historical exhibits, the museum may offer a self-guided walking tour of the town for a nominal price. Other sights include the ornate Anglican Cathedral and the restored buildings on Redcliffe Quay. English Harbour National Park offers greater opportunities for history hounds. About 8 miles southeast of St. John's, this historical park is one of the Caribbean's foremost historical attractions. Restored buildings and anchorages abound, including Nelson's Dockyard, and no fewer than four fortresses set up to guard the mouth of the harbor and command nearby Shirley Heights. The most photographed portion of Nelson's Dockyard is a group of 12 massive columns that used to support a huge boathouse where ships could get their sails and rigging repaired. Nelson's Dockyard is also famous for its English pubs and restaurants. If you'd rather, the park also offers several nature trails. Some visitors liken English Harbour to Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. Detailed information can be found at the Visitor's Center in the Royal Artillery Barracks on Shirley Heights.

WALKING TOURS

ACTIVITIES

Playing in Antigua

The **closest decent beach** to Heritage Quay is Fort Bay, near the northern mouth of the harbor. Runaway Bay and Dickenson Bay are just a little farther north up the coast (about 5 to 10 minutes by taxi), and offer calm, sheltered waters and the civilized niceties that go along with the adjoining beachfront resorts. Half Moon Bay is reputed to be among the island's finest beaches, but it's all the way cross-island from St. John's. If you're visiting English Harbour, Pigeon Beach is nearby (short drive or 20 minute walk).

The only **casino**—Kings Casino—is located moments from the ship, on Heritage Quay. Visit <http://www.kingscasino.com>.

Golfers can play a round at the **Jolly Harbour Golf Club**, an 18-hole championship course. Visitors can play for a daily fee and club rental is available. Visit <http://www.jollyharbourantigua.com/golf.html>.

Scuba, snorkel, and windsurfing are all popular activities, thanks to miles of encircling reefs, and the brisk winds on the Atlantic (eastern) side of the island. Snorkeling is possible at many of Antigua's beaches. Cades Reef is part of a designated off-shore underwater park, and very popular for snorkeling and scuba-diving. The wreck of the *Andes*, a three-masted merchant ship that sank in 1905, is another popular spot. Sailing is also very popular here—the island hosts an annual major regatta.

Looking for a **stingray and/or dolphin experience**? Antigua has those, too. For more information on stingray and dolphin encounters, visit <http://www.dolphindiscovery.com/antigua>.

Devil's Bridge at the northeastern point of the island is an amazing natural arch, created when the soft limestone was eroded away by the seawater. Devil's Bridge is located in Indian Town, one of Antigua's National Parks. Numerous blowholes spouting water surround Indian Town, making for quite a sight.

Cricket is a big sport on Antigua! If this sport interests you, matches can be found on the island at almost any time. For more information, visit <http://www.antigua-barbuda.org/agcri01.htm>.

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