

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

An economic powerhouse

A booming tourism sector and a host of exciting new developments are ensuring that the economy continues to thrive in Antigua and Barbuda

Antigua and Barbuda has consistently been one of the Caribbean's most prosperous countries, thanks in large to a thriving tourism sector that has regularly accounted for close to 60% of the country's GDP. This was of course severely impacted by the global pandemic but the most recent projections from the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank suggest that the twin-island nation will see a 9.4% increase in its GDP this year.

This fast recovery post-pandemic has been achieved through the foresight of the government. While the world was placed under various forms of lockdown, there was an opportunity to undertake regeneration projects and employment was kept at a high level through a series of construction programs. It was also during this time that marketing plans and trade deals were put in place, ensuring that as soon as the movement of people and goods was permitted, the travel and trade industry flourished once again.

With tourist arrivals significantly increasing in 2022, thanks in large to the country recovering an impressive 88% of air arrivals from 2019 — which was a record year — the government is now looking at ways to capitalize on this success and ensure that the tourism industry continues to flourish.

"My priority for 2023 is to see a stronger Antigua and Barbuda brand globally and, therefore, it is about expanding the nation's footprint internationally by strengthening more bilateral relations with countries across the world," reveals Everly Paul Chet Greene, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Trade and Barbuda Affairs. "We are seeking to build an air bridge between the Caribbean and Africa as the continent has great untapped potential."

In addition to exploring new markets, the country is undertaking a series of major developments that will have a significant impact on the tourism industry. "Sandals Grande Antigua is undergoing \$120 million worth of refurbishment and we will have a new hotel in Dickenson Bay under the Royalton Chic brand that will feature around 200 rooms," describes

CHARLES FERNANDEZ
MINISTER OF TOURISM, CIVIL AVIATION,
TRANSPORTATION AND INVESTMENT

"We have recently completed the fifth berth which will allow us to accept the biggest class of cruise liner, the Oasis."

Charles Fernandez, Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Transportation and Investment.

"We also have Hammock Cove which will add another 150 villas, while Nikki Beach property will be developed across 10 acres of land on Jolly Beach. There are also several exciting projects happening right now in Barbuda. There is a tremendous amount of interest in terms of investment, mainly in the hotel sector, because for us that is the biggest money earner."

The government has also undertaken the necessary investment in the airport and the cruise port to ensure that the country will be



Shirley Heights Lookout offers breathtaking views of English and Falmouth Harbors



Charles Fernandez
Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation,
Transportation and Investment

able to cope with an increase in visitor numbers. More than \$50 million is being spent on resurfacing the runway at V.C Bird International Airport, while Antigua Cruise Port is undergoing a major expansion confirming Antigua's position as a top homeporting destination in the Eastern Caribbean.

The country recently welcomed its largest-ever cruise ship, the Arvia, which saw 765 passengers disembark, and there is hope that the cruise industry will deliver as many as one million passengers a year.

"We have recently completed the fifth berth and we are finishing the dredging of the channel which will allow us to accept the biggest class of cruise liner, the Oasis," reveals Fernandez. "We



Everly Paul Chet Greene
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture,
Trade and Barbuda Affairs

are also building out the cruise pier which will have around 50,000 square feet for retail shops, vendors, restaurants and such. Furthermore, we have built an LNG (liquefied natural gas) plant which will mean that we will be able to fuel the cruise ships that arrive in 2025.

"In a few years, cruise ships will have to convert to LNG to reduce emissions so Antigua will be one of the few ports in the world that will allow for LNG refueling."

Exploring new streams of revenue

While the aim of all of these projects is to significantly increase the number of arrivals, the government is also looking at ways to further diversify the economy in order to decrease a re-

liance on the tourism sector. Agriculture is one area that is being thoroughly explored, as is the blue economy — which is the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth and improved livelihoods.

"In regard to agriculture, we are expanding our maize production, as well as scaling up and investing in abattoirs, to make sure that through the creation of new deals we are providing proper support for our local farmers. Not only are we looking at this sector as a vehicle for development and the advancement of our people in terms of food sovereignty, but we

EVERLY PAUL CHET GREENE
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND
BARBUDA AFFAIRS

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are also looking to explore the export business. We already have one farmer who has secured permission to export mangoes and avocados into the US market," reveals Greene.

"The blue economy is also seen as an area where we can attract international investment and further diversify our economy as we have several miles of untapped ocean space. We hope to attract companies with deep-sea fishing equipment and the latest technology so that we can fully explore this sector's full potential."

Creating a new, exciting tourism offering

Plans are underway to transform the island of Barbuda, including the construction of a golf course and private resorts

While Antigua has long been recognized as a thriving tourist destination, its sister island of Barbuda is a somewhat unknown gem to the vast majority outside of the Caribbean. Located 27 miles north-east of Antigua, it boasts pink coral and white sand beaches and is home to the largest Frigate Bird Sanctuary in the Western Hemisphere.

The low-lying coral island has traditionally been viewed as a short-stay option for those seeking a tranquil getaway. However, Barbuda is currently undergoing a transformation that will not only ensure the sanctity of its cultural heritage but significantly improve its revenue-generating capacity.

Accessible from Antigua via a powerful catamaran that offers round-trip services six days a week, or by private chartered flights, Barbuda's tourism offering is set to substantially increase due to a plethora of ambitious developments. One of the most notable projects currently taking shape is Barbuda Ocean Club, which is being developed by Discovery Land Company and Peace, Love and Happiness Partnership.

The private luxury residential community set across eight miles of beachfront will be home to an 18-hole Tom Fazio golf course, which is close to completion, as well as



There are 365 sandy beaches to explore — one for each day of the year

EVERLY PAUL CHET GREENE
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
AGRICULTURE, TRADE
AND BARBUDA AFFAIRS

"It's a whole economy that is being built around Barbuda and in approximately three years we believe it will be the envy of the East Caribbean."

restaurants, wellness centers and an expansive marina within the Codrington Lagoon that will have the ability to harbor numerous mega-yachts.

"When we came into office in 2014 we knew that Barbuda was a diamond in the rough.

What we are doing now is polishing this diamond into something brilliant for the benefit of the Barbudan people. This will include an airport and terminal offering fixed-base operator services, which is already being constructed," reveals the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Trade and Barbuda Affairs, Everly Paul Chet Greene.

"It's a whole economy that is being built around Barbuda and in approximately three years we believe it will be the envy of the East Caribbean.

"It's a clear case of development from scratch, which has taken on international proportions. I saw the golf course and it's unbelievable. Without fear of contradiction, I believe it will be the number one golf course in the world and will be a sought after destination for golfers around the globe."

Another major development in Barbuda that is already attracting a high-end clientele is Nobu Beach Inn, which was conceived by Hollywood actor Robert de Niro and Australian businessman James Packer.

The project currently consists of a Nobu Restaurant, which regularly attracts day-trippers from Antigua, and a beach club that boasts five private cabanas as well as personal hosts to tend to the every need of guests. Work is also taking place to construct a boutique hotel with additional private residences, a wellness center and an organic farm that will be situated next to the restaurant.

"We have major developments going on in Barbuda, including the De Niro and Packer project that costs around \$500 million, while the Barbuda Ocean Club is projected to cost \$3 billion. There is also another group that has shown an interest and will spend \$80 million. Therefore, there is substantial investment coming into the country," says the Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Transportation and Investment, Charles Fernandez.

These projects will dramatically alter the tourism offering in Barbuda and will potentially lead to a substantial increase in demand. While this is positive news for the economy, the government is also acutely aware of the environmental impact this could have and are determined to tackle any potential issues with an increase in the island's carbon footprint.

"In Antigua we have already made numerous green investments. For example, solar panels are installed at the airport in order to ensure much of the daily energy consumption is through solar power," adds Fernandez.

"Additionally, Barbuda will be fully green within the next two years. Our goal is to make Barbuda the first island in the Caribbean that will run 100% on green energy.

"In order to achieve this target we are working closely with the Ministry of the Environment. The plan is to provide various incentives, especially within the transport sector, to encourage a move to electric vehicles."

An attractive citizenship scheme

Antigua and Barbuda's Citizenship by Investment Programme provides major benefits for business investors and large families

Established in 2013 as a direct response to the recession that was being felt by countries around the world, Antigua and Barbuda's Citizenship by Investment (CBI) Programme is a government administered initiative aimed at attracting foreign direct investment to support the economy. Growing in popularity year on year, it now contributes around 15% of the twin-island nation's gross domestic product.

Thanks to its extremely attractive offering, the program has received nearly 4,000 applications from almost 200 countries over the last 10 years. Through four investment options, the CBI scheme grants applicants the opportunity to become citizens and have visa-free access to 165 countries.

Overseeing the entire process is the Citizenship by Investment Unit (CIU), an administrative agency mandated to manage the program. It ensures that each application is thoroughly assessed and twice a year publishes a report to inform the public about the number of applicants, their countries of origin and how the revenue generation will be utilized by the government.

"We have been fortunate to experience people's cultures through their applications, since we conduct a thorough assessment to determine the eligibility of the applicant and their dependents for citizenship," says Charmaine Quinland-Donovan, CEO, CIU. "As the true gatekeepers of the country, we do all that we possibly can to ensure the risk brought by each application is within the overall risk appetite of not only the program, but also the country."

Four unique investment options

The application process itself is simple and can be completed online, with the wide-ranging program providing four pathways to citizenship. The most subscribed option is the National Development Fund (NDF), which provides the applicant with the opportunity to obtain citizenship by making a contribution of \$100,000 for an application consisting of up to four family members and \$125,000 for larger families.

"The revenue generation from this option has really helped Antigua and Barbuda over the years, especially during COVID-19 when it provided continuous funding to the government, thus ensuring that we had proper PPE to retrofit a former hospital and its surrounding area," explains Quinland-Donovan. "It is now called the Infectious Disease Center and it was fitted to care for people who were stricken with COVID and had to be hospitalized. Additionally, the government was able to utilize revenue generated by this pathway to secure vaccines. We were one of the first nations in this region



Charmaine Quinland-Donovan
CEO, Citizenship by Investment Unit

to start vaccinating our people, so the NDF has been really helpful in that regard."

Another option is investment in a business, where applicants can start a new business or invest in an existing one. A single investor must contribute a minimum of \$1.5 million in an approved business, or two or more individuals may make a joint investment of \$5 million, with each applicant contributing a minimum of \$400,000.

A third option, investment in approved real estate, requires applicants to make a purchase of a unit outright for \$400,000 or partner with another applicant to jointly purchase an approved development, with each applicant contributing at least \$200,000. "Since Antigua and Barbuda is part of the hurricane belt, the building codes here are much more robust and the quality of structures is very high. What the applicant gets is true value for their investment," adds Quinland-Donovan.

The final option, investment in the University of the West Indies Fund, has grown in popularity since being introduced in 2017 and it supports the country's Five Islands university campus. Applicants are required to make a contribution of \$150,000 for a family of six or more, which entitles one member of the family to a one-year scholarship at the campus in Antigua and Barbuda. "We are seeing a growing interest in this option as it is particularly attractive for large families," says Quinland-Donovan.

"Families as large as six can apply and, when compared to the overall cost of applying for other options, it is more affordable. Additionally, since the revenues generated by this pathway are given to the University of the West Indies for its sustenance and expansion efforts, many philanthropic clients are attracted to investing



Applying for citizenship in idyllic Antigua and Barbuda is a quick, simple process

under this option, as they feel they are contributing to the building of the nation."

A stand-out offering

While other Caribbean countries have similar CBI schemes — such as St. Lucia, Dominica and Grenada — what differentiates Antigua and Barbuda's program is that it is not only exceptionally attractive for families, but the country also boasts excellent connectivity, an outstanding healthcare system and high-quality real estate options.

CHARMAINE QUINLAND-DONOVAN CEO CITIZENSHIP BY INVESTMENT UNIT

"We are also quickly becoming recognized as the most developed country among the CBI options available to applicants."

"Due to our expansive definition of dependence, we allow siblings of any age who are unmarried, parents and grandparents aged 55 and older, dependent children up to the age of 30, as well as the spouses and children of dependent children to be included in an application," explains Quinland-Donovan. "This isn't a feature of other programs and is especially appealing to those from areas with traditionally larger families, such as the African continent and the Middle East."

"We are also quickly becoming recognized as the most developed country among the CBI options available to applicants. We have daily

international flights from the US and the UK, plus several a week from Canada, making it easier for people to move here. Additionally, our real estate options are high quality and people like to select units here because they get better value for their investments. Our healthcare system is also akin to that of first-world countries." Thanks to these competitive advantages and the additional benefits of applying for citizenship under the Antigua and Barbuda program, such as there being no tax levied on worldwide income and applications being completed in 90 days, the CBI program continues to attract huge numbers each year.

To ensure it maintains the utmost scrutiny and transparency, Antigua and Barbuda works with governments and law enforcement agencies around the world. "The International Law Enforcement Network is part of our due diligence process, which ensures that we are not hiding information about the applicants," says Quinland-Donovan. "We want to make international governments aware that we are cognizant and that each application presents a unique risk. Therefore, we take the necessary steps to understand the risk profile of each applicant, to measure and mitigate the risk, and to reject an application if it does not fit within our risk profile. We are open to bilateral talks with other governments to help them understand our process and the value we place on the integrity of our program."

"When someone comes through this program and goes through our thorough due diligence, it is very difficult for us not to be able to uncover anything suspicious about a particular candidate. We take every precaution about the type of people that join the program, so that they do not present a risk to us or to themselves."

Rebuilding a robust tourism industry

The Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority has played a vital role in the recovery of a thriving tourism sector

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when airplanes were grounded and hotels were forced to temporarily close, the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority (ABTA) put a plan in place to help ensure that the tourism sector rebounded once travel restrictions were lifted. Now the twin-island nation is beginning to reap the rewards of the work done by the authority, with a robust recovery boosted by record levels of stay-over arrivals in 2022 from the US and the UK.

Having traditionally punched well above its weight as a small destination, the authority knew that it would need to quickly rebuild the tourism industry through a mix of negotiation with airlines, engagement with tour operators and development of clever marketing campaigns.

"We had to make sure that we spoke to the airlines and rebuilt the islands' airlift and seafit as quickly as possible. We also worked on a strategy to engage with the travel trade community and this required very creative marketing, an area in which we have become a thought leader in this region," explains Colin C. James, CEO of ABTA.

"Our marketing efforts were built on four pillars: romance, yachting, heritage and culture, and wellness. We're well known for being one of the romance capitals of the world because we have all the amenities and the infrastructure needed to facilitate destination weddings and honeymoons. Antigua is also the mecca of Caribbean yachting and has the only naval facility from the mid-1700s that is still in operation today and an UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Nelson's Dockyard in English Harbor."

"We also promote our rich, vibrant culture that is evident in our language, cuisine, architecture and music, and which can be explored through our museums, art studios and festivals. Wellness also really came to the forefront after the pandemic as people wanted to focus on rejuvenation and relaxation. Our 365 beautiful beaches and hospitable people were ideal in that aspect."

"In addition to this promotion, we were able to put things in place so that we could recover quickly. We were the first country in the Caribbean region to open our doors post-pandemic



Antigua is one of the romance capitals of the world, ideal for weddings and honeymoons

because of the strong protocols that we have in place. This helped us really take advantage of that global demand for travel."

The work carried out by ABTA led to a strong recovery in 2022 as the tourism sector in Antigua and Barbuda recovered 88% of its arrivals from 2019, with the US market proving particularly crucial. "The US is our strongest market, with around 40% of our visitors to Antigua coming from the US," says James. "Last year we registered 129,000 stay-overs from the US, which is significant as it's the greatest number ever from the US. It's a 5% growth on the figures from 2019, which was our best year."

"The UK is our second largest source market and that grew by 4% again, due to the strong efforts in recovery and getting back the airlift and promoting the destination in a very creative way. In fact, the only reason we didn't surpass our overall figures from 2019 was because we couldn't match our figures from Canada, which kept its travel restrictions for far longer."

"Taking into account that we rebuilt our airlift with the US really helped and we are well served with flights from New York and New Jersey. We also have services from Miami, Charlotte, North Carolina and out of Atlanta. That has been the catalyst in the remarkable growth that we've seen during this recovery period."

The importance of Barbuda

While Antigua has long been recognized as a popular tourist destination within the Caribbean, ABTA has placed a growing emphasis on promoting Barbuda as a standalone destination. The island may only have a population of 1,500, but it is surrounded by protected reefs and is

home to picturesque lagoons, sandy beaches and an abundance of wildlife.

Separated from Antigua by around 27 miles, there are already numerous projects underway on the island, including the construction of an airport and an 18-hole golf course, as the authority aims to market the island as a high-end and exclusive destination.

"Barbuda is unspoiled and beautiful, with gorgeous beaches, including Princess Diana Beach, which was renamed in honor of Princess Diana as she used to vacation there with Prince William and Prince Harry. It's absolutely spectacular," adds James.

COLIN C. JAMES CEO, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TOURISM AUTHORITY

"Taking into account that we rebuilt our airlift with the US really helped and we are well served with flights from New York and New Jersey."

"We already have the only Nobu Restaurant in the Caribbean — which makes it very exclusive. We are also building an airport that will accommodate private jets and commercial aircraft, which should be ready within the next 12 months. Infrastructure is also being built, such as the Tom Fazio designed 18-hole golf course that is soon to be completed. This will be another game changer as it opens us up to the high-end golfing clientele."

"Everything has come together to position Barbuda as an exclusive destination which will attract the type of visitor that will give us a greater yield and a greater return on the investments that are being made. We also want to manage the arrival numbers in order to avoid overcrowding and ensure that Barbuda is seen as an aspirational destination."



Colin C. James
CEO, Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority

New hospitality offerings

One of the key projects on the rapidly-developing island of Barbuda is Barbuda Ocean Club — a \$3 billion project that will see the construction of a variety of hospitality options. There will be around 250 rooms in one part of the island and another 30 luxury villas close to the golf course. Antigua is also set to benefit from a host of new property developments from Marriott Group, Sandals and Royalton, which is set to open a new 227-room beachfront property that is for adults only.

This is in addition to recent new arrivals in the form of Weatherills Hotel, a historic 17th-century colonial mansion set within 40 acres of picturesque gardens in the north of the island, and Tamarind Hills Beach Club, which opened in late 2022 and provides those staying in the resorts' luxury villas with a place to relax and indulge in international cuisine.

While there is a trend to attract visitors seeking to stay in five-star resorts, Antigua, in particular, is keen to promote its alternative accommodation, as James explains: "We have three-star accommodation and we offer Airbnb so there is really something to fit every budget. Having a wide variety of accommodation is crucial, as is the fact that we are renowned for having a remarkable caliber of tourism professionals."

"We offer the best hospitality service and that has been key to the growth we have seen in the tourism industry. This has been recognized within the industry as we are regularly the recipient of awards, which goes to show that we have an impressive physical infrastructure and incredible people who provide a first-class service to all our visitors."

Why choose Antigua and Barbuda's Citizenship by Investment Programme

Visa-free access to more than 150 countries including the UK and Europe's Schengen area

Straightforward application process, no minimum net worth requirement or previous business experience

Competitive global option for economic citizenship, range of price points and investments

Average application processing time is 60 days

No restrictions on dual nationality

No tax on worldwide income, inheritance, capital gains or investment returns

Citizenship for life, once residency requirement is met

Paradise becomes your home

4 EXCITING PATHWAYS TO CITIZENSHIP



Minimum contribution of \$100,000 to the National Development Fund



The purchase of property worth \$400,000 or more. This can be a joint purchase between two applicants, with each investing \$200,000



Investment of \$1.5 million in a business for a single applicant, or \$5 million for a joint application from two or more investors

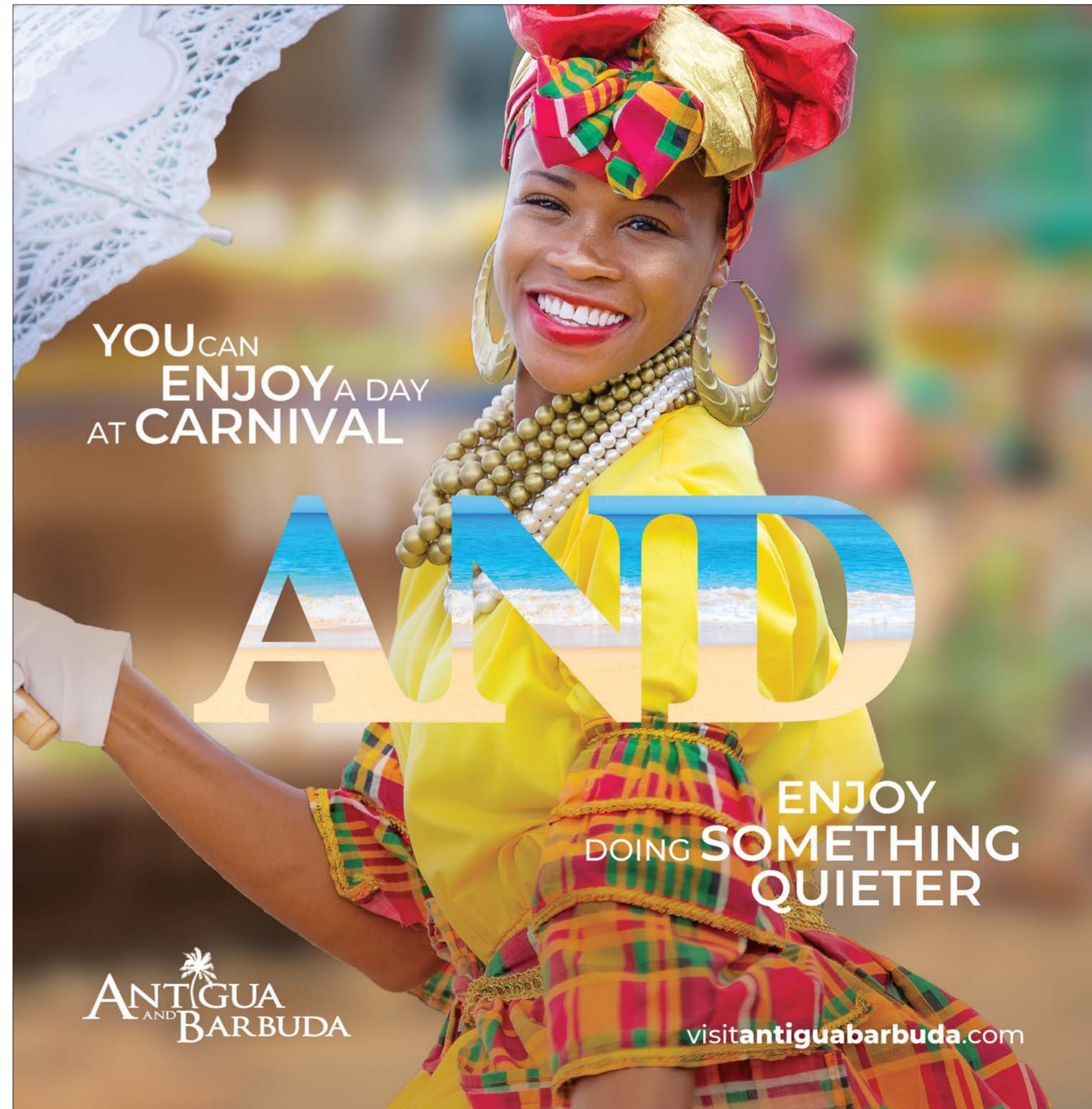


Investment of \$150,000 in the University of the West Indies Fund



The Antigua and Barbuda Citizenship by Investment Programme is a foreign direct investment initiative giving unparalleled second citizenship options. With four exciting pathways to citizenship and visa-free access to more than 150 countries, plus no tax on worldwide income, inheritance, capital gains or investment returns, **you can see why paradise becomes your home.**

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Antigua Cruise Port — a top homeporting destination

An inviting option for investment

Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority has created an enticing offering for investors through a variety of innovative initiatives

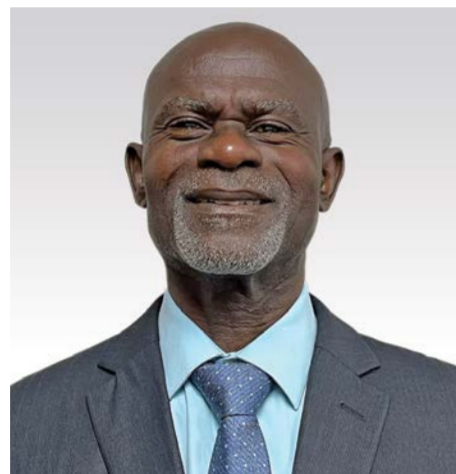
Ever since it was established in 2006, the Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority (AIBA) has worked diligently to make the twin-island nation a more attractive place for investment. The government agency has conducted numerous studies to better understand which sectors to target and has been able to use investments to build industries and benefit the local community.

One of its most effective tools has been the introduction of an online investment guide that promotes the country as an appealing destination for investment. “We were the first investment promotion agency in the Caribbean to launch this type of online guide and it has been a very cost-effective and efficient tool in helping us to promote Antigua and Barbuda,” reveals Henderson Fields, Executive Director of AIBA. “We launched the guide in 2016 and it is very comprehensive in regard to providing information about investing in the country.”

“You can find everything you need to know about the laws within the country, as well as the operational aspect of our agency’s stakeholders, who play a critical role and facilitate investors who are seeking to make Antigua and Barbuda their jurisdiction for investment. Such has been the success of the guide, that a few other Caribbean investment authorities and promotion agencies have followed our lead and launched their own guides.”

In addition to the online guide, AIBA has been able to impact policy change to further attract investment from a variety of sectors. This is through a variety of studies that were able to identify issues which affected the development and growth of several sectors.

“We commissioned a major study looking at a diversified tourism implementation strategy that provided guidance on the introduction of Sunset Legislation, which provides incentives to stimulate investment interests in nontraditional sectors,” explains Fields. “This was done during the global financial crisis when FDI would have been very difficult to attract. This was seen as a catalyst to try to further jumpstart attracting



Henderson Fields
Executive Director
Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority

investments from some nontraditional sectors and was useful for the government which could make the necessary policy changes.

“From the study, nine sectors were identified as priorities, these were tourism, which is of course our main economic driver, agriculture, fisheries and agribusiness, which fall under one sector. Then there was business process outsourcing, energy, health and wellness, manufacturing, creative industry, financial services and information and communications technology.”

“These sectors are all eligible for incentives under the Investment Authority Amendment Act 2019, but our main promotional focus in the short term is tourism and residential services, the agribusiness sector and business process outsourcing.”

Leading the pandemic recovery

Having excelled in the years since it was established, AIBA had an important role to play during the COVID-19 pandemic when the entire economy took a significant hit. Fortunately,



Fryres Beach, one of the most beautiful and pristine beaches in Antigua

the work done in relation to reform measures enhanced the ease of doing business and there are now encouraging signs that the economy is starting to recover.

Foreign direct investment rose to represent 7.1% of the nation’s GDP in 2021, up 5.4% from the previous year, and investors are returning to the country buoyed by Antigua and Barbuda’s stable economic and political environment. “The positive investment climate was conducive for not only attracting FDI, but also for encouraging domestic investment,” reveals Henderson Fields, Executive Director of AIBA. “The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank has indicated that based on its estimates, the country experienced an impressive 8.5% growth in GDP in 2022, with real estate development playing a particularly crucial role.”

Real estate is an area that AIBA has been heavily involved in for a number of years, having supported the Construct Antigua Barbuda Initiative (CAB-I) since 2011. During that time close to 1,500 projects have been approved and even during the pandemic, there was demand for further developments.

“The pandemic proved to be a very strong period for CAB-I as the government took the decision to increase the ceiling on the cap of the construction value of a project and reintroduce renovations and expansions. Due to this policy initiative, we got approximately 260 new projects for construction with the value of close to \$37 million,” adds Fields.

Attracting investment from the US

With the country showing promising signs of recovery post pandemic, AIBA is now seeking to attract investors from the US, which has predominantly been interested in tourism and residential services. In recent times, the majority of US companies have been interested in the development of Barbuda as the island bids to attract a high-end clientele through the construction of five-star resorts.

However, there is now a focus on attracting investment in other sectors such as business process outsourcing and education services. This could be well boosted by the construction of the Antigua and Barbuda Special Economic Zone, which upon completion, will cover an area of 1,609 acres across 10 functional zones that will include a central business center, financial center and a university town.

The special economic zone will also offer comprehensive and competitive incentives and preferential policies in areas such as duty-free, licensing, infrastructure and tax, in order to attract foreign direct investment.

“Traditionally the focus has been on call centers but we recognize the need to attract higher value operations such as in software development and the telecommunication sector,” explains Fields.

“We believe the country is well positioned to grow in these sectors due to its proximity to the US, our shared language, strong air connec-

tivity, experience in offshore services and good communication infrastructure. Additionally, the availability of people for extensive training, in particular segments of the industry, such as banking, financial and insurance services, and telecommunications position the country well, especially in relation to the US market.

“Education services is another one. The attraction of offshore medical schools from the US and elsewhere is an integral part of Antigua and Barbuda’s participation in the global educational services value chain.”

Another sector that is being explored by AIBA is renewable energy as, like many of its Caribbean neighbors, the country is highly dependent on imported fossil fuels and is extremely vulnerable to fluctuating oil prices. This has led to the government proposing a target of achieving 100% of its energy generation from renewable sources by 2030.

HENDERSON FIELDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA INVESTMENT AUTHORITY

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Under the renewable energy roadmap, Antigua and Barbuda wants to explore renewable energy options such as utility-scale solar photovoltaic and utility-scale wind and green hydrogen.

“Renewable energy is one of the priority sectors, with the country setting targets for electricity generation as well as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions,” says Fields. “Therefore, we are seeking private investment in this sector by creating appropriate incentives and making mechanisms to aid in achieving these objectives.”



The colorful capital of St. John's

Leading this charge is St. John’s Development Corporation (SJDC), which looks to develop the services in the city and make it an enticing destination for tourists. “The capital is historic but it has been neglected in recent times and few things have been built over the course of the last two decades. That is why we are trying to revitalize the city in the areas of health, entertainment, culture and business,” reveals Said Greene, Director, City and Urban Renewal, SJDC.

“One of the areas we are focusing on is implementing Airbnb options as we have a lot of first floor properties that are currently empty. We believe that by making these spaces available to Airbnb businesses, we can make St. John’s a popular place to stay with business and leisure visitors.

“We want the capital to maintain the historical significance of its architecture but the city needs projects that will help with its restoration. That’s why there are unique opportunities for businesses and investors who are looking to do something special in our country.”

“There are regularly more than 5,000 visitors descending on the city from cruises and we want to have plenty of entertainment options for them. We believe they will be looking for something cultural and authentic, whether through food, music or something else we can offer that is distinct to our heritage. This is what we want to provide to visitors and we believe it will boost their impression of the entire country.”

One SJDC project that has already proved successful was the introduction of the Public Market. Held throughout the week but spilling onto the surrounding streets on Fridays and Saturdays, the vibrant market features a collection of vendors selling exotic local produce such as sugar apples, sorrel and black pineapples, as well as fresh fish and more familiar produce.

Building on that success, Greene aims to transform the city through a variety of new developments that will provide greater options for tourists. “Because of the pandemic, the projects to revitalize the city have been pushed back for almost two years. But now we are starting to move on with our plans as we believe St. John’s should be a place with plenty of restaurant options and entertainment activities that utilize our location on the water.

“We are also hiring exciting young architects who are working on a new vision for the city. We want to overhaul Market Street so that there are restaurants on the ground floor and then Airbnb properties above. We want to create a new concept for the city in order to position the capital city of St. John’s as a destination that is doing things differently.

“We want the city to shine once again which is why we are producing creative short five-minute films to teach people about the capital, its history and where it is heading in the future. We are also looking to improve our social media presence so that we can communicate what is changing within the city. This will help us to tell our story.”

Turning Antigua’s port into a global transshipment hub

Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority is continuing with its exciting plans to further develop and upgrade Deep Water Harbor

Tasked with ensuring that the country becomes one of the main transport and logistics hubs in the region, Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority (ABPA) identified five key elements that would facilitate in achieving its objectives. The most important of which was the redevelopment of Antigua’s main commercial cargo port, Deep Water Harbor, which is located in the capital city of St. John’s.

Work on the \$100 million project began in 2018 but was substantially delayed during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the development was completed last year and the port now boasts a new cruise berth, cargo and logistics facilities, offices and a host of new amenities. Constructed by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation, the modernized port now has the capacity to offer transshipment and centralized services and is the largest cargo port in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

While expanding and modernizing the country’s half-century-old seaport was a significant achievement, ABPA CEO, Darwin Telemaque, reveals that there are further plans in place to improve and strengthen the port’s standing on the international stage. “We wanted to start with the infrastructure and we now have a brand new port and the only container terminal in the region. We also have a new extended berth, deeper water and we can bring in larger ships.

“We also want to make sure we have the right legislation in place as ours was last updated in the 1960s. Now is the time to create a whole new corporate governance structure and introduce new tariffs, regulations and rules that will better allow the port to function.

“Furthermore, we are looking to increase the technical knowledge of our port staff so that we can operate as efficiently as possible. We have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Panama Maritime Authority who will provide training across various disciplines and we have brought in 17 young people from the Caribbean Maritime University who have also been trained across various disciplines. Finally, we want to improve our labor environment by working with the unions to create a more relevant collective bargaining agreement that fits the modern standards.”



Darwin Telemaque
CEO, Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority

DARWIN TELEMAQUE CEO, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA PORT AUTHORITY

“We wanted to start with the infrastructure and we now have a brand new port and the only container terminal in the region... and we can bring in larger ships.”

Significant efforts are also being placed on digitalization and thanks to a partnership with the government of Norway and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Antigua and Barbuda is now the only Eastern Caribbean country that has a Maritime Single Window, which has increased efficiency by digitally connecting all partners related to the ship clearing process.

“We want to digitalize port operations and ensure the port functions fully paperless. We need to digitalize every aspect of maritime transport and we have already begun this process. The IMO mandated that all ports need to clear ships electronically by January of 2024 and we have already achieved this,” says Telemaque.

Capitalizing on a lucrative cruise industry

Major developments are taking place at Antigua Cruise Port to enhance the country’s position as a top homeporting destination

With an economy heavily reliant on trade, travel and tourism, Antigua and Barbuda’s ports and airports play a critical role in these crucially important sectors by providing access to global markets and supply chains. They have helped the country to recover from the crippling effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and now there are major projects on the horizon that could further incentivize the economy.

Antigua Cruise Port, which already handles more than 800,000 passengers annually and acts as the gateway to the country’s capital, completed work on a new berth that allowed the largest cruise ship to ever dock in the country earlier this year and has unveiled plans to construct a new terminal.

“We are going into homeporting in a major way so we are positioning Antigua Cruise Port as a home port for luxury vessels through the building of a terminal. This will also help us with interporting, which is where cruise lines have multiple home ports, so Antigua could be a pickup, embarkation or disembarkation destination,” reveals the general manager of Antigua Cruise Port, Dona Regis-Prosper.

“The building of the terminal for that service is already underway, while our second project is Heritage Quay where we will be completing some major upgrades in regard to the electrical systems and the overall look of the area. This is a 30-year-old facility so it is important to do some upgrades.

“There is also some work taking place adjacent to the fifth berth which was just completed. There is 80,000 square feet of space which will include additional retail, food and beverage facilities, a day club and a casino.

“This is crucial as thanks to an agreement with Global Port Holdings, the world’s largest cruise port operator, we will be able to maximize the number of arrivals. The pre-pandemic numbers totalled around 800,000 but we now hope to serve as many as one million passengers per year.”

While the construction projects will help the cruise port handle an increase in visitor numbers, Regis-Prosper’s priority is to ensure that the port is rebranded as a homeporting destination. This is particularly important as those starting a cruise in Antigua can deliver an economic benefit.

“Homeporting is significant because where- as with transit the vessel only comes in and spends a day, this way passengers arrive in Anti-

gua for their cruise. Therefore, they may end up contributing an economic uplift in regard to the airport, the hotels and resorts, and even the taxi companies that transfer passengers to the cruise port,” she adds.

“We are marketing our homeporting package to cruise lines that wish to expand in the region and we are stressing both our level of service and the fact that we have a very supportive government. In fact, the government has given certain special considerations to homeporting that includes direct transfer from the airport to the seaport. Things like that go a very long way as they assist us in being able to raise the level of the brand.”

Enhancing the visitor experience

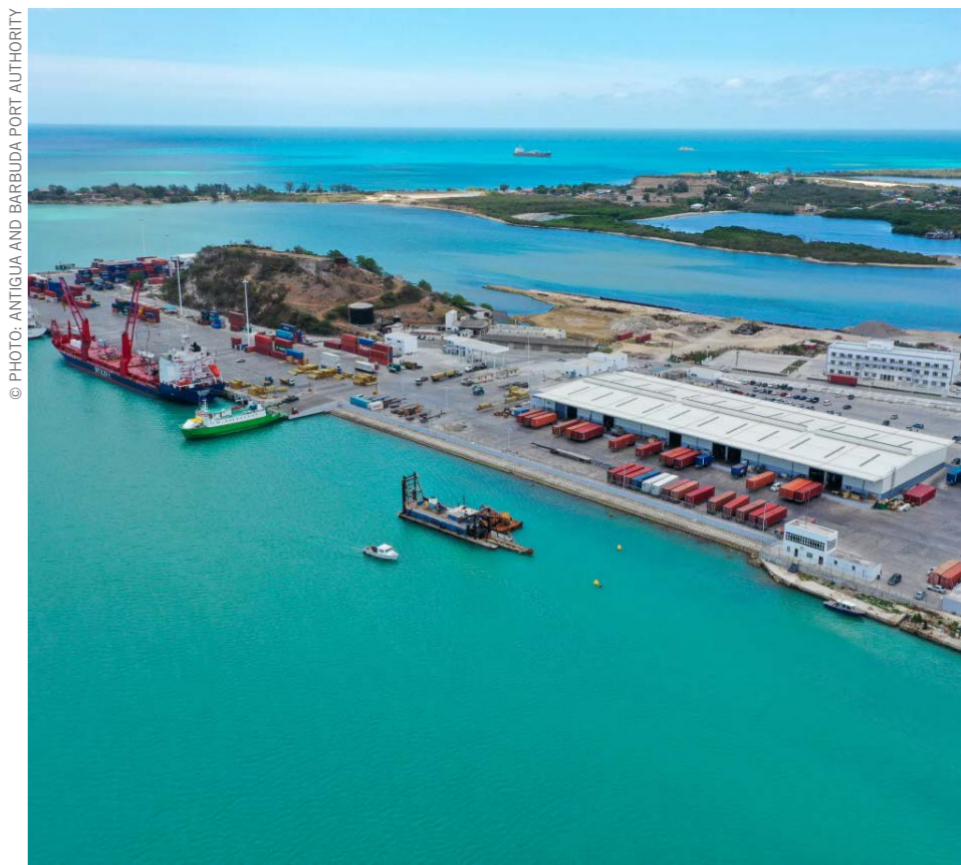
To support the port’s plans to make Antigua a homeporting destination, there are initiatives in the works at V. C. Bird International Airport to ensure that those arriving in the country enjoy a seamless onward journey.

“One of the areas that we are continuing to look at is how to enhance the passenger experience at the airport. We have a lot of tour operating companies at the airport so we are looking into the ground transportation sector and improving the infrastructure so that guests are serviced more efficiently,” explains Euleta Francis, CEO of Antigua and Barbuda Airport Authority.

“We are going to be investing more than a million US dollars into making some changes to the road infrastructure to better serve the taxis, transfer agents and the premier transfers in regard to the pick-up and transfer of passengers. This is a major plan that we are focusing on and we hope that in the coming year we will create a seamless flow for passengers.”

Recently nominated at the prestigious World Travel Awards as the Caribbean’s Leading Airport, V. C. Bird has also ensured that it keeps up with global standards by introducing advanced technology throughout the terminal. “We are going to be upgrading our check-in kiosks shortly so that everything can be done in one place, from printing your bag tags to dropping off your luggage,” adds Francis. “We want to make sure we adopt the best technology so that every part of our airport operation is efficient.”

“We are doing everything possible to ensure that visitors coming to the shore start with a great experience and end with a great experience. Therefore, it is all about charting the future and enhancing the passenger experience.”



Deep Water Harbor in Antigua — an upcoming global transshipment hub

“Antigua became the first country in the OECS to implement the Maritime Single Window and our source code has now been built into the software so that all small island states in the world can use that code to build up their Maritime Single Window. We are very excited that we could be part of that international process.”

An emerging transshipment center

All of the work being carried out by ABPA is with the ultimate aim of transforming the port into a global transshipment hub. Deep Water Harbor already boasts an enviable geographic location in the very center of the Caribbean and has the very first container terminal in the region.

The authority now wants to attract new business and bring in increased revenue, whether through direct services into Antigua or through new shipping lines. “We want to attract companies like Tropical Shipping, Seaport Marine and King Ocean,” says Telemaque. “We also want to explore the option of having ships based in Antigua that could do the bulk carriage to the smaller islands and build connectivity back to the island.”

“We can find a new avenue as that service currently doesn’t exist. The region has no connectivity within itself because direct shipping takes place out of Miami. The establishment of that hub will not only serve Antigua’s interest, but it will also ensure that the region is further empowered.”

Transitioning the port into a global transshipment hub will not only see an increase in the amount of cargo coming into Antigua, but it would deliver increased revenue and offer opportunities for the country to become a base for

OECS countries whose own ports cannot operate such an advanced service.

ABPA therefore hopes to partner with global leaders to provide support in terms of cybersecurity, terminal operating systems and gate management systems. There is also hope that foreign direct investment could provide further improvements to the port’s infrastructure, while discussions are taking place in regard to constructing a ferry terminal.

“We’re building a logistics park to develop areas of distribution and we want to have a free trade zone within that port space for other activities,” says Telemaque. “There are even

DARWIN TELEMAQUE CEO, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA PORT AUTHORITY

“Antigua became the first country in the OECS to implement the Maritime Single Window.”

opportunities to further expand the port itself to put in gantry cranes and that could easily be done because we are unencumbered in regard to where we can build.

“We are also planning to create a tourism product at the back of the port and we require around \$30 million so we are currently looking for investment and partners that can help us with the dredge development. This would include a ferry terminal, shops, a slew of restaurants, a fish market and a few offices in the complex as well.”

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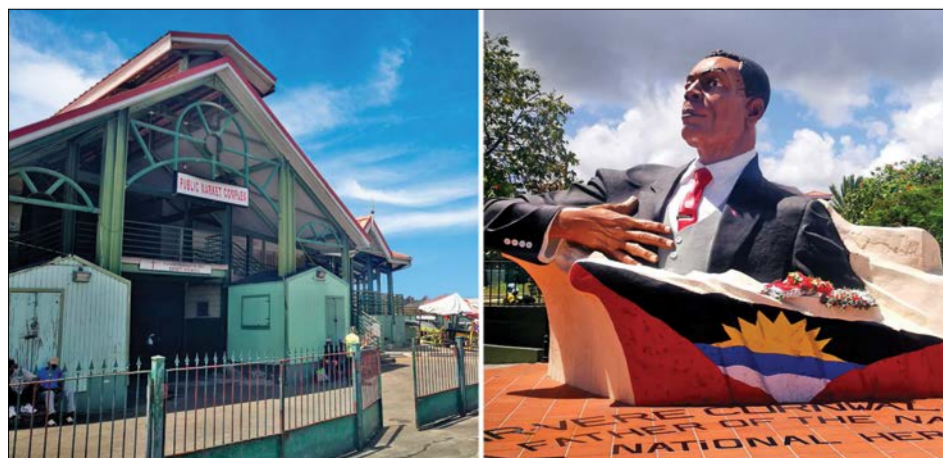
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Revitalizing the country’s historic capital city

St. John’s Development Corporation aims to modernize the capital though a plethora of new projects that will increase its offering

Capital cities have a crucial role to play in the life of a country as they tend to be economic, historical and cultural hubs. St. John’s is no different. Located on the northwest coast of Antigua, it is home to a 17th-century Government House, an Anglican Church, the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda and a key port where goods have arrived for centuries.

Just six miles from V.C. Bird International Airport, the capital is easily accessible and welcomes a significant number of tourists each year. However, as the country bids to increase its tourism offering and attract an ever-increasing number of visitors, there are ambitious plans to revitalize the city through a host of entertainment, culture and business developments.



St. John’s Development Corporation
Redevelopment of Antigua and Barbuda’s capital — a better future





One of the stunning pink sand beaches in Barbuda is covered with an abundance of pink shells from October to May

© PHOTO: ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TOURISM AUTHORITY

A digital transformation that positively impacts the country

Placing a high priority on ICT and seeing the sector as an important enabler for national development, Antigua and Barbuda has introduced a modern telecommunications infrastructure that makes it one of the most well-connected islands in the Eastern Caribbean. The country is also well on the way to becoming a digital economy, thanks to high levels of internet and telephone connectivity, as well as a coordinated move from the government to digitize its operations.

Leading this charge has been Melford Walter Fitzgerald Nicholas, who in his work as the Minister of Information, Communication Technologies, Utilities and Energy, has played an integral role in digitally transforming numerous sectors across the country — from the public school system to the telecommunications industry. He even oversaw the modification of government processes which needed a significant upgrade.

"When we came into power in 2014 it was still a paper-driven bureaucracy, therefore to get information to move upwards, downwards or even laterally was a bit of a challenge," states Nicholas. "We have led the push to digitize not just within government but across industries. We were one of the first countries within the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to put our driver's license renewal program online so that people from the diaspora could renew without having to step foot on the island."

"We have also digitalized our border entry system and our business and land registry. In fact, we are one of the few countries on this side of the Atlantic that has such extensive digitization of its land resources coast to coast. The ministry is responsible for leading the digital transformation agenda and in the next 24 months I would expect that the vast majority of services that people are currently forced to wait in line for will be made available online. We want to create a digital realm where services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

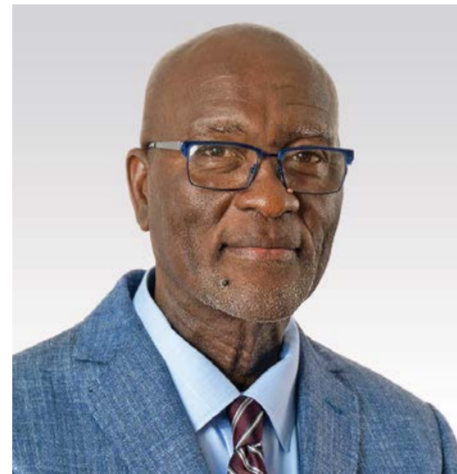
"It's going to be quite a challenge but that's why we are launching a digital training academy that will retrain those working within public services to be comfortable with this shift. We want to move towards the digital transformation of our entire society so that it becomes easier to conduct business."

While retraining and employing the latest technology will be a crucial step towards

Embracing the latest technology and improving connectivity has emerged as a vital focus for Antigua and Barbuda



Melford Walter Fitzgerald Nicholas
Minister of Information, Communication Technologies, Utilities and Energy



Esworth Martin
General Manager, Antigua Public Utilities Authority

ESWORTH MARTIN
GENERAL MANAGER, ANTIGUA PUBLIC UTILITIES AUTHORITY

"Now every citizen has the opportunity to have a first-world broadband service installed in their home."

a digital economy, the government has also recognized the need to invest in the future of the country and is being backed by one of the leading educational institutions in the region, the University of the West Indies, which has a campus in Antigua.

"Around two years ago the university launched two business schools. One deals with artificial intelligence and the other one deals with computing technology," reveals Nicholas. "We believe that by producing that level of skills at the university level, having an environ-

ment that can allow the minds to expand, and by bringing IT companies on board here, we should be able to build a whole IT export sector from Antigua, in a similar way as it has been achieved in Dubai and in cities across India."

Improving connectivity

In addition to the work being done by Nicholas and the ministry, the Antigua Public Utilities Authority (APUA) has implemented several schemes that have positively impacted the ICT sector across the twin-island nation. Established as an authority in 1973 and mandated to serve the community through the delivery of water, electricity and telecommunications, it has since expanded its areas of work and now has a mobile service offering and became a broadband service provider.

Perhaps its most ambitious project to date recently concluded after two years of work is the 'Fibre to the Home' initiative allowing all citizens to upgrade household internet from DSL to 4G LTE fibre optic cables, and delivering a speed that is nearly 200 times faster than was previously achievable.

"This has been one of the most exciting things that we have accomplished during my tenure," says Esworth Martin, general manager of APUA. "Now every citizen has the opportunity to have a first-world broadband service installed in their home."

Explaining how the project came to fruition, Martin explains: "In 1998 I attended a conference in the Bahamas and that is when the growth of the mobile industry had begun. Soon after, the opportunity for broadband came along so we decided to pursue it and build a fibre cable ring around the entire island, which placed us in a very advantageous position."

"Fibre became the gold standard as far as broadband was concerned, so we initially migrated to 4G, then we expanded the broadband reach and finally the 'Fibre to the Home' project which has been a huge success."

"In addition to the funds that were required for that project, we also received funding that has enabled us to embark on a new project for a subsea cable. That process was initially delayed because of the pandemic but we are now finalizing the plans to execute this project in the near future."

"Once this is all in place, we will be able to lower the price of fibre broadband to all of our citizens. This is a crucial objective as we want to ensure that the price is reasonable and that everyone in the country has access to broadband."

Ensuring a constant supply of water

One of the major challenges that APUA has faced over the last decade has been to supply water 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to all of the citizens in Antigua and Barbuda. Having ceased to have access to groundwater and surface water resources since 2010, reverse osmosis plants and water treatment plants have come to the forefront and now provide more than eight million gallons of water a day.

Prioritizing the continuity of delivery and conservation of water has long been on the agenda for the authority and there are major projects underway across the country.

"We just constructed Fort James which has a capacity of 500,000 gallons of water per day and we are now entering phase two of the proj-

ect which should soon be completed and will increase the capacity to one million gallons per day," explains Martin.

"We also have Camp Blizzard with the capacity of 600,000 gallons of water per day, while the facility we have in Crabbs can produce 4.2 million gallons of water per day. We have also begun to source another major reverse osmosis plant that will be situated at Bethesda and will have a capacity of 3.2 million per day."

"The plan is to ensure that we have installed the capacity to produce around 11 million gallons per day, even if the demand is only for 8 million. We want to make sure we have a significant reserve just in case one of the plants requires maintenance."

"In addition to having the capacity and the production side secured, we will be working on improving our distribution lines and introducing smart meters. Currently meters are read manually, so we want to automate the process and make it far more efficient."

Planning for a greener future

Within the APUA, the electricity unit is responsible for the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity throughout the country. External suppliers currently contribute to the grid and there is scope for more companies to come aboard, especially those with a focus on green energy.

The country has set a target of achieving 100% of its energy generation from renewable sources by 2030 and the authority is already exploring ways in which it can contribute by investing in renewable energy projects throughout the islands.

"There is an appetite for investment in renewable energy and we have a mandate from the government that points us in that direction. We do have some long-term contracts with independent power producers, however, we still have allowed renewable energy entrants as far as our energy mix is concerned. 20% of our demand is met from renewable energy sources — that is a significant penetration. Barbuda is also about to realize its energy demands being met 100% from renewable energy sources," says Martin.

MELFORD WALTER FITZGERLAD NICHOLAS
MINISTER OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES, UTILITIES AND ENERGY

"The ministry is responsible for leading the digital transformation agenda and in the next 24 months I would expect that the vast majority of services will be made available online."

"We are looking to the future and for any expansion and growth that will take place in Antigua, we will not be using any kind of fossil fuel plant. We are adding 40 megawatts with liquefied natural gas and that plant will be commissioned later this year, between the end of the third and early fourth quarter."

One of the companies hoping to play a leading role in the transition to green energy is the West Indies Oil Company. Founded in 1961, it spearheaded an energy revolution in the Eastern Caribbean and is now looking to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions it produces during its operation by pushing towards renewable energy sources.

"The company plans to invest in a five-megawatt solar plant and is expected to play an important role in the country's transition towards renewable energy."

"Our key priority is to diversify our portfolio, grow the business and therefore we expect to play a leading role in terms of the energy transition," outlines Gregory Georges, CEO of West Indies Oil Company.

"We see what is happening in the energy sector, not just in the Caribbean, but outside where companies are no longer just oil companies but energy companies. Therefore, we plan to diversify our business into the renewable energy sector. At the moment we are looking at maybe expanding into solar, wind and biofuels, knowing that is the trajectory of the business now."

"We are also working on developing electric charging stations for vehicles and we have partnered with the Ministry of Environment as they are pursuing projects in regard to electric vehicles' introduction on the island. We will be managing those assets and facilitating the charging stations."

Education — a key driver for economic growth

The government's continued financial support has helped create a thriving education sector where universities are experiencing increasing demand

Antigua and Barbuda has consistently shown its commitment to improving all levels of education, which was once again proven when the 2023 budget was released and the Ministry of Education, Sport and Creative Industries was handed \$68.5 million — the largest percentage of the government budget.

Realizing that education can be a platform for high levels of economic growth, more than 10% of the budget was allocated to the ministry in a clear indication that it represents a high priority for the government and its plans to further develop the country.

"Over the last few years, we have made significant investment at a very high cost to improve the educational infrastructure and by that, I mean ensuring that every citizen, irrespective of their age, demographic or orientation has access to government education," says Daryll Sylvester Matthew, the Minister of Education, Sport and Creative Industries. "I specifically mentioned government education because we do have a thriving private sector-driven educational component as well."

"In the government system, we cover primary and secondary education, from the age of five to 16. We also have several post-secondary and tertiary-level institutions and a university campus. Just focusing on the university, we have heavily subsidized the cost of Antiguans and Barbudans attending the University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus because we have agreed to underwrite the cost of the running of that campus for the first five years of its existence."

"This allows those pursuing degrees at a well-established, well-accredited institution of higher learning to do so for the cost of \$1,800 a year. That is almost nothing compared with the cost of university education elsewhere in the world. We have also given in excess of \$40 million worth of scholarships to our young people to study at home and abroad over the past few years. And it is something that we expect to continue because it costs you more to not have a well-educated society."

"Therefore, we want to complete that circle of education, from the primary stage to receiving a PhD degree. Every citizen and resident in Antigua and Barbuda should have access to every level of education."

A clear focus on higher education

In a move to bring access to the underserved community of the Caribbean, the University of the West Indies opened a physical campus in Antigua in 2019. Named the Five Islands Campus, there were initially just 178 students



Daryll Sylvester Matthew
Minister of Education, Sport and Creative Industries

studying the first and second year portion of their degree. That number has now risen to 700 and is expected to exceed 1,000 by September.

Within the campus are four major schools, each with a dedicated purpose. These are the School of Business and Management, School of Science Computing and Artificial Intelligence, School of Health and Behavioral Sciences and the School of Humanities and Education. There are plans underway to significantly expand the campus in order to meet with the growing demands and popularity of the schools.

"We have partnered with the government

DARYLL SYLVESTER MATTHEW
MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

"Over the last few years, we have made significant investment at a very high cost to improve the educational infrastructure"

of Antigua and Barbuda to expand and build the physical infrastructure of the campus in order to accommodate 5,000 students within the next five years," explains Densil A. Williams, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus.

"We have a good partnership with the Saudi Fund for Development and have secured a soft loan of \$80 million to complete our master plan for the campus. This will allow us to meet



A bird-watcher's paradise, Frigate Bird Sanctuary is the largest in the West Hemisphere



Densil A. Williams
Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus

the housing requirements for students, build a new administrative complex, a new teaching and learning complex and supporting facilities.

"This is a top concern for us as we are seeing a substantial increase in demand across the four schools. The School of Business and Management is still the most popular, but the School of Science Computing and Artificial Intelligence is growing the fastest and is becoming very attractive. An increase in students also means more staff so between now and 2025, we should have 20 new faculty members working across all four schools."

Making a difference

Thanks to the sharp focus on education, Antigua and Barbuda is developing a young and talented workforce that will not only impact the future of the country but also have a say internationally. This is already being seen at the American University of Antigua (AUA), which ranks as one of the top international medical schools in the Caribbean thanks to its emphasis on innovation and ability to provide a learn-centric education.

"The university has developed a close relationship with local hospitals, thus allowing its medical students the opportunity to shadow physicians and gain a great deal of invaluable clinical exposure."

"This helps our students to develop a global health perspective on medicine and see specifically how things are done in the Caribbean," reveals Vernon Solomon, Vice President of Administration and Community Affairs at AUA.

"We also bring faculty from all over the globe to speak on a variety of topics, whether



Vernon Solomon
Vice President, Administration and Community Affairs, American University of Antigua

it be sickle cell, healthcare systems, or various crises that may be happening around the world."

"This knowledge and expertise is then put to good use, with many graduates taking up placements in the Caribbean, as well as further afield."

DENSIL A. WILLIAMS
PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL
UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, FIVE ISLANDS CAMPUS

"We have partnered with the government of Antigua and Barbuda to expand and build the physical infrastructure of the campus in order to accommodate 5,000 students within the next five years."

"There is genuine pride in seeing where students have gone after their studies have concluded. Knowing that many of them may not have had the opportunity to study initially and seeing them succeed in the end is absolutely amazing and professionally very satisfying," adds Solomon.

"AUA has and continues to provide medical education to students from around the globe and there are now more than 2,500 graduates that can be found practicing medicine across the Caribbean as well as in the US, Canada, UK, India and Africa."

Collaboration beneficial for staff and students

The country's leading universities are exchanging knowledge with some of the world's leading institutions

At a time when internationalization is growing rapidly due to advances in technology and the relative ease and inexpensiveness of travel, universities around the world are seeking to capitalize on the opportunity this presents by fostering relationships with other institutions. This allows for an exchange of knowledge that not only benefits students and educators, but the world as a whole.

This has been the case in Antigua and Barbuda where the University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus has partnered with numerous American researchers and welcomed a host of foreign exchange students. It already has partnerships with Harvard Business School and the University of Maryland, and is always willing to explore other areas of collaboration.

"We offer a course that has been developed by the Harvard Business School for students who want to upgrade their skills in financial management accounting or production and operations management," explains Densil A. Williams, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus.

"We have also just had four faculty members travel to Harvard Business School to study a new course in teaching and learning. They have recently returned and will impart that knowledge to other members of our faculty so that they can offer new teaching and case study methodologies."

"These are very important partnerships and we are looking to select more high-quality partners that share our vision, ethos and core values. We currently have a team at the University of Maryland on a research proposal grant that is exploring the transformation of healthcare through modern technology. This is another collaboration that I'm sure will advance the Five Islands Campus."

Similarly, the American University of Antigua (AUA) has an affiliation agreement with Florida International University in the US and the University of Warwick Medical School in the UK, the latter allowing up to eight AUA students a year the opportunity to finish their degree after completing their first two years of medical education in Antigua. "American University of Antigua also has a direct connection

with India and my team and I have travelled to India on several occasions and have taken our pre-hospital care programs to the country, along with specific American Heart Association courses," details Vernon Solomon, Vice President of Administration and Community Affairs at AUA.

"We have noticed similarities between our needs and those that exist in India. Therefore, being able to share our experiences with the Indian community, and vice versa, lays the foundation to save lives now, as well as in the future, through the excellent training that our students receive."

Creating new connections

The Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology (ABIIT) already has a relationship with both the Midwestern State University in Texas and the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. However, Ornel Walker-Maurice, Head of Campus at ABIIT is keen for the institute to create further associations with overseas universities.

"That is our main ambition this year and we are negotiating to develop relationships with more universities. We have pioneered the way our course content is delivered through relationships with other institutions which has allowed for greater transparency for universities to see what is being taught" she says.

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The historic Nelson's Dockyard in English Harbor is Antigua's UNESCO World Heritage gem

In addition to partnering with educational institutions, the University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC) has been seeking ways in which it can work with organizations whose aim is to help the local community. Rather than offering simple outreach programs, the university and its faculty look to collaborate with government agencies and non-government organizations that are hoping to make a significant difference in Antigua and Barbuda.

Most recently, the university embarked on a scheme with the Ministry of Labor which proved to be especially effective. "We trained

close to 200 people in entrepreneurship and employability skills, with the focus mainly being on those who are unemployed and making sure that they have the opportunity to find employment and get back in the workplace," explains Coleen Letlow, Head of Campus at UWIOC.

"There's also a local NGO, Women Against Rape, who we collaborate with and offer our expertise and facilities. It is imperative that we work with these organizations to benefit the community, so we try to do both educational and social outreach."

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An enviable tourism offering

With tourism being one of the main economic drivers in Antigua and Barbuda, the twin-island destination felt the full effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as travel restrictions were enforced around the world. However, the industry has rebounded quickly and there has been a significant surge in demand from tourists looking to visit the Caribbean country.

More than 680,000 visits were recorded in 2022 as the country builds towards matching the record numbers seen in 2019. This tremendous success has been led by the nation's enviable offering, with Antigua boasting 95 miles of stunning coastline and its sister island of Barbuda being home to protective reefs and picturesque lagoons.

Steeped in history and culture, visitors can choose to relax on pristine white-sand beaches, visit colonial-era buildings and forts, or explore the vibrant rainforests and national parks that offer breathtaking views. The country also has an attractive hospitality offering, covering everything from internationally renowned hotel brands to a new generation of boutique hotels that deliver competitive prices, attention to detail and carefully curated services.

Located on Dickenson Bay, one of the most prestigious beaches in Antigua, Buccaneer Beach Club is a 20-room boutique hotel that has seen a significant increase in demand post-COVID, thanks to its wonderful location and its reputation for delivering a highly personalized service.

Just a 10-minute drive from V. C. Bird International Airport, the hotel's large, self-contained rooms come with kitchenettes, desks for working and a spacious living area that makes it a favorite both with business and leisure tourists. The property also boasts two beachfront cottages, each featuring living and dining rooms, a kitchen, laundry area and two bedrooms.

"Buccaneer Beach Club offers comfort, convenience, and natural beauty," describes Leonard Reynolds, general manager at Buccaneer Beach Club. "Guests can enjoy luxurious accommodations with self-contained rooms that feature a kitchenette, which makes it ideal for remote workers or anyone looking to prepare their own meals. Some rooms even include a washer and dryer, allowing guests to do their laundry at their own pace.

"Guests can also request grocery packs before arrival, which are delivered to their rooms to ensure they have the necessary supplies for their stay. Additionally, airport pickups are available upon request to make arrival and departure seamless.

"Furthermore, the club's friendly staff ensure a warm and welcoming atmosphere, while the serene beachfront location and access to various amenities such as swimming pools, nearby restaurants and bars make it the perfect choice for a memorable stay in Antigua."

Having witnessed a rise in bookings and increased demand in the past year, especially from visitors from the US, Reynolds reveals that Buccaneer Beach Club has diversified its offering as it now looks to cater to a variety of travelers, all with specific demands.

"The pandemic taught the tourism industry the importance of adaptability and we have learned to pivot in order to cater to the preferences of different travelers," he says.

LEONARD REYNOLDS
GENERAL MANAGER
BUCCANEER BEACH CLUB

"We encourage those looking to plan a stay to be sure to book via our website www.buccaneerbeach.com to take full advantage of the best deals"

"We have implemented enhanced health and safety protocols and we're crafting new strategies to explore different tourist profiles, such as eco-friendly and wellness travelers.

"We also have the ability to arrange adventure tours that showcase Antigua's unique offering. These include guided hikes, sailing, snorkeling and diving excursions, and visits to historical sites like Nelson's Dockyard. We want to ensure that visitors have the chance to experience the island's rich culture, its beautiful landscapes and warm hospitality throughout their stay.

"Therefore, we encourage those looking to plan a stay at Buccaneer Beach Club to be sure to book directly via our website www.buccaneerbeach.com in order to take full advantage of the best deals."

Showcasing its storied history

While Antigua may be renowned for its 365 beaches and Barbuda is home to seemingly endless stretches of unspoiled sand, the twin-island nation offers up much more than just white sands. The country has a fascinating history that can be explored across a variety of locations.

In the capital of St. John's, the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda houses plenty of indigenous artefacts, including well-preserved examples of basketry and pottery. It also provides background on the history of sugar plantations and even touches on the country's sporting heroes, with a statue portraying cricketing legend Sir Vivian Richards in mid-swing. Perhaps the most famous site of all, however, is Nelson's

Antigua and Barbuda is home to boutique hotels, fascinating historical sites, a championship golf course and a successful sailing industry



Leonard Reynolds
General Manager
Buccaneer Beach Club



Alison Sly-Adams
President and Commercial Director
Antigua Sailing Week



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Dockyard, which has functioned as a marina for more than 350 years.

Inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016 and named after the legendary British admiral, Horatio Nelson, who was stationed in the country in the 18th century, buildings have been restored to past glory and there is a dockyard museum, marina and restaurants to explore.

One of the most popular sites in the country and a hit with visitors from around the world, the dockyard is also somewhat unique in that it is one of the few places where luxurious yachts are just a short distance from the endangered and threatened ecosystems that the country is working hard to protect. Surrounding the historic site is a colorful coral reef that is home to a variety of marine life, such as nursing sharks, the West Indian Spiny lobster and hawksbill turtles.

"We are a mecca for yachting but we also work to maintain a pristine ecosystem so we aim to attract tourists and maintain the heritage of the site. It's a sustainable model that has worked for decades," explains a Nelson's Dockyard official.

Outside of the dockyard, historic forts dot the landscape around the national park that stretches more than 15 square miles of Antigua's south coastline. Within this huge expanse are hiking trails, diverse ecosystems, stunning beaches and the historic Shirley Heights Lookout, which was first used during the War of American Independence as a signal station and

lookout for approaches to the English Harbor. But it is the marina itself that consistently attracts large visitor numbers, especially during Antigua Sailing Week, which is one of the most popular events that takes place in the country.

A globally renowned sporting event

Running since 1967, Antigua Sailing Week is one of the longest-running regattas in the Caribbean and regularly attracts participants from all over the world. Started by a group of cruisers who came together to celebrate the end of the winter season, the first race saw participants sail from the country to Guadalupe and back.

Now close to 100 boats take part in the race each year and it is the last event on the International Caribbean Regatta calendar. That makes it a popular celebration for the sailing community across the region, attracting both professional and amateur classes that are incredibly competitive.

"One of the most interesting things about the event is that it takes place in the English Harbor where we have phenomenal world-class marine services that can deliver for the biggest superyachts right down to the smallest dinghy. But then we also have this wonderful juxtaposition with the storied history of Nelson's Dockyard, and the origin of the yachting industry not just in Antigua, but in the region as a whole" explains Alison Sly-Adams, the president and commercial director of Antigua Sailing Week.

© PHOTO: ANTIGUA SAILING WEEK



Antigua Sailing Week — one of the most prestigious regattas in the world

"There is a beautiful history around you as it's the only Georgian dockyard in the region that is still in working order. Because it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the preservation and protection of the area and its history is wonderful to see. That means that even if you don't sail, you can come and be a part of the atmosphere and explore the area."

Regarded as one of the world's top regattas, Antigua Sailing Week regularly attracts more than 1,500 sailors and around 5,000 spectators, making it one of the most important occasions on the country's event calendar. Not only does it help to promote the country and make a significant contribution to the tourism sector, but it also generates a great deal of employment for the local community.

"We do a post-race survey and the injection into the economy just from sailing across the Antigua Sailing Week is around \$2.2 million," reveals Sly-Adams. "However, we have races throughout the season that attract boats that spend money on dock space, marina services, fuel and provisions as well.

"This has actually helped the country develop excellent marine services as the events have grown in number and caliber over the years. The whole industry has become a key driver for the economy and while the regatta may only last a week, those services are vital throughout the year and that in turn ensures that there is a constant stream of revenue coming from the marine industry.

While Antigua Sailing Week is by far the most high-profile event held in the country, there are numerous regattas held throughout the year, including the Optimist Regatta, which teaches young people how to sail and potentially earn a living from within the industry.

"Even the Optimist Regatta attracts around

ALISON SLY-ADAMS
PRESIDENT AND COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR, ANTIGUA SAILING WEEK
"One of the most interesting things about the event is that it takes place in the English Harbor where we have phenomenal world-class marine services."

150 sailors and happens right in the harbor so it is extremely exciting to watch," adds Sly-Adams. "There is a whole ecosystem around sailing as there are numerous harbors and marinas that support the industry and employ many local residents who provide services all across the island. It really does bring great economic value to the country."

Capitalizing on the rise in golf tourism

While sailing has provided a significant uplift to the economy, another area that is ripe for growth is the golf tourism industry. Scotland, known as the home of golf, has always attracted large numbers of golfers from around the world, but now countries such as Thailand and Japan are beginning to grow in popularity among golf enthusiasts.

One of the few sports that could still be played during the COVID-19 pandemic, golf has seen a significant rise in popularity and golf courses around the world are seeking to capitalize by attracting international visitors.

In Barbuda, a championship-caliber golf course is currently being completed as part of the Barbuda Ocean Club project. The hope is that the new course will appeal to every level of golfer and will attract visitors thanks to the guarantee of excellent weather. This will then complement the offering that is already available in Antigua, in Cedar Valley Golf Club.

Designed and built in 1970 and initially opened with just nine holes, it was transformed into an 18-hole course in 1977 and is now home to the Antigua Open Golf Championship and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Golf Tournament. The club already regularly attracts golfers from the US and is now looking to take advantage of the country's thriving cruise industry by enticing more international visitors to spend a day on the fairways and greens.

"We do have a lot of clients from the cruise ships but we would certainly like to have more which is why we want to take the course to the next level," explains Clint Gilpin, the general manager of Cedar Valley Golf Club.

"We would like to brand it as a Professional Golf Association course so we are improving a few things at the club, such as changing the grass, as well as adding a new filtration system and a new irrigation system.

"On top of this, we have roughly around seven acres of land and there has been some interest from developers looking to build hotels and condos around the golf course, which would facilitate the club in realizing its full potential. It certainly presents a great investment opportunity as we are just 10 minutes from the cruise port and it takes the same amount of time to reach the airport.

"Recently we had Jaysom Tatum from the Boston Celtics basketball team come and play here. We have a truly wonderful location and the 18-hole course is absolutely spectacular because of the sea views. The golf course itself is one of the most challenging in the Caribbean because of its steep hills and slopes. It is also a great place to come and relax as we have comfortable facilities, friendly staff and we cater to every level of golfer."

EVENTS IN ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

JANUARY

- Talisker Whisky Atlantic Rowing Challenge

MARCH

- Superyacht Challenge
- Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta

MAY

- The 55th Antigua Sportfishing Tournament
- Barbuda's Caribana

JULY

- Optimist North American Championships
- Antigua's Carnival

SEPTEMBER

- Francis Nunes Jr. Memorial Fishing Tournament & Seafood Festival



FEBRUARY

- Antigua 360
- Royal Oceanic Race Club (RORC) Caribbean 600 Race

APRIL

- Antigua Sailing Week
- Antigua and Barbuda International Kite Festival

JUNE

- Antigua and Barbuda Romance Month

AUGUST

- Urlings Seafood Festival
- The Piango Festival

NOVEMBER

- Gemonites Moods of Pan Festival

DECEMBER

- Antigua Charter Yacht Show

More info at:
www.visitantiguabarbuda.com/calendar/