

DECEMBER 2019 | JANUARY 2020

BOLD

INSPIRATION FOR TRAVELLERS



DISCOVERING
**ANTIGUA
& BARBUDA**

San Francisco
Cape Town
Michoacán
+ Los Cabos
TWO WAYS

Holiday Style!

GIFT GUIDE 2019
WHERE TO GO &
WHAT TO WEAR

TRADE



An aerial photograph of a tropical coastline. The top half of the image shows clear, turquoise water with visible sandy patches and coral reefs. The bottom half shows a dense, lush green forest along the coast. The word "WINDS" is written in large, white, serif capital letters across the center of the image.

WINDS

SURE, ANTIGUA'S BEACHES AND RESORTS ARE SPECTACULAR. BUT **GORDON BOWNESS** FELL IN LOVE WITH THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRY'S COOL

SUPERETTE.

WHAT *a*

WONDERFUL *word*

A superlative married to a diminutive. On the east Caribbean island of Antigua, a superette is a small mom-and-pop grocery store. Antiguan love their diminutives: shackette, snackette... and superette. I can't think of a better word to describe this little island with its outsized attitude.

On a recent whirlwind tour of this sunny nation, I was determined to get a handle on what comprises that unique Antigua attitude.

The country, a jagged network of coves and promontories, dramatic cliffs and pristine beaches, has been a prime destination for the well-heeled and well-travelled ever since the 1960s when it was one of the first islands in the region to turn from sugarcane production to tourism. Socialite Bunny Mellon was an early convert, welcoming the likes of Jackie O and Robert Kennedy to her secluded villa above Half Moon Bay (recently restored by the current owner, American fashion designer Tory Burch). Giorgio Armani still has a home here, as does Eric Clapton, Lord Sainsbury, Pierce Brosnan, Oprah... the list goes on.

Yet Antiguan—a tiny nation of about 80,000, built by slaves and their descendants—are famously blasé about their celebrity visitors. While having dinner at Trappas, a boisterous eatery popular with both locals and tourists in the town of English Harbour, I ask my host, Mauricia Frith of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, about her favourite celebrity sightings. She demurs. “Oh, no,” she says, waving her hand. “We don't care about such things.” There is an intriguing nonchalance to Antiguan. They've seen it all. Most locals work in or support the tourist industry. They are very adept at handling the idiosyncrasies, if not the idiocies, of all manner of tourists. I call that sophistication, which is just an old-fashioned word for cool.

Antigua is one of the most popular wedding destinations in the Caribbean. Upon arrival in the airport, it's common to see two or three grooms-to-be holding giant garment bags containing fluffy wedding dresses and veils. This presents a delightful irony. For on this island of love-ever-after, the most visited attraction is named after a cad, Horatio Nelson, English hero of the Napoleonic Wars.

“Maritime criminal” is the preferred term of Antiguan writer Jamaica Kincaid to describe Nelson, who was an ally of Caribbean slave owners and took a position against the abolitionist movement in Britain. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, an estimated four million were brought to the sugar islands of the Caribbean, though many died on the journey or soon after arrival.



Antigua remains one of the world's yachting capitals.

A cocktail at Sandra's Bar and Grill at Jolly Beach.



Although Nelson can be seen primarily as a symbol of the global scale of British colonial aggression, he is a notable as a character specific to the history of Antigua. English Harbour is home to Nelson's Dockyard, the world's best-preserved Georgian-era dockyard. The UNESCO World Heritage site is still very much a working marina with a suite of 250-year-old stone buildings refurbished as boutique hotels and chic restaurants. At Pillars, housed in the former pitch and turpentine storehouse, you can order a Dark 'N' Stormy (rum and ginger beer) under the watchful gaze of Nelson, whose portrait presides over the dark wood bar. From underneath the almond trees by the patio, I look out across the water to the recently restored Clarence House, a very pretty 18th-century cottage overlooking the harbour. It inspires dreams of great love. Kind of. It's where Nelson likely fell in love with a married woman, Mary Moutray, wife of the harbour master when Nelson was stationed here in the 1780s. She would return to England and Nelson would marry a widow from the nearby island of Nevis, though that marriage didn't end well either.

In matters of romance, a healthy dose of skepticism goes a long way. I find a kindred spirit while dining at Sugar Ridge Resort. Its special event restaurant, Carmichael's, is one of the most romantic dining spots on the island, perched way up a hill above Jolly Harbour. Facing west, it catches the sun setting over the Caribbean as tree frogs begin their nightly serenade. When our dinner conversation turns to divorce, as it sometimes does, Sugar Ridge's food and beverage manager sounds off. "We renew our car licence, we renew all kinds of licences," says Alfredo Diedrick, "so why don't we renew our wedding licences?" It's a grown-up dose of realism in the land of young romance. While happy to host weddings, Diedrick finds greater satisfaction from hosting couples who choose to renew their vows at Carmichael's. "Five years, 10 years in a relationship," he says, "that's something to celebrate."

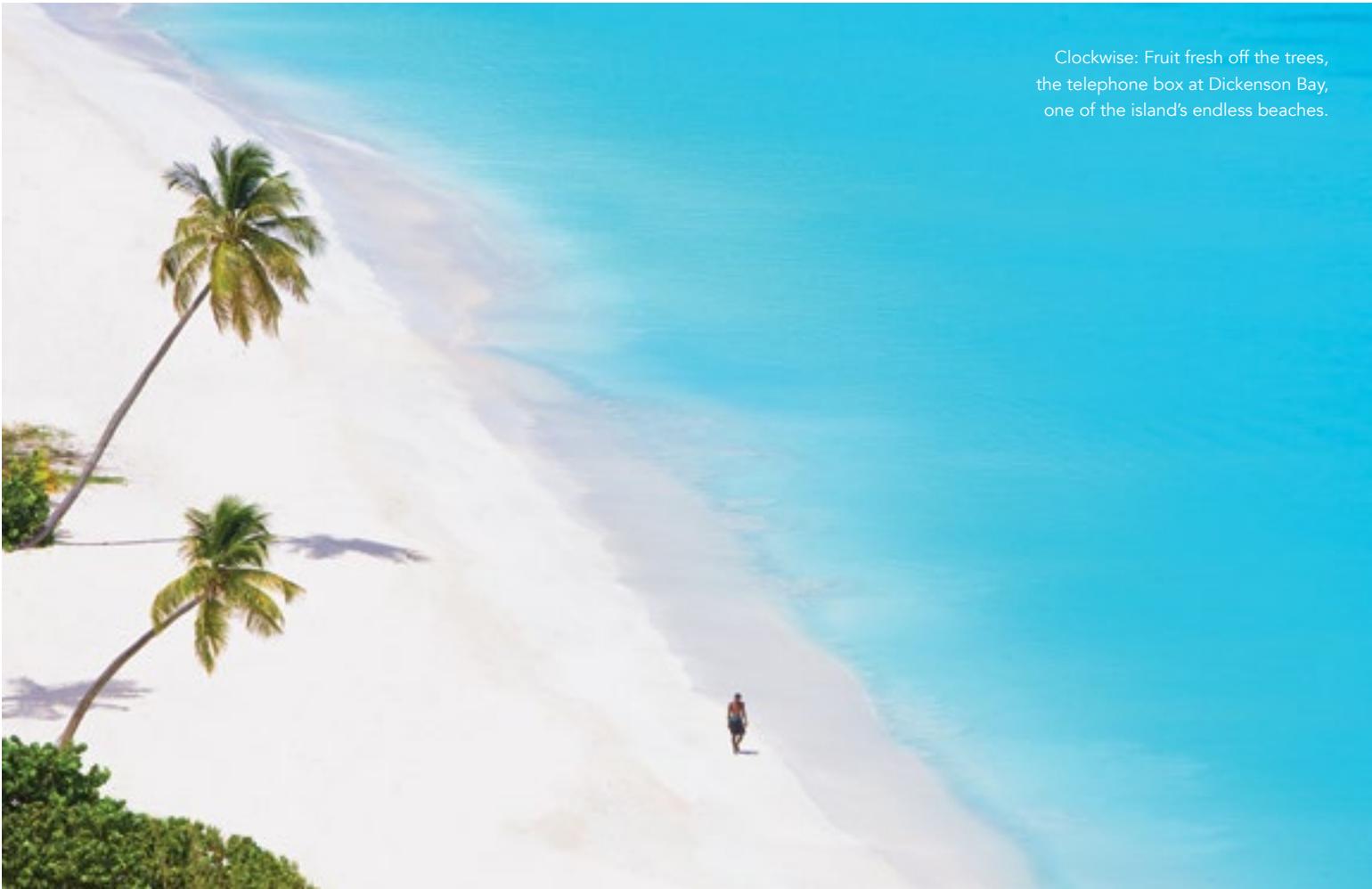
Throughout the trip, I was on the hunt for national dishes like saltfish and ducana (white sweet potato and coconut), fungee (cornmeal and okra dumpling) and pepperpot (salt beef, chopped vegetables and mine had pickled pig tail).

"I hate making ducana," says Frith over a plate of seasoned rice. "My mother insists I grate everything by hand. I can't use a blender, I just can't.... Our food takes a long, long time to make and a lot of finesse."

That finesse is an essential component of Antigua's history. These national dishes began as off-cuts and other foodstuffs the slave owners didn't want, but were transformed through hard work and a few ingenious flavourings into something sustaining and delicious. They suggest the most crucial ingredient in Antigua's bewitching attitude: resilience.

Sophistication, realism, hard work, resilience—that's Antigua cool.

I love what ordinary Antiguanians have built here. This is a beautiful island that has moved past its dark colonial history. Superette.



Clockwise: Fruit fresh off the trees, the telephone box at Dickenson Bay, one of the island's endless beaches.



ANTIGUA + BARBUDA

Essentials

SEE

Wallings Nature Reserve is a community-run national park offering beautiful, medium-difficulty nature walks. The shortish but very vertical hike to Signal Hill is a must. Hikers emerge from the shady forest into a sun-blasted meadow of tall lemongrass blowing wildly atop a rocky outcrop that offers stunning views to both sides of the island. wallingsnaturereserve.org

ROMANCE

Carmichael's is the spot for a romantic sunset, whether sampling cocktails by the infinity pool or savouring dinner in the cliff-hugging open-air restaurant. Built high atop a peak overlooking Jolly Bay and operated by the lovely (non-beach) resort **Sugar Ridge**, Carmichael's is always a special event. sugarridgeantigua.com

STAY

If the view is good enough for Giorgio Armani.... **Galley Bay Resort** is one of the oldest on the island, dating back to 1959. Expanded repeatedly over the years, now at 98 rooms, it's still the only resort on Galley Bay and its secluded beach. Celebrated for superior service and unpretentious glamour—Garbo stayed here!—this adult-only all-inclusive is a perennial favourite with scores of returning customers. Even Armani, whose villa is perched on a cliff at the northeast end of the beach, is known to grace the resort's delightful open-air bar. galleybayresort.com

EAT

Way at the end of Fort James Beach is **Beach Limerz**, a charming family-owned resto-bar offering a mix of local and international fare, from delicious goat curry to satisfying burgers and fries. Situated on a long beach popular with day-tripping cruise passengers, find out when they are not descending on this locale to enjoy it at its best. beachlierz.com

The Farmers Market near the port in St. John's is held every Saturday, offering a great selection of fruit, fish, baking and other goodies. Saturday is also the day locals eat goat water (a hearty stew), bull's foot soup and other traditional dishes served up in street stalls around the market. If those prove too daunting for some travellers, head over a few blocks to **Joe Mike's**, a clean, barebones cafeteria (and casino?!) popular with locals that serves up a selection of inexpensive Antiguan dishes. joemikes.com

CRUISE

The nautical calendar kicks off early December with the **Antigua Charter Yacht Show**, the ultimate showcase for rich boys (mostly) and their giant toys. That's followed by a series of popular regattas culminating late April in Sailing Week, considered one of the world's best regattas. Featuring six days of races and parties, **Sailing Week** offers a very Antiguan mix of wealthy jet-setters, ordinary residents and sailors at all levels, from Olympic-champions to local juniors. Non-competitors get in on the action with numerous spectator boats chasing the racers and land-based viewing parties. English Harbour and neighbouring Falmouth Harbour, already jammed with restaurants and bars, are filled to bursting during Sailing Week with scores of additional food stalls and vendors. In the heart of the action are the historic **Admiral's Inn** and **Copper and Lumber Store Inn**; bookings for Sailing Week are made a year in advance. antiguayachtshow.com; sailingweek.com; admiralsantigua.com; copperandlumberstore.com

Antigua's sister island, Barbuda, has been making a comeback after Hurricane Irma devastated the island in 2017. Although the entire population of 1,800 had to be evacuated, most Barbudans have come back. As have the frigate birds—Barbuda had one of the largest colonies in the world of frigate birds, impressive creatures with eight-foot wingspans and bright red throat pouches. The island's pristine 27-kilometre beach is again hosting day-trippers from Antigua, and a few accommodations have re-opened for more adventurous nature lovers.