

Walking Tour of St. John's (Antigua)

A map can be found here: <http://edit.jgospel.net/media/35806/48503.jpg>

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The Ministry of Tourism promotes the National Museum of Antigua and Barbuda and St. John's Cathedral as major tourist attractions. These sites should not be overlooked, but St. John's also offers the opportunity to experience one of the best Caribbean capital cities while exploring local hang-outs, sampling the local cuisine, and absorbing some of the Antiguan culture.

Orientation

St. John's main drag is Market Street stretching from the West Bus Station north to High Street. If St. John's had a major intersection, High Street and Market Street would be it. From High Street east to Independence Ave is another busy stretch. West from High Street and Market Street is the main tourist area, Heritage Quay, where cruise ship passengers disembark to explore the island. Here you will find duty-free shopping and several trendy clothing outlets (not to mention the throngs of taxi drivers and street vendors). Redcliffe Quay is a beautifully restored area nestled by the docks of St. John's. Once the slave market and rum distillery, Redcliffe Quay is now top real estate for restaurants and souvenir boutiques.

Getting Around

There is no bus service within St. John's but luckily you really don't need any transportation other than your feet. Set in a grid system, the 4 square miles of the capital are easy to navigate. If, however, you would like a lift, taxis are readily available from about EC\$15 to take you anywhere within the city.

If you drive to the capital parking can be a problem, especially during weekday business hours. There is a secure car park on lower Newgate Street charging EC\$2/hour or EC\$12/day. A multistory car park is currently under construction near the East Bus Station. Alternatively, you can vie for a street parking space, which are free of charge, but can be difficult to find. You should keep in mind that illegal parking in the capital is finable and tickets are regularly issued by the police.



Parking in St. John's can be difficult

Sights/Tour

Heritage Quay

For most visitors to St. John's (especially cruise ship passengers), Heritage Quay will be your first point of entrance. Heritage Quay is the quintessential cruise ship port. Everyday during high season, thousands of visitors crowd the quay where duty-free shops and upscale souvenir stores are housed in a massive outdoor complex. You really won't find anything unique or culturally significant here, but if you are looking to stock up on generic Caribbean souvenirs, they have the stores and vendors to accommodate you.



Street vendor near Heritage Quay

National Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

MARKET STREET AND LONG STREET; 462-1469

MON-FRI 8:30AM-4PM, SAT 10AM-2PM; US\$3/EC\$8, 12 AND UNDER FREE

This small yet informative museum gives a brief historical overview of the island. Although many of the exhibits seem outdated, the museum gives the visitor a better understanding of the island's history. Of special interest are the early photographs on display and additional archived photos. The museum opened in 1985 in what was once the old St. John's Court House, constructed in 1750. Today it is operated by the Historical & Archeological Society, a private non-profit organization, which also hosts several historical seminars and events that are open to the public. Inquire with the museum for further information.

Continue east on Long Street until you reach the Cathedral on your left.

St. John's Cathedral

Looming over the capital for which it takes its name, St. John's Cathedral is an impressive sight. The current structure is actually the third and most elaborate church to be constructed on this hill overlooking the city. An earthquake in 1683 destroyed a small wooden church that sat on this site and in 1843 another quake caused severe damage to a larger brick cathedral. The designers of the current structure wanted to ensure that history would not repeat itself, so a pitch pine interior was created encasing the freestone structure to provide protection from earthquakes and hurricanes. This design has caused the cathedral to be called "a church within a church".

Today the cathedral has fallen into disrepair and a restoration project has been in the works for several years. Despite the needed repairs, the cathedral offers regular service for the public and is open for all to visit. The large cemetery with wide horizontal headstones has turned into a picnic area for Antiguan workers on their lunch breaks – during a hot afternoon the cathedral's elevated status provides a much needed breeze above the city. It is not uncommon to find the graveyard crowded with locals cooling out over the crumbling graves of early colonizers.



Government House

NEWGATE STREET AND CROSS STREET
NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Built around 1750 and occupied at the time by the well known merchant Thomas Norbury Kerby, this residence was purchased by the British government in 1807 as the official house for the Governor of the Leeward Islands. Although 35 Governor Generals have lived here, the most revered was Governor Oliver Baldwin who promoted social and economic reform to improve the lives of black Antiguans. Due to these controversial views of the time, Baldwin was recalled to England in 1950 after only a short two year post and subsequently died in 1958. Upon his request, Baldwin's ashes were buried in Antigua on Green Castle Hill.

Antigua Recreation Grounds

FACTORY ROAD AND INDEPENDENCE AVENUE

The ARG was once the national venue for all entertainment and sporting events, including the beloved West Indies Cricket. Chikie's HiFi in the party stand and Sir Viv's record breaking moments have enshrined the ARG in Antiguan history. Today the venue has been overshadowed by the new Sir Vivian Richards Stadium (pg 82), which was built in preparation for the 2007 Cricket World Cup and many believe will eventually replace the ARG. To the elation of Antiguans with fond memories of the ARG, events are still held here. For more information on upcoming events, call 462-1419.

Cenotaph

FACTORY ROAD AND INDEPENDENCE AVENUE

Located on Independence Ave, between the ARG and East Bus Station, is Antigua and Barbuda's memorial to those Antiguans and Barbudans who lost their lives serving in the First and Second World Wars. Each year on Remembrance Day a ceremony is held at the monument and wreaths are placed around the memorial.