

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**TOURISM SECTOR BOUYED AS ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TOURISM AIR ARRIVAL FIGURES HIT PRE-COVID HIGH**

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**ST. JOHN’S, ANTIGUA (August 16, 2021) –** Tourism stayover arrivals in Antigua and Barbuda for the month of July have surpassed pre-covid levels, as pent-up demand for travel, has tourists flocking to the twin-island paradise during the country’s traditional low season.

The Ministry of Tourism has announced that stayover tourism arrivals for the month came in at a high with 23,405 tourists visiting Antigua and Barbuda via the V.C. Bird International Airport. The July 2021 air arrival figures have surpassed 2019 arrivals, which during the record-breaking year for Antigua and Barbuda, stood at 23,031.

Minister of Tourism, The Honourable Charles Fernandez said, “there has been a visible change in the travel behaviour of our visitors brought on by the covid-19 pandemic and we continue to see a steady increase in arrivals during the summer months.

“July has been an extremely strong month with demand for the destination from the US Market as well as the UK market, booming, with growth above 2019 figures. We are also beginning to see an uptake from our Caribbean and Canadian market.”

From the main source markets, 15,350 of Antigua and Barbuda’s tourists travelled by air from the United States in July 2021 compared to 10,221 in July 2019. This is followed by 6521 from the United Kingdom compared to 5378. With airlift still not up to pre-covid levels, Antigua and Barbuda received 839 tourists from the Caribbean and 107 from Canada during the month.

CEO of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, Colin C. James, said “We are indeed buoyed by this continued upward trajectory in the air arrival numbers which is a clear indication that the recovery is well underway. This is particularly encouraging in that this July which is the best July ever for air arrivals was accomplished in a year when Antigua’s carnival was again cancelled due to the pandemic as compared to 2019 when we had carnival. This good news only serves to redouble our efforts for the remainder of the year.”

With air arrivals up, hoteliers across the country have been busy. Vernon A. Jeffers Snr. Executive Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association, reports that, “July saw a return to very high occupancies particularly across our mid-range sized hotels who performed at 80% and higher. We certainly hope that these occupancy levels are sustained over the next few months as travelers continue to make last minute decisions to travel to the destination.”

The good news continued as reports coming in from tourism stakeholders across the sector have also been positive. Tour operators, taxis and restauranteurs have indicated that they are experiencing an uptake in business for the month of July with some partners calling July 2021, “the best July in years even before covid!” with increased bookings for the month, as well as going into August.

“Let me take this opportunity to say thank you, to all our tourism partners and the hard-working professionals in our Ministry of Health, for their continuous hard work and dedication”, said the Tourism Minister. He also stressed that, “with forward bookings for Antigua and Barbuda showing arrivals expected to rise, the safety of those who reside in Antigua and Barbuda as well as our visitors remains of paramount importance.

“The Ministry of Tourism urges all tourism partners and stakeholders to remain vigilant and committed to the following of the covid-19 health and safety protocols to guarantee a strong tourism recovery.”

The Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association also echoed these sentiments and encouraged resort management and employees in the sector to ensure that all public health measures are followed, thereby ensuring that we remain safe and have the capability to sustain a long-term performance in the sector.

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**ABOUT ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA**

Antigua (pronounced An-tee'ga) and Barbuda (Bar-byew’da) is located in the heart of the Caribbean Sea. Voted the World Travel Awards 2015, 2016, 2017 *and 2018* *Caribbean’s Most Romantic Destination*, the twin-island paradise offers visitors two uniquely distinct experiences, ideal temperatures year-round, a rich history, vibrant culture, exhilarating excursions, award-winning resorts, mouth-watering cuisine and 365 stunning pink and white-sand beaches - one for every day of the year. The largest of the Leeward Islands, Antigua comprises 108-square miles with rich history and spectacular topography that provides a variety of popular sightseeing opportunities. Nelson’s Dockyard, the only remaining example of a Georgian fort a listed UNESCO World Heritage site, is perhaps the most renowned landmark. Antigua’s tourism events calendar includes the prestigious Antigua Sailing Week, Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta, and the annual Antigua Carnival; known as the Caribbean’s Greatest Summer Festival. Barbuda, Antigua’s smaller sister island, is the ultimate celebrity hideaway. The island lies 27 miles north-east of Antigua and is just a 15-minute plane ride away. Barbuda is known for its untouched 17 mile stretch of pink sand beach and as the home of the largest Frigate Bird Sanctuary in the Western Hemisphere.  Find information on Antigua & Barbuda at: [www.visitantiguabarbuda.com](http://www.visitantiguabarbuda.com) or follow us on **Twitter**. <http://twitter.com/antiguabarbuda>  **Facebook** [www.facebook.com/antiguabarbuda](http://www.facebook.com/antiguabarbuda); **Instagram**: [www.instagram.com/AntiguaandBarbuda](http://www.instagram.com/AntiguaandBarbuda)

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