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SISTER ISLANDS

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SEE PAGE 26

INSIDE:

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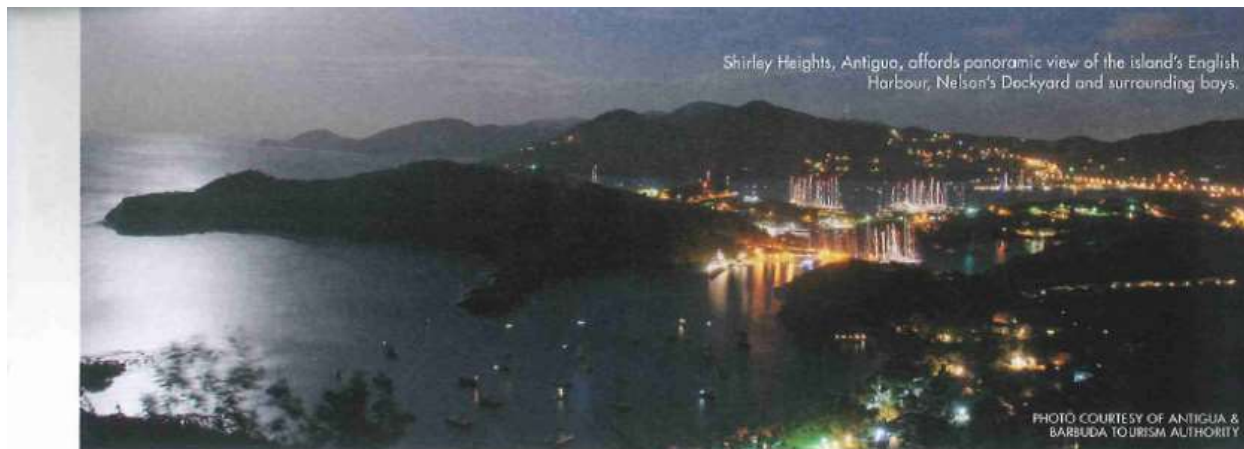
Caribbean islands are well represented among the specialist courses and rewards programs at Travel Agent University, www.tauniv.com

SISTER ACT: SELLING ISLAND PAIRS IN THE CARIBBEAN

BY JOE PIKE



View of Nevis from Major's Bay
Beach on St. Kitts. Visitors can
make plane or ferry connections
between the two islands.



Shirley Heights, Antigua, affords panoramic view of the island's English Harbour, Nelson's Dockyard and surrounding bays.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANTIGUA & BARBUDA TOURISM AUTHORITY

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

The Big Sister/Little Sister: Antigua gets the big sister nod as it is the largest of the English-speaking Leeward Islands. It is about 14 miles long and 11 miles wide, covering roughly 110 square miles. It has a population of 80,000 people, whereas the much smaller Barbuda is home to only about 2,000. Barbuda is a flat coral island with an area of only roughly 70 square miles.

Location: Antigua and Barbuda are part of the Leeward Islands chain in the Eastern Caribbean.

Nearest Airport: Antigua is home to V. C. Bird International Airport, which is where most people will fly to when going to Barbuda as well, followed by a 25-minute drive. However, Barbuda is also home to the much smaller Barbuda Codrington Airport, which can accommodate small charter flights. Currently, it has only one scheduled service offered by ABM Air as the airport has a very short runway and no terminal building.

Hottest News: It was announced toward the end of 2013 that Sandals Resorts International (www.sandals.com) will bring a new Beaches Resort to the country. The move comes not too long after the company announced the purchase of a Couples Resort and a new Beaches resort in Barbados. The new Beaches Antigua will be built on the site of the company's existing Grand Pineapple Beach Resort in Long Bay. It will have one- to four-bedroom rooms and suites, up to 12 restaurants, conferencing facilities and a waterpark, cinema, Xbox Play Lounge and BMX track.

Most Popular Clientele: Young couples and large families are the dominant guests here. Specifically, fans of all-inclusives should be targeted. Affluent clients tend to head to Barbuda for an overnight while budget-conscious vacationers in Antigua will head to Barbuda for a day trip or perhaps an overnight or two. Antigua is immensely popular for both couples on a budget and families looking for some of the best all-inclusives in the region.

Other Niche Markets: Soft adventure travel, weddings and honeymoons, and both budget and luxury travel.

Most Popular Activities/Attractions: Water sports continue to be the most common activity on both islands, while horseback riding is also a big attraction on Antigua. Also on Antigua, tell clients to check out Shirley Heights, a restored garrison that has a panoramic view of English Harbour and Nelson's Dockyard. Named after General Sir Thomas Shirley, a former governor, this installation has two particular vantage points worth seeking out. One of the main buildings, known as the Block House, was put up as a stronghold in 1787 in case of a siege. From here, in the southeast area of the island, you can peer over a cliff 487 feet above Galleon Beach. It is as terrifying as it is absolutely gorgeous. Don't worry; you don't have to get too close to the edge to see the green hills, where countless goats and their adorable kids can be seen, and definitely heard, climbing on their way down to the base of the cliff.

At night, the area is a popular camping ground for couples looking to watch the sun come up.

Hot Hotels: Arguably the best place to stay in Antigua is Galley Bay Resort (www.galleybayresort.com). This 40-acre couples' haven, built next to Giorgio Armani's mansion, sports a larger pool area, a tennis court, small fitness center with only a treadmill and exercise bike (although there are plans to make the gym bigger), a cricket lawn, pool table, free Internet room with two computers, two bars and three restaurants—Gauguin, Sea Grape and Ismay's Restaurant & Bar.

Galley Bay Resort is for couples seeking tranquil surroundings. Since guests need to be at least 16 years old, it is not an option for most families.

There is only one hotel in Barbuda, but it's a great one. Lighthouse Bay Resort (www.lighthousebay.com) sits on its

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

own private island, with 17 miles of pink sand beach and the Caribbean Sea on one side and a shallow lagoon on the other. This is just the thing for affluent couples looking for something off-the-beaten path in the Caribbean. While Barbuda in general is not recommended for a vacation on its own, one or two days here could be a much needed escape from the more tourist-heavy Antigua. Guests can either access the property directly via a private helicopter from Antigua Airport (ANU) or take an S.A.G. flight to Barbuda followed by a boat-ride across the lagoon. A private plane can also be arranged from Antigua to Barbuda.

Additional Tips for Agents: Barbuda is a great compliment to Antigua, but until it gets more resorts and easier access to the island, we wouldn't recommend anything past a night or two on the island. In fact, it is perfect for a day trip, but staying at Lighthouse Bay Resort for a couple of nights is a treat in itself. Antigua has some of the best beaches in the Caribbean so be sure to tell clients to soak up the sun while there.

More Info: www.antigua-barbuda.org