

Antigua and Barbuda

Status: Independent State within the British Commonwealth
Area: 171 sq. miles
Population: 93,581 (2016 estimate)
Currency: Eastern Caribbean Dollar (100c = EC\$1) EC\$1 = U.S. \$0.37



The nation of Antigua and Barbuda consists of three islands. Antigua, the largest, is 108 square miles and volcanic in origin. It is distinguished from other Leeward Islands by its lack of mountains or forests. It includes the capital of St. John's and the overwhelming majority of the population. Barbuda is a coral island 25 miles to the northwest, about 62 square miles in size with roughly 2,000 inhabitants. The third, Redonda, is about 30 miles to the west, one-half square mile in area, and populated by a handful of people engaged in phosphate mining.

Columbus named Antigua after a church in Seville when he visited the island in 1493. Spanish and French settlement failed because of Carib attacks and the arid climate. The first British settlers arrived in 1632 from St. Kitts. Barbuda was settled in 1678 and in 1685 the British crown granted it to the Codrington family. The islands were agricultural, initially producing tobacco and later sugar. The abolition of slavery in 1834 created labor shortages and economic problems. Barbuda reverted to the crown in the 19th century and was made a dependency of Antigua.



A King George VI 1-shilling stamp showing St. John's Harbor, Scott 91.

The British policy of merging colonial administrations led to the establishment of the Leeward Islands colony in the 17th century with its administrative seat in St. John's. The federation was never popular with the islands and was abolished in 1956.

On February 27, 1967, Antigua was granted internal self-government and in 1978 it sought full independence. There were negotiations with Barbuda, which wanted its own independent status. On November 1, 1981, Antigua and Barbuda became independent.

A GPO Branch post office was opened in St. John's in 1850. In May 1858, the GPO allowed British stamps to be used for packet mail to England. In February 1859, usage was extended to local mail.

In April 1860, the post office was handed over to the local officials and the use of British stamps discontinued. In August 1862 the first Antiguan stamp was issued, a 6-cent denomination produced by Perkins Bacon depicting Queen Victoria. In October 1890, Antigua's stamps were replaced by stamps of the Leeward Islands. In July 1903, separate Antigua issues were resumed. They were sold and used concurrently with the Leeward Islands issues until 1956.

Barbuda issued overprinted stamps from 1922 to 1924. Special Barbuda issues were resumed in 1968.

In the independence negotiations it was agreed that stamps for the new country would be inscribed "Antigua and Barbuda," a practice that continues to this day. The separate issues for Barbuda lasted until 2000, though it appears that these stamps were produced primarily for the philatelic marketplace.

From 1979 to 1991, Antigua issued stamps and souvenir sheets inscribed Redonda, often overprinted on Antigua & Barbuda issues. These are not listed by major catalogs.

The stamps of Barbuda (after 1968), Antigua, and Redonda were valid throughout the country.



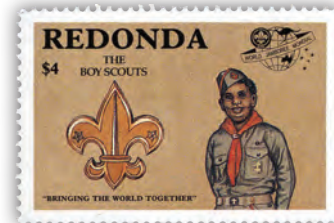
The 4-cent blue stamp of 1879, Scott 10.



Henry II appears on the Barbuda English Monarchs set of 37 from 1970-71, Scott 47.



The 45-cent commemorative stamp from the 19-stamp Antigua and Barbuda Butterflies set of 1988-90, Scott 1155.



There are stamps from Redonda, a mostly uninhabited tiny island that is part of Antigua. The stamps are not listed in Scott catalogs. Among the issues is one for the Boy Scouts.



Antigua and Barbuda has produced several stamps with Disney characters. This is part of the 1993 nine-stamp Nutcracker Christmas set, Scott 1746.