

# Anguilla

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue – wedding bells immediately come to mind, but what about Anguilla? As rabid consumerism devours many Caribbean hot spots, this little limestone bump in the sea has, thus far, maintained its charming menagerie of clapboard shacks (something old) while quietly weaving stunning vacation properties (something new) into the mix. Visitors will discover a melting pot of cultures (something borrowed) set along mind-blowing beaches (something very blue).

One of the most intriguing things about little Anguilla is that it's hard to decide whether or not the island is grossly underrated or if it actually garners more buzz than it deserves. Supporters cite the refreshing lack of development relative to neighboring islands (no casinos, nightclubs etc), and an earnest local vibe that remains very much intact. But on the other hand, extreme price hikes have turned the island into St-Barthélemy's stunt double for jetsetters.

While the debate will no doubt rage for years to come, most agree that the island's best feature (besides the oh-so-blue sea) is its malleability – Anguilla is a blank canvas, allowing visitors to design any vacation they please. Those seeking opulence and privacy can rent one of the many rambling villas, while those looking to dive headfirst into the gritty island culture will be sated with cold beer, reggae beats and nightly gatherings around smoky BBQs. And what's more satisfying than discovering a hidden local haunt which serves fresh lobster and big smiles for half the price of those big-name joints down the street?

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 35 sq miles
- **Capital** The Valley
- **Country code** ☎ 264
- **Departure tax** US\$20 airport & ferry terminal (\$5 if returning the same day)
- **Famous for** Perfect beaches
- **Language** English
- **Money** Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$); EC\$1 = US\$0.38 = €0.24 = UK£0.19
- **Official name** Anguilla
- **People** Anguillians
- **Phrase** Limin' (hanging out, preferably on a beach with a rum punch)
- **Population** 13,677
- **Visa** Not necessary for most nationalities; see p432



## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Beaches** (p430) Indulge in Anguilla's one true claim to fame – emerald waters and powder-soft sands ripped straight from the pages of your favorite travel magazine. Try the popular Shoal Bay East or the quieter windswept Junk's Hole
- **BBQ Tents** (p423) Devour succulent ribs with locals on their lunch break amid thick plumes of barbecue smoke
- **Live Music** (see boxed text, p424) Tap into Anguilla's nightly jam sessions at various hangouts around the island. The Dune Preserve draws in the big names, but don't forget to check out Sprocka's or the Pump-house to hear some gifted local talent
- **Prickly Pear** (p428) Hop on a sailboat or catamaran and make your way over to this super-secluded mini-Anguilla, with its 360 degrees of flaxen sands and mellow turquoise waves
- **Private Villas** (p430) Rent a rambling beachside villa for the ultimate in privacy and pampering

## ITINERARIES

- **One Day** After arriving either at the airport or the ferry pier, rent a car and head to the Valley for an early lunch at one of the local BBQ tents. Continue east and spend the afternoon basking in the turquoise waters at Shoal Bay East, and then, depending on your mood, finish the day with a romantic dinner along Meads Bay, or hit the quaint bar scene in Sandy Ground.
- **Three Days** Grab a hotel room along Shoal Bay East or in the West End (penny-pinchers should try a place in the Valley) and spend your days worshipping the sun and evenings devoted to tracking down the nightly jam session – Sandy Ground's a good place to start.
- **One Week** Try out a villa rental rather than a hotel room for the utmost in privacy. Divide your time between doing absolutely nothing and taste-testing the flavorful local cuisine. Spend a sun-soaked day at Prickly Pear, and do a day trip to St-Martin/Sint Maarten to remind yourself why quiet Anguilla is tops for relaxation.

## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The average annual temperature is 80.6°F (27°C), with the hottest weather occurring

during the hurricane season from June to November. June, July and August, however, are known to be quite lovely as the intense humidity only kicks in around September, when hurricane season is at its peak. The average annual rainfall is 35in. The lightest rainfall is generally from February to April and the heaviest from October to December. Inflated high-season rates start around mid-December and go until mid-April. Many hotels shut down for the entire month of September and often October as well. Christmas or New Year's are crowded for obvious reasons, but surprisingly, February sees the most visitors.

## HISTORY

First settled by the Arawaks from South America over 3500 years ago, Anguilla was called 'Malliouhana,' which meant arrow-shaped sea serpent. The Arawaks settled the island for millennia, evidenced by many cave sites with petroglyphs and artifacts still visible today and studied by archaeologists.

Columbus sailed by in 1493, but didn't land on the island (probably because he didn't notice it since it's extremely flat compared to St-Martin/Sint Maarten next door). Britain sent a colony in 1650 to take advantage of soil that was hospitable to growing corn and tobacco. However, it wasn't hospitable to much else, and the plantation colonies that bloomed on nearby Caribbean islands, like St Kitts and Nevis, never defined Anguilla.

When the sugar plantations were abandoned due to a lack of viable soil and insufficient rain, small-scale industries, like sailing, fishing and private farming, began to crop up on the island. In 1834 Britain abolished slavery in its colonies, and many Anguillian ex-slaves took up positions as farmers, sailors and fishermen.

Soon after, Anguilla formed a federation with St Kitts and Nevis, which was disliked by most of the ex-slave population. Anguilla was allowed only one freeholder representative to the House of Assembly on St Kitts and was largely ignored, eventually culminating in the Anguilla Revolution in 1967. Anguilla Day marks May 30, 1967, the day Anguillians forced the Royal St Kitts Police off the island for good.

As a result of its revolt against St Kitts, Anguilla remains a British overseas territory. Under the Anguilla constitution, which came