



Antigua & Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association

Resorts on Antigua & Barbuda offer on-site Antigen testing for UK and US guests

January 26, 2021, Antigua and Barbuda: The Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment following recent discussions with the Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association has given approval for resorts on Antigua and Barbuda to provide on-site rapid antigen testing services to guests. Resorts offering the service, must have a doctor assigned to the property who is authorised by the Ministry of Health, to oversee the administration and delivery of antigen test results to departing guests.

The ABHTA's request for on-site testing at resorts comes on the heels of the recent implementation by the United Kingdom and the United States of America that all returning residents must have a negative Covid-19 test. The US and UK testing requirements make allowances for the use of the rapid antigen test.

In Canada, where the testing requirement was first implemented, travellers to Canada are required to have a negative RT-PCR. RT-PCR Testing is presently administered at the Mount St. John Medical Centre (MSJMC). The MSJMC on January 25 announced that the hospital will also be administering the antigen test to the general public.

Resorts in Antigua have reported cancellations from Canada, UK and the US since the announcement of new return testing requirements by their respective Governments. Potential visitors have voiced concerns about the cost of the return and availability of testing on the island.

Alex de Brito interim Chairman of the ABHTA remarked that *"We are at another stage of our journey in managing our way through the pandemic and the support of the Ministry of Health in approving Antigen testing on resort will greatly help us to secure the few bookings we have. What has become even more concerning is that guests are now required to not only have the negative test but also quarantine on their return home, another barrier which will again negatively impact the industry. We clearly have a long road ahead as we continue to face these challenges however, our swift reaction to the new normal will define our success and we are grateful for the support of the Minister of Health the Honourable Sir Molwyn Joseph, the Chief Medical Officer Dr. Rhonda Sealey Thomas, Dr. Simon and Dr. Duncan of the Mount St. John Medical Centre in offering us the opportunity to make this possible for our guests."*

Twenty resorts across Antigua and Barbuda are currently testing or preparing themselves to commence testing. Resorts not testing will continue to utilize the



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services of their on-site Doctors to swab guests and complete testing at the Mount St. John's Medical Centre.

Minister of Tourism, The Hon, Charles Fernandez commented that, "*While these new travel requirements will impact the traveller's decision-making process, Antigua and Barbuda continues to provide travellers with the assurance that protocols and testing resources are available for their safe travels during the Covid-19 pandemic.*"

The Ministry of Health has more than doubled the laboratory testing resources to take care of the expected surge in demand for RT-PCR testing at the Mount St. John's Medical Centre. With the Health Authorities now giving approval for authorised in-house doctors at resorts to provide the antigen testing to meet the needs of the US and UK travellers, we've not only increased our capabilities further, but are quickly adapting our resorts to provide travellers with the enhanced and higher level of service that is required within the hospitality sector at this time."

ABOUT THE ABHTA

The ABHTA collectively represents the hospitality industry by educating, advocating and promoting to increase visitation and the economic benefits for Antigua and Barbuda. The primary focus is on the needs and best interests of the members of the Association. The membership of the Antigua & Barbuda Hotels & Tourism Association is open to all hotels, restaurants, airlines, and companies directly or indirectly involved in the tourism sector of Antigua and Barbuda. Joining the Association is a way of showing your support of the island's tourism product and helping us to further develop our tourism industry.