

Yacht Entry and Clearance Procedures for an Antigua Yacht Charter Keep Caribbean Waters Safe

Contributed by Shannon DeFries

The rules and regulations of yacht entry differ from port to port around the world. For the yachting capital of the West Indies, Antigua & Barbuda, there are very specific standards and regulations for yacht entry into these high volume ports. Below are several of the clearance regulations for Antigua & Barbuda that are applicable to captains, crew and guests. While many yachties are experts when it comes to touring the Caribbean, staying informed may help their Antigua Yacht Charter run a little smoother.

All yachts and vessels arriving from an overseas port who request entry must fly a yellow 'Q' quarantine flag from a high point in the rigging of a sailing yacht or at the bridge of a motor yacht just before they anchor or dock alongside a marina. This ensures officials that members on board are all healthy and fit to enter the island. All passengers and crew must remain on board until clearance has been obtained. Since crewmembers are included in these rules, only the Captain (skipper) may go ashore to the customs and immigration offices. Captains of vessels arriving after hours must make sure that no one from the vessel goes ashore before they have been cleared at the earliest opportunity. Antigua's ports anticipate providing 24-hour customs and immigration services in the near future. As of right now, opening hours of Customs and Immigration offices vary from port to port. Agents and captains may check for opening hours with the Port Authority on CH68 or by contacting the marina directly. Some charter agencies or yacht services will provide an agent on site to handle the clearance procedures. If prior arrangements are made, the agent can clear your vessel before your yacht even arrives. If you are aboard a Caribbean Yacht Charter and wish to cruise in the waters of Antigua & Barbuda, the captain must check with the local Port Authority for permission to do so. The port officials will issue a Cruising Permit which can range anywhere from \$8.00- \$20.00 depending on the length of the vessel. This permit will allow the vessel to cruise in all Antigua & Barbuda waters unless a specific area has been prohibited for draft or national security reasons. Last, all passengers and crew wishing to depart from a vessel that will remain in Antigua & Barbuda's waters must have a valid airline ticket or proof of exit to another island or country that will accept them without question. This ticket or substantial proof must be presented to the immigration officer before guests may depart from the vessel onto land. The island's strict berthing and cruising laws make these Caribbean waters safe to enjoy. While passport and immigration laws continue to change, Caribbean travelers are becoming yacht charter aficionados to maximize the benefits of their travels.