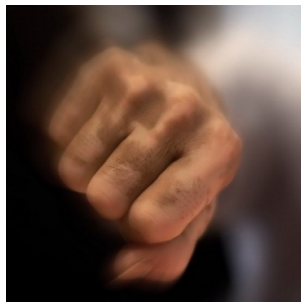


CRIMINALS KILLING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY



Antigua and Barbuda experiences serious problems with criminality that scares off tourists. Recently, several tourists were murdered here. Yachters are leaving the destination for safer places.

Difficult times are approaching the Caribbean nation of Antigua and Barbuda. The economic crisis hits tourism everywhere but in here the crime is the reason why tourists refuse to stay. Just recently an Australian yacht captain was shot dead during a robbery. Last year a newlywed couple got killed during their honeymoon on the islands and robberies are not unusual here. This January for example four robbers boarded a yacht and threatened the passengers with a gun. The masked robbers were, however, overpowered by two men on the yacht and fled.

Such news naturally scares off the potential tourists. Not many people are willing to stay in a dangerous destination especially when there are so many other options where to spend holiday. The local officials may try to convince tourists that the islands are perfectly safe. It is, however, a rather hard thing to do. The press has intensively informed about all cases of killing and even has urged boycotts of the destination.

Yachters were infuriated by the death of the Australian captain and some of them left the island for other anchorages. The tourism Minister Harold Lovell asked the yachters not to leave but as one of the captains put it, it was too risky to stay considering the obvious incompetence of the police.

This development is quite unlucky for the island's economy as half of its GDP is generated by the tourism industry. The officials need to accept effective measures to reassure tourists that they can feel safe here.

What more, it is not only the violent crimes that make stay at Antigua and Barbuda so unpleasant. Numerous visitors also complain about rude staff at the airport and hotels, as well as the taxi drivers.

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