

## NEW LOOK FOR ANTIGUA NICE WEBSITE

By Joanne C. Hillhouse

Antigua Nice, the country's premier online hub, is now challenging clients and visitors alike to 'Get Inspired'. It's rebranding, with the new site set to go live on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May.

The motivation, according to Allison Sly-Adams, who took over the site in 2003 with husband Colin, was a Caribbean Tourism Organization report issued more than a year ago. As members of the Antigua Hotels and Tourism Association, she said, they were privy to this report which spoke of the recession ahead and its likely impact on business in the region. Having lifted what was essentially a hobby site into the go-to online commercial hub for Antigua and Barbuda, they once again wanted to be ahead of the curve. After all, with tourist dollars being few, every possible lure ought to be maximized; essentially, they wanted to be that lure.

Well, there's that and the fact that they'd long had a hankering to update the look of the site, largely unchanged from its inception, and, according to reviews, not particularly good looking. "It wasn't actually doing justice to marketing the island," Sly-Adams said. The new site features stylish design by Robby Breadner, with Adrian Lodge as the data base designer, and photography by Alexis Andrews. "We wanted a fresh look, we wanted something very simple, we wanted something (that reflected) Antigua, but didn't want it to be too traditional," Sly-Adams said, commenting on the new site's aesthetic.

Yes, in the world of online marketing, looks do matter and the Sly-Adamses and their small staff were invested in the continued viability of their site – especially with an increasing number of residents, due to various factors, finding their way online. In fact, Sly-Adams noted, their stats show a dramatic increase among local visitors to the site in the past year; up from five percent to eighteen percent. While [www.antiguanice.com](http://www.antiguanice.com) has long been a link to the rest of the world, especially given the profusion of tourism-related clientele, these numbers suggest it's catching on at home as well. The newsletter, started roughly a year ago, keeping people up to date on a regular basis was a huge factor, Sly-Adams believes. This aspect allows clients – of which there are about 300 – to keep readers, i.e. potential customers, up to speed on their activities.

The new site will give them even more opportunities to do that. "With it being a recession, we're hoping to inspire our clients to rethink their advertising, refocus on thing they can be promoting for free," Sly-Adams said. They've incorporated several additional marketing tools, free and paid, into the site. It now includes searchability, to ensure that users find the information they're looking for in good time. Also, clients can access and update their own pages, giving them more direct control over content. "We're trying to do something that is simple enough that people will take the time to do it," Sly-Adams said.

The new look Antigua Nice also features wine lists and menus, price lists, maps, directories, video, photo galleries, and then some. In short, there's a whole lot more going on over at Antigua Nice.

It took over a year to get there, but they're now on the eve of a transition which they expect to be smooth. Sly-Adams said they scaled back launch party plans, in light of the times, for a quiet turnover from one version of the site to the next...and maybe a little champagne.

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