



ST. JOHN

U.S.V.I

St. John is one of the four main islands which comprise the U.S. Virgin Islands. The others include St. Thomas, St. Croix and newly designated Water Island. In the Danish colonial period, rather than the first generation forests which greet visitors today, the hills and valleys throughout the entire island were covered with cultivated fields of sugar cane, and cotton. As the plantation economy faded, nature again took over and returned St. John into a dark green emerald set in a turquoise blue sea.

St. John has long been regarded as one of the most inviting islands in the Caribbean. The beaches are pristine and the crystal clear water surrounding the island provides superb snorkeling and diving. The beauty and tranquility of St. John is protected for future generations by the Virgin Islands National Park.

HISTORY

Archeological evidence suggests that Arawak/Taino Indians were living on the island now known as St. John as far back as 500 to 700 BC. Cristoforo Colombo discovered and named the Virgin Islands while sailing on his second voyage to the New World in November of 1493. The Danes took control of the island of St. Thomas in 1671 but it was not until 1718 when the first attempt was made to colonize neighboring St. John. Plantations were established with the purpose of growing sugarcane and cotton, but there was a labor shortage. The indigenous Taino Indians had long been removed, free citizens of Denmark were not very interested in coming to the islands and Danish prison labor and indentured servants could not adapt to the harsh and unfamiliar conditions. Following the example of the other European colonial powers in the Caribbean, the Danes began to import African slave labor.

The Danes were soon joined by the Dutch who had been invited to the island. Over the following years dozens of plantations were built as the hilly countryside was burned, clear-cut of its vegetation, terraced and planted. Sugar, molasses, rum and cotton were produced and exported to European markets. When the Danes abolished slavery in the mid 1800s, the plantation based economy of St. John collapsed. Most Europeans abandoned the island and it reverted to the former slaves who lived precariously on subsistence farming and fishing.

In the mid 1800s and again at the turn of the century Denmark and the United States came close to brokering a deal for the sale of the islands. As World War I loomed on the horizon the US became increasingly concerned with German naval encroachment into the Caribbean which might ultimately threaten the new Panama Canal. The government of Denmark was approached once more, this time with the quiet suggestion that the U.S. was prepared to occupy the islands in order to prevent them from falling into German hands. Agreement between Denmark and the U.S. was quickly reached in 1917 and the United States purchased St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John for \$ 25 million in gold.

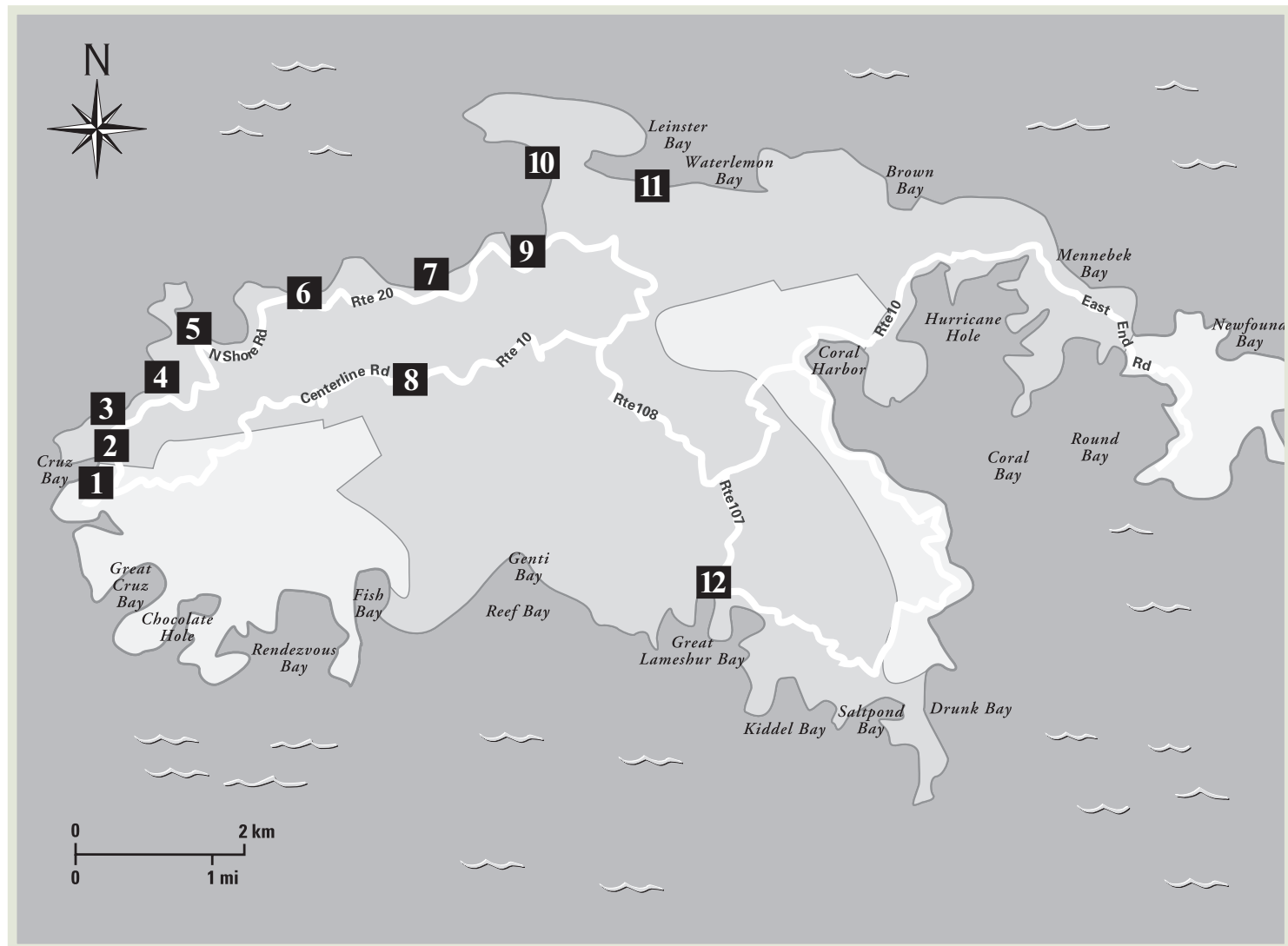
Thereafter known as the U.S. Virgin Islands the people were granted U.S. citizenship a decade later. The United States Navy administered the islands up though



1931 followed by appointed Governors. When Congress passed the U.S. Virgin Islands Organic Act, responsibility for the administration of the newly defined “territories” was transferred to the U.S. Department of the Interior. The people of the U.S.V.I. elected their first governor in 1971.

In the 1950s two gentlemen (among many others) were instrumental in preserving and creating something quite special for the citizens of St. John and the U.S.V.I. Philanthropist and

conservationist Laurance S. Rockefeller and the famous illustrator and conservationist Frank Leonard Stick led the efforts which resulted in the deeding of 5,086 acres of private land on St. John to the U.S. Department of the Interior. This act resulted in the creation of the Virgin Islands National Park, a jewel for the people of the U.S.V.I. who now proudly protect and share the park with visitors from around the world.



ST. JOHN POINTS OF INTEREST

The beaches of St. John are truly some of the most breathtakingly beautiful, stunningly gorgeous beaches in the world.

1 The **Virgin Islands National Park** covers two thirds (over 7,000 acres) of St. John. The Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument protects over 12,000 acres of the waters surrounding the island. All visitors arrive by boat, most at the Cruz Bay dock. The park’s Visitors Center is close to the dock.

2 The **Lind Point Trail** begins at the National Park Visitors Center at Cruz Bay and makes its way along the northwest coast of St. John. The mile long trail takes hikers to Salomon Bay Beach and Honeymoon Beach.

3 **Solomon Beach**, because of its secluded location and few visitors, gained a reputation as “swimsuit optional”. Be advised; Park Rangers enforce the “Put your swimsuit back on” rule with citations and fines. Solomon Bay has some of the best shallow water snorkeling on the island.

4 **Caneel Bay Beach** is a peaceful tropical site for visitors who would like to enjoy a quiet resort setting. The hotel has a very nice beach side restaurant and bar. Some ruins of the colonial era plantation remain on the property.

5 **Hawksnest Beach** is a favorite for families. The beach is easily accessible and has picnic tables and grills. Basic bathroom facilities are available. The snorkeling is extremely good, especially for beginners. For a bit more privacy, Little Hawksnest is a short climb over the rocks to the left of the

main beach, when facing the water.

6 Trunk Bay is one of the most popular beaches on St. John. There are shady palm trees all along the white sand. With gear rental available, there is an underwater snorkeling trail through the vibrant coral reef complete with signs providing information about the abundant sea life. Changing facilities, showers and bathrooms are provided. A snack bar and gift shop offer food, cold drinks and beach items. The National Park charges a small admission fee to enter the site.



7 Cinnamon Bay Beach is also very popular and has complete facilities and water sports rentals. There are very interesting ruins of an 18th century sugar factory. At the Cinnamon Bay Archeological Dig visitors can see pre-Columbian and colonial period artifacts.

8 The Catherineberg Sugar Mill is the well preserved ruins of one of St. John's many mills and rum factories dating back to the 1700s. It is listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. This was the main camp of the Akwamu led slave revolt in 1733. There are no fancy tours or gift shops here. It is stark yet beautiful place where silent stone upon stone speaks loudly of a difficult era long past.

9 Maho Beach is set in a clean and calm bay. There are no facilities here but there is plenty of sun, sand, shade and clear water.

10 Francis Bay Beach is very large and inviting. There is always plenty of room for a bit of privacy. There are portable facilities available. The bay attracts many fish and is a very good snorkeling site. Behind the beach is a salt marsh which attracts many birds thereby making it a nice spot for ornithologists, birders and twitchers (you know who you are).

11 Annaberg is the well preserved site of what was one of the largest sugar plantations on St. John. From 1718 through 1848 the plantation produced sugar, rum and molasses. The ruins give visitors a glimpse into what life was like during the colonial period. The plantation continued production until the evening of October 29, 1867 when a tremendous hurricane, soon followed by a powerful earthquake, devastated the Virgin Islands with great loss of life and near total destruction of property.

12 The Bordeaux Mountain Trail provides hikers beautiful panoramic views of St. John and many of the surrounding islands. The trail is a little over a mile long and descends to the ruins of the Lameshur Bay Plantation.

SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to St John we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For more information, please consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the onboard Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Bargaining: Prices are fixed in restaurants and most stores. Bargaining at open-air markets is common. Major credit cards are widely accepted.

Tipping: A 10-15 % tip is customary at restaurants and for taxis.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES

Caribbean cooking is primarily a combination of European and West African. While in the Virgin Islands try some of the favorite traditional dishes which have been passed down for generations. Fish is understandably popular and always fresh. Bonito, yellowtail and kingfish are common. They are usually grilled or boiled in a lime based sauce with onions, peppers, and tomatoes. Fungi are dumplings made from cornmeal. A fresh vegetable such as okra is often added to the dough. Okra is very popular throughout the islands. It is often fried in butter or with bacon then tomatoes, garlic, peppers and onions are added. Seasoned Rice is prepared with most meals. Pork, onion, tomatoes and garlic are the usual additions. Conch Creole is a rich stew made with local fresh conch, salt pork, garlic, onions and hot peppers. Goat Curry is fresh goat meat marinated in a mixture of lime juice, salt and pepper, thyme, garlic and onions then cubed and slowly stewed with curry and sugar and a few potatoes added. Meat Pate is a baked pastry filled with a mixture of cooked beef or pork and sweet pepper, chopped celery, parsley, tomato paste, garlic and onion.

Drink Specialties: Rum has been produced in the Virgin Islands for three centuries. The famous "Cruzan Rum" has been distilled on the neighboring island of St. Croix by the same family since the 1750s. If you are not a rum drinker and you decide to try a fresh fruit rum punch, be warned, they are delicious, however, the rum is smooth and the fruit juice will disguise the high alcohol content.

SHOPPING

St. John has duty-free shopping for visitors. Fun shopping in a Caribbean setting is located near the National Park Visitors Center and just two minutes walk from the pier. At Mongoose Junction guests will find dozens of unique shops and galleries, restaurants and cafes. Five minutes walk from the pier is downtown Cruz Bay. Visitors can shop for a wide range of items in many of the locally owned stores. Often there are local artisans playing instruments and selling their wares. The downtown waterfront has the Wharf Side Village. Visitors can find custom jewelry, tropical clothing, gift shops, fine art and locally made products.

LOCAL CURRENCY

The U.S. dollar is the official currency in the Virgin Islands.

