



SEADREAM
YACHT CLUB

CRUZ BAY, ST JOHN, USVI

When St. John was discovered by Columbus in 1493, this marked the beginning of a complicated history that turned out to be a round dance (after the Arawak, Tiano and Carib Indians departed) among European powers, together with the Knights of Malta. It is a history of slave trading, pirates and privateers, sugar plantations, slave revolt and liberation. The Danes maintained a major influence from the 17th to 19th century. They oversaw the lucrative plantation economy, producing molasses, rum, cotton and tobacco. In 1917, the U.S. bought the islands, St. John included, for US\$25 million in order to establish a naval base for the protection of the Panama Canal. St. John is a close neighbour to St. Thomas and located 40 miles north of St. Croix. Together the three of them constitutes the main islands of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

St. John is a reminder of how things were in the Caribbean of the old days: quiet, lazy times, with little crime and none of the frenzy of urban life. The 19 sq mi/49 sq km island is the most scenic and the most unspoiled of the U.S. Virgin Islands. This is largely because two-thirds of the island was set aside as the **Virgin Island National Park**. The park came into being after Laurence Rockefeller III donated some 5000 acres/2000 hectares of property to the National Park Service in the mid 1950s. The park also includes much of the offshore waters. The island is wholesome and outdoorsy – hiking shoes and a snorkeling mask are musts. It's also dramatically beautiful, with coral reefs, volcanic mountains, deep ravines, tropical greenery and an arid east coast dotted with salt ponds and cacti. The island's main city is **Crüz Bay**, where half of the island's 3 500 residents live. Once a dusty port, it has blossomed into a pleasant resort town with classy boutiques, cafés and bars and houses with pastel painted facades. The land and beaches of St. John are matchless in beauty, when compared with other islands of this region.

PLACES OF INTEREST

About 6 mi/10 km northeast of Cruz Bay, sits the ruins of the **Annaberg Sugar Plantation**, the remains of one of the 25 sugar factories which were active on St. John. This Danish plantation was established around 1718 and was driven by slave labor until July 1848 when freedom was declared for Danish West Indies slaves. The name Annaberg means "Anna's Hill" and refers to the infant daughter of William Gottschalk, a plantation owner from St. Thomas. In the **Town Library** there's a small museum which exhibits photographs, drawings and artifacts documenting the island's past. The **National Park** offers quite a few hiking trails. Among those are the **Reef Bay** trail, which passes by mysterious petroglyphs (ancient rock carvings), said to be carved by Arawaks or Caribs long before Columbus arrived in the West Indies, and the **Caneel Bay** trail, surrounded by beautiful flora and fauna. St. John's beauty is spectacular and from roads at higher elevations, the views are quite extraordinary. The **North Shore Road** that runs from Cruz Bay to Coral Bay is a particularly scenic route and along the way there are more shades of blue than in the jumbo Crayola box. **Bordeaux Mountain** offers good views of Coral Bay and the British Virgin Islands.

BEACHES

The island is surrounded by gorgeous white-sand beaches, including **Trunk Bay**, one of the loveliest in the Caribbean and the main beach draw on the island because of its underwater snorkeling trail. Trunk Bay is a very popular beach and can therefore get very crowded. For a more serene experience, there is **Cinnamon Bay** with postcard-perfect white sands, on the northern shore of the national park. Close to Cruz Bay is **Hawksnest Bay**, a narrow yet beautiful beach. Here, the water seems especially clear, and both swimming and snorkeling are good. On the south side of the national park are **Lameshur Beach** and **Salt Pond Beach**, near the village of Coral Bay. These two beaches are relaxing and uncrowded.

SHOPPING

One popular spot with visitors is **Wharfside Village**, an attractive compact mall of some 30 shops, overlooking Cruz Bay Harbour. **Mongoose Junction**, just north of Cruz Bay, across from the Park Services Visitor's Centre, is one of the most pleasant shopping areas in the Caribbean. Built from native stone, the graceful staircases and balconies wind among the shops, a number of which sell handicrafts designed and fashioned by resident artisans.

Shopping Hours: Monday – Saturday: 9 am – 5 pm. Some shops stay open until 8 or 9 pm, and generally they're also open on Sundays.

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS POTPOURRI

- St. John has no traffic lights. One was recently proposed for Cruz Bay, but the governor intervened and nixed the plan.
- St. Thomas replaced Havana as a tourist mecca in the late 1950s, after Castro took over Cuba.
- *Quelbe*, an old traditional music form that often accompanies dances, is making a comeback in the islands.
- Mongooses abound on the islands, having been brought in to control rats and snakes.
- Driving has been on the left side since before World War I. Authorities changed the law to require right-side driving a few years ago; the people adapted, but draft animals didn't, so it has remained a left-sided territory.
- U.S. mainland residents are referred to as Continentals by islanders.
- Coral World on St. Thomas has the world's only underwater post-office box.
- The eastern tip of St. Croix, *Point Udall*, is the easternmost point of the U.S.