



WELCOME

TO ST. JOHN



With the majority of the island's nearly 20 square miles protected by the Virgin Islands National Park, St. John is the perfect spot for nature lovers. The smallest of the three main U.S. Virgin Islands, St. John offers a little something for everyone. Shoppers are sure to love the charming, walkable town of Cruz Bay, where quaint shops abound. Hikers will be wowed by the island's numerous trails that ascend to sweeping vistas and 18th-century plantation ruins. Animal lovers will get a thrill from the goats, sheep, donkeys, deer, cows and pigs that roam freely. And everyone is sure to find solace in St. John's pristine shorelines, where silky white sands meet glittering turquoise waters, conjuring in residents and visitors alike a certain gratitude that only such pristine beauty can inspire.



Cinnamon Bay Plantation Ruins

HISTORIC HIGHLIGHTS

BY ANDREA MILAM

Delve into island history with the remnants of bygone eras.

St. John bears numerous artifacts of its multifaceted history, ranging from the rock carvings of the Tainos, peaceful people who inhabited the island during the pre-Columbian era, to the ruins of 18th- and 19th-century Danish plantations, where sugarcane was grown and rum was produced. A number of different sites offer insights into St. John's roots, including:

Annaberg Plantation

This protected historic site was one of the island's most active and productive sugar plantations during the 18th- and 19th-century Danish plantation era. Walk the grounds and you'll encounter the windmill tower, the factory where sugarcane was processed into molasses and rum, slave quarters and the cook house. www.nps.gov/viis

America Hill

This trail serves double duty, offering a great hike that takes you by a number of historical sites. It starts near the Cinnamon Bay plantation ruins, first ascending sharply

and then zigzagging to the top of a hillside, where a bird's-eye view of Maho and Francis bays is your reward for that uphill trek. The red-tinged ruin that sits atop the hill served as a guesthouse for visitors into the early 19th century. www.nps.gov/viis

Elaine I. Sprauve Library

Once an 18th-century plantation great house, this charming present-day library's story is one for the books. The welcoming arms staircase, yellow limestone exterior and green trim and accents hearken back to the days when the building was occupied by original owner William Wood, who was laid to rest in a small cemetery on the library property that's open to visitors. www.virginislandspubliclibraries.org

L'Esperance Trail

Descending 1,000 feet over two and a half miles, L'Esperance takes hikers past two sets of plantation ruins and through two distinct environments — moist tropical forest at the top gives way to dry tropical forest as you near Genti Bay. Don't miss the short

spur partway down the trail, which leads to the island's only baobab tree. www.nps.gov/viis

Cinnamon Bay Plantation Ruins

An accessible boardwalk takes visitors of all abilities through these sugar factory ruins; continue into the cool forest for an easy half-mile hike on the Cinnamon Bay Nature Loop. This trail is simple enough even for the youngest members of your family, who are sure to find wonder at the crypts of a Danish family and enjoy the scent of bay rum trees, whose leaves perfume the air. www.nps.gov/viis

Friends of Virgin Islands National Park

This nonprofit organization offers various ways for visitors to connect to the island's culture and history, ranging from seminars on weaving traditional market baskets to baking demonstrations at the Annaberg cook house. Visit their website or give them a call to find out what they're offering during your stay. www.friendsvinp.org



Annaberg Plantation

NATURAL TREASURES

BY ANDREA MILAM

The Virgin Islands National Park offers natural wonders for eco-minded visitors.

Nature abounds on St. John thanks to the protection of the Virgin Islands National Park (VINP). Beyond preserving the landscape, the park offers visitors numerous ways to experience the island's exceptional natural beauty. Here's a look at some park experiences you won't want to miss.

Curious Carvings

Close to the bottom of Reef Bay Trail lies one of the island's most exotic attractions — the petroglyphs, carved into rocks at the base of a waterfall by Tainos who inhabited the island around 1,000 years ago. Hike on your own but come prepared for a sweat-inducing trek back up the trail, or join the VINP's guided hike, expected to resume this season, and enjoy a relaxing ride back to Cruz Bay by boat via the island's south shore. www.friendsvinp.org

Bird is the Word

You'd be hard pressed to match VINP supervisory ranger Laurel Brannick's knowledge and enthusiasm for local birds. Learn bird facts and more with Brannick's guided Francis Bay bird walk, which goes through a forest, by the ocean and around a salt pond, Friday mornings at 7:30 a.m. www.nps.gov/viis

A Savory Harvest

Dry periods might dull the lush green of St. John's hills, but island droughts

also deliver. The water in the salt pond that lies behind Salt Pond Beach evaporates, leaving countless pounds of salt at its edges. Harvest some yourself and add a little island spice to your dishes with all-natural pure island sea salt. www.nps.gov/viis

Learn from the Experts

Every year from January through April, the Friends of VINP offers the chance to connect with some of the island's most valuable resources — its knowledgeable residents. Explore coastal habitats, hike under the full moon or snorkel the mangroves with informed guides whose expertise enriches the experience. Sign up early, as these popular seminars fill up fast. www.friendsvinp.org

Give Back

The concept of voluntourism is gaining ground, and one way you can give back during your time on St. John is to Get Trashed. No, liquor is not directly involved with this all-volunteer group that conducts monthly litter cleanups at various places around the island, but volunteers do typically gather for an after-party or Happy Hour get-together as a reward for their hard work. Just how much you celebrate after the job is done is up to you. www.facebook.com/gettrashedstj



Salt Pond Bay



Reef Bay Trail



Mangroves

DOWN TO EARTH

BY ANDREA MILAM

St. John is more than just beautiful beaches. Head inland for some land-based fun.

The pristine beaches are probably high on the list of reasons you've come to St. John, but the island also offers plenty of non-ocean-related activities. Whether you want to get your reps in at the gym or you're looking to engage in some treasure hunting and exploration, you'll find plenty of island-style outdoor pursuits on St. John.

Hiking

Looking for a casual stroll, a strenuous trek with big rewards, or just want to get a little sweat in before a day at the beach? St. John's numerous hiking trails — including America Hill and L'Esperance — offer all these options and more. Many trails take you past historic Danish plantation ruins to lookouts with sweeping views. Some trails end at the beach, welcoming you for a refreshing dip. Take an easy stroll on the accessible Francis Bay boardwalk or challenge yourself on the Caneel Hill trail, where a viewing platform with stunning 360-degree island and ocean views is well worth the effort to get there.

Horseback Riding

Let someone else do the hard work for you with a horseback ride through island trails. It's a peaceful way to traverse St. John hillsides, and when you ride with Carolina Corral, you're helping support a one-woman operation. Owner Dana Bartlett puts a lot of time and love into caring for her rescue horses — and donkeys, goats, sheep and countless other animals that call the Corral home. www.horsesstjohn.com

Tennis

Fire up your competitive spirit with an island tennis match. Public courts in Cruz Bay are free to use, and it's not uncommon to see residents there engaging in a little friendly competition. Be sure to bring your own racket and tennis balls if you want to hit the courts, as there's currently nowhere on island to buy or rent this equipment. No reservations at the courts are necessary — just show up ready to play.

Geocaching

Modern-day treasure hunting on St. John involves small trinkets, not the pirate's gold of yesteryear. "Caches" are hidden in various places across the island, left behind by geocachers for others to discover. Take a found trinket as a memento of your time on the island and leave an item behind in its place or add your name and date to the log that accompanies most caches. www.geocaching.com

Hit the Gym

Whether you're keeping up with your fitness regimen or you want to work off the Happy Hour libations you've been downing, head to St. John Fitness on the second floor of

Palm Plaza for some cardio or weightlifting. Day passes are available to visitors who can make use of the gym's treadmills, stationary bikes, ellipticals, weight machines and more. www.stjohnfitness.com

Try a Taxi Tour

St. John's colorful open-air safari taxis are a hallmark of the Love City island experience, so you may want to try a taxi tour, which you can kick off at the taxi stand in Cruz Bay. Then sit back and bask in the Caribbean breeze as your driver stops along the way to point out stunning vistas, local plants and wildlife and historical and cultural sights. www.vitaxiassociation.com



Cinnamon Bay Plantation Ruins

Trunk Bay

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BY ANDREA MILAM



Virgin Islands Ecotours

MAKE A SPLASH

For those looking for fun on or under the water, St. John's cerulean seas just beg to be explored.

The waters that surround St. John are simply irresistible. From tranquil bays with crystal-clear water to shoreline mangroves whose shadows offer sanctuary to juvenile sea creatures, the ocean around the island is well worth exploring. Experience the water your own way, whether gliding across the surface on a paddle board or enjoying cocktails aboard a sunset sail excursion.

Power of the Paddle

Paddling through the sea, whether atop a paddle board or in a kayak, is one of the most serene ways to experience the island's marine life. It's just you, your vessel of choice and the quiet sound of your paddle

slicing through the water. In most areas of the island, the clarity is outstanding, allowing you to spy on active coral reefs and gently gliding sea turtles from above. Arawak Expeditions rents paddle boards from their Mongoose Junction office. They'll give you a brief introduction to the sport, which is surprisingly easy to get the hang of. Stand in the middle of the board, plant your feet firmly about shoulder width apart, bend slightly at the knees and paddle. You can expect to fall off once or twice while you get the hang of it, but in no time you're sure to find your sea legs and off you go, paddling like a pro. You can also rent a paddle board right at the beach with Virgin Islands Ecotours, which provides rentals at

On the Water

Honeymoon Beach. Virgin Islands Expedition Company offers daily and weekly rentals; the latter includes free delivery. Arawak, Virgin Islands Ecotours and the Virgin Islands Expedition Company all rent kayaks as well and they each offer specialized on the water tours, including Arawak's renowned five-day kayaking and camping excursion, where you'll sleep under the stars in some of the most beautiful settings in the USVI and the BVI.

Look Below

If you'd prefer to get a little more up close and personal with the coral reefs and marine life that call the island's waters home, there are plenty of snorkeling and scuba diving options. St. John boasts the ability for visitors to snorkel right from the shore, making it remarkably easy to drift over reefs and alongside the turtles that coast effortlessly through the crystal-clear waters. Swim with the turtles at Maho Bay, view a wide variety of marine life at Salt Pond on the island's south shore or see if you can spot an octopus or two at the Trunk Bay underwater snorkel trail.

Rent your snorkel equipment from Arawak Expeditions, Virgin Islands Ecotours or the Virgin Islands Expedition Company, or go even deeper with a scuba diving excursion with Cruz Bay Watersports. For decades they've been descending into the deep, and their knowledgeable staff provides a safe and informational experience for everyone from beginners to those looking to earn more advanced certifications.

Sailing in Style

Be sure to reserve a portion of your vacation for a boating excursion. Zip out to lunch at one of the area's floating restaurants, or

go international with a trip to the BVI, where Painkiller-fueled debauchery rules the scene at Jost Van Dyke's White Bay. Opt for a more tranquil experience with a sunset cocktail sail. There are numerous private charters to choose from, allowing you to customize your day on the water.

Group boat tours are a great way to let the experts do the planning for you. Cruz Bay Watersports' excursions offer a little something for everyone, from a trip to The Baths in Virgin Gorda aboard their 60-foot express cruiser to family fun with a picnic snorkel sail to a romantic Champagne sunset sail.

Keep it Reel

If you're looking for a thrill on the water, treat yourself to a fishing charter with Arawak Expeditions. Captain Arthur Jones has been fishing around St. John for more than 20 years, and he's as knowledgeable as he is passionate about this sport. His vast abilities for reeling one in can help you land an elusive bonefish or leaping tarpon. Other species that frequent the island's waters include snook, jacks, snapper, barracuda and many more.

The many ways to experience the ocean's wonders are enchanting, bringing you face to face with indescribable natural beauty. Some of your best vacation memories are sure to be made on the water.

ARAWAK EXPEDITIONS

Experience an unforgettable adventure. Whether you choose a half-day kayak tour, stand-up paddleboarding (SUP), fly-fishing, snorkeling or an extended kayaking and camping tour, you'll leave with a better appreciation of the natural wonders of these islands. An easy walk from the Ferry Dock in downtown Cruz Bay. **Mongoose Junction, Cruz Bay; 340-693-8312; www.arawakexp.com**

CRUZ BAY WATERSPORTS

Celebrating 35+ years, Cruz Bay Watersports is the premier company for a fun-filled day on the water. With a diverse fleet of catamarans and motor vessels, they offer trips to the BVI, sunset sails, scuba diving and PADI instruction, snorkeling, dinghy rentals and a retail location with unique souvenirs and rental gear. **Westin Resort, St. John; 340-775-6555; www.cruzbaywatersports.com**

HONEYMOON BEACH, ST. JOHN

New! Golf cart shuttle from Caneel Bay Resort! Or, hike from town and enjoy a Beach Bar & Grill, watersports rentals, gift shop, snorkel gear, kayaks, stand-up paddle boards, floats, beach chairs, umbrellas and lockers. Save by booking an inclusive watersports Day Pass for \$49 pp. Guided kayak and snorkel with sea turtles. Book online and SAVE 10% using promo code VISIT. **340-779-2155; www.viecotours.com**

VIRGIN ISLANDS EXPEDITION COMPANY

Journey beyond the beach! Guided kayaking, paddleboarding and hiking tours around St. John and its surrounding waters. Transportation and equipment included on full- and half-day tours. Knowledgeable staff at Cruz Bay location will help you plan independent adventures with quality rental equipment and other St. John adventure necessities. **Cruz Bay, St. John; 340-775-6074; www.usviexpeditions.com**



Most St. John visitors are aware that the island is home to a U.S. national park, but did you know there are actually two national parks on St. John?

On January 7, 2001, the Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument was established, setting aside 12,708 marine acres to protect the fragile and unique tropical marine ecosystem in waters to the south and north of the island, as well as the Hurricane Hole area located on the east side of St. John. This ecosystem includes seagrass beds and coral reefs, threatened and endangered species such as hawksbill and green turtles and the most extensive and well-developed mangrove habitat on St. John. Thirty of the Virgin Islands' 45 species of coral are found here, and the area provides a safe place for fish, spiny lobster and queen conch to spawn and grow. This activity attracts more than 25 species of seabirds that feed in the surrounding waters.

Named for its centuries-old reputation as a safe haven for ships during hurricanes, even after the area came under protection by the National Park Service in 2001, a plan remained in place to allow local boats to shelter there during large storms. Unfortunately, during hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, most of the boats anchored there were unable to withstand the strong winds and large waves, and the boats and the area itself were heavily damaged. More than two years later, the damaged and sunken boats have been removed and the area is showing signs of life again thanks in large part to Hurricane Hole's federal protection and lack of commercial boating.

Mangrove seedlings are starting to sprout, and new coral growth has been seen in the waters. Green turtles are often seen eating the seagrass in Princess Bay, while spiny lobster and southern rays have been observed in Otter Creek. Even the roots of mangroves that died in the storms remain in place, providing a habitat for angelfish, snapper and tangs as well as new coral to thrive.

Don't miss a trip to the other national park on St. John. Virgin Islands Expedition Company provides half- and full-day kayak and snorkel tours in Hurricane Hole, including transportation from their shop located in downtown Cruz Bay across from the VINP dock. www.usviexpeditions.com

Courtesy of Virgin Islands Expedition Company

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Trunk Bay

BY ANDREA MILAM



Cinnamon Bay

SPLENDID SHORELINES

St. John's beaches are diverse enough to fit your favorite type of fun.

Looking for adventure? Peace and quiet? A perfectly unspoiled beach away from the crowds? Local party vibes? St. John beaches offer all this and more. Each section of shoreline on St. John has its own unique character, so you're sure to find your ideal day in the sun.

The List-Topper

Trunk Bay is a stunner of a beach that has it all. The silkiest, most pristine sands. Bluer-than-blue water. A bar and concession stand, restrooms and showers, snorkel

equipment rentals, covered picnic tables and even an underwater snorkel trail. It's easily the most visited and most photographed stretch of shoreline on St. John, and it cleans up in the awards department, too. Most recently, Trunk Bay made Forbes.com's 2019 list of Best Caribbean Beaches.

Where the Party's At

Hansen Bay is one of the few stretches of sand whose unspoiled beauty rivals national park beaches, yet it lies outside the park's



Mongoose Junction

BY ANDREA MILAM



RETAIL TREASURES

With shops bearing items as unique as each store's individual owner, shoppers find joy in seeking out memorable gifts and souvenirs that reflect the special character of St. John.

St. John offers a shopping experience that's hard to come by. There are no chain stores on this island. Instead, you'll find individually owned and operated shops selling hand-selected items sourced locally and from across the globe. In fact, it's not uncommon to find the owner herself behind the counter, assisting customers as they seek out the perfect memento of their vacation. The highest concentration of shops is in Cruz Bay, an easily walkable

town that's bookended by two shopping destinations, each with its own charm and allure.

Located at one end of this small town, Mongoose Junction is an architectural stunner with native stone designs, tranquil water features and lush planters throughout, making shopping a remarkably serene experience. Stop here to pick up lunch from the North Shore Deli on your way to one of

the island's beautiful beaches, or enjoy a relaxing breezeway lunch at Sun Dog Cafe. Browse creations by local artists at the Bajo el Sol Gallery & Art Bar, which also hosts events and themed exhibitions aimed at highlighting the island's history and culture. Pick up some adorable island-inspired souvenirs at Island Fancy, where offerings include small toys, trinkets and books to help your little ones remember their special time on island. Stunning island photographs are incorporated into works of art at the St. John Experience Gallery, and Just Beach has everything you need for a fabulous day on island, including sunscreen, snorkel gear rentals, hats, swimsuit cover-ups and much more.

Mongoose Junction's Caravan Gallery is a must-stop shop. Prayer flags and wind chimes hanging outside the entrance set the tone for this store, where you'll find exotic treasures from all corners of the globe. Jewelry, gifts and artifacts from Tibet, In-

donesia, Africa and beyond line the shelves here; and Caravan's sales associates are knowledgeable, helpful and friendly. No trip to St. John is complete without selecting your very own hook bracelet, and Caravan offers options for men, women and children. Shopping at Caravan is like perusing a world traveler's treasure chest. African masks, Buddha statues, artwork featuring ancient fossils, keepsake boxes and wood-inlaid cribbage boards are among the boutique's ever-rotating inventory.

Bring home the beauty of St. John with Steve Simonsen's classic book, *Living Art*. A favorite of residents and visitors alike, this coffee table book is full of stunning images and makes a great gift. It's available on Amazon, Steve's website (www.stevesimonsen.net) and in local stores. A book with a more somber subject matter is the St. John Community Foundation's *St. John Recovery Book: A Community Perspective on Hurricanes Irma and Maria*.

This publication provides an in-depth look at how the catastrophic 2017 hurricane season affected St. John, and is a truly gripping read. This book is available on Amazon, the Community Foundation's website, and in local stores.

Find essentials like an ATM, pharmacy, mail center, grocery store and bookstore at The Marketplace, also located in Cruz Bay. Eight miles to the east, Coral Bay offers a small selection of shops that are as charming and eclectic as the town itself.

Whether you've come prepared with a shopping list of specific items or you're just browsing to see what catches your fancy, shopping on St. John is sure to be a memorable experience. From souvenir T-shirts to hook bracelets to homemade hot sauces, island treasures will bring a smile to your face long after you've departed, keeping alive the memories of your happy time on St. John.

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caravan gallery

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Shopping by the Sea

The moment you arrive in Cruz Bay by ferry, you're greeted by Wharfside Village, a cute, colorful Caribbean-style collection of shops lining the Cruz Bay beachfront. Connected by exterior breezeways, the shops at Wharfside offer everything from handmade crafts to fine jewelry to spices and local hot sauces. Wharfside's beautiful waterfront setting and the shops' varied offerings and friendly staff make it a wonderful location for some island-style retail therapy.

At Wharfside Village's Bamboo Studio, you'll find designs that give a nod to the island — like petroglyph-themed earrings, rings and bracelets — as well as their take on the well-known hook bracelet, whose hook is shaped like a "J" for St. John. Bamboo Studio's charms and pendants display the outline of St. John or feature a compass rose with the island's latitude and longitude coordinates. You can also customize your own charm or bracelet with a loved one's name or initials. There's even a dedicated hurricane collection, featuring an iconic hurricane-themed swirl incorporated into pendants, earrings and bracelets, showcasing the island's strength and resilience following Irma.

Once you've selected gifts for yourself and your loved ones back home, why not try your luck with a little roll of the dice? Head to the Parrot Club at Wharfside Village, where you can cool down while turning up the heat at the blackjack table. Video slots, poker and roulette are also on offer. When you're in the Parrot Club, you're sure to end up shoulder to shoulder with a St. John resident or two; islanders love to wager for a win at this popular venue.

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Want to show your love for St. John? Take home a handmade charm necklace in sterling silver, 14k gold or a combination of both — and create a charm that is uniquely yours. They also carry a wide selection of hook bracelets and petroglyph jewelry. "All handcrafted by our artisans... inspired by our island."

Wharfside Village;
340-776-0669; www.bamboovi.com

CARAVAN GALLERY

Caravan Gallery is the place for affordable and fine jewelry, unique gifts and authentic artifacts from around the world. In their Mongoose Junction location, you will find the original St. John Hook bracelet, locally made jewelry and the best selection of Larimar, the "Gemstone of the Caribbean." Mongoose Junction; 340-779-4566; www.caravangallery.com

MONGOOSE JUNCTION

Discover St. John's premier shopping, dining and entertainment destination. Mongoose Junction hosts 30 unique businesses amid tropical landscaping and beautiful stone architecture. Explore boutique shops and galleries, courtyard cafés and restaurants, including the island's only brewery. Just a five-minute stroll from the Cruz Bay ferry dock. North Shore Road, Cruz Bay; 340-774-8175; www.mongoosejunctionstjohn.com

SPA CEYLON

Located in the heart of Cruz Bay, this unique Ayurveda boutique will arouse your senses with vibrant colors and exotic fragrances from a wide range of all natural treatment oils, body scrubs, body lotions, moisturizing balms, body mist, cleansing bars, shower gels and much more. The boutique's White Collection & Tropical Destination Collection make for perfect bridal gifts. Wharfside Landing, Cruz Bay; 340-725-5497



» SHOPPING FINDS



1. Custom Sterling Silver Petroglyph & Larimar Pendant. Caravan Gallery; www.caravangallery.com
2. Customizable Charm Necklace. Bamboo Studio; www.bamboovi.com
3. Eau de Ceylon perfumes. Spa Ceylon

BY ANDREA MILAM



DELICIOUS DELIGHTS

From toes-in-the-sand Happy-Hour-hanging spots to upscale waterfront fine dining, St. John has a surprisingly robust restaurant scene.

For a small island, St. John punches way above its weight class when it comes to restaurant offerings. From air-conditioned sports bars with frosty beers on draft to quaint, breezy outdoor eateries to upscale establishments with supremely divine dishes, St. John's restaurants have something for everyone.

Laid-Back Lunching

When you're in search of a casual, easy breakfast, lunch or dinner, St. John has plenty of options at mid-range price points. Cruz Bay is home to the biggest concentration of dining venues of all sorts. Many restaurants are open air and serve familiar American fare. Coral Bay also offers a handful of dining options, most falling into the casual category. Sunday brunch is available on both sides of the island, and many restaurants have Happy Hour drink specials, with some giving deals on food during Happy Hour as well.

Upscale and Incredible

It's hard to treat yourself to just one night of fine dining on St. John, where the competitive restaurant scene keeps chefs on their toes and at the forefront of culinary trends. A longtime favorite, Morgan's Mango in Cruz Bay has become an integral part of a St. John vacation for repeat visitors who laud the restaurant's Caribbean-influenced cuisine, top-notch service and breezy, beautiful setting. On the other side of Cruz Bay, The Terrace dominates the French cuisine scene with carefully selected fresh ingredients and the incredible talents of Chef/Owner Erica Miner in the kitchen. Sunset views over Cruz Bay add an extra special flair to an evening at The Terrace.

On-the-Water Eats

Plenty of new additions to the St. John restaurant scene allow you



Courtesy of Ocean 360



» St. John's restaurants have something for everyone.

to combine a day at the beach — or on the water — with an amazing culinary experience. Maho Crossroads, located just across the street from one of the island's most stunning North Shore beaches, offers grilled foods like burgers and hot dogs with local specialties including lobster and roti when available. Grab a drink from the bar and relax beachside in the shade in one of Crossroads' ultra-comfy beach chairs. Bikinis on the Beach is another venue that offers quick and easy eats at a beautiful beach. Sandwiches, wraps and ice-cold beverages pair perfectly with pristine Honeymoon Beach. A meal at Lime Out on the Island's East End is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Where else can you get tacos made to order in a lime green boat floating in a pristine bay?

Island Vibes

Don't miss one of the best things about the Caribbean — its cuisine. Pick up a pate — a pastry that's stuffed with spiced chicken, beef, saltfish or vegetables, then deep fried — for a flavorful and easy snack on the go. Hercules in Cruz Bay is the best spot to grab a pate on your way to the beach. There are a handful of other local options in Cruz Bay, so don't be afraid to branch out and try something new like stew goat or oxtail

at De Coal Pot, where portions are plentiful. And if you're on island in June, the annual Food Fair is a literal smorgasbord of local entrees, tarts, jams and jellies, local juices and much more.

Lunch by the Sea

Some St. John beaches do have food offerings, but for the most part, you'll want to bring lunch with you if you're planning to stay and soak up the sun for a while. A handful of delis in Cruz Bay offer easy grab-and-go sandwiches and sides, or you can opt for something heartier with a heaping container of delicious fried chicken, pasta salad, coleslaw and other picnic-inspired foods from an island grocery store.

Custom Cooking

If you get in the mood to exercise your culinary creativity, you'll be happy to know that most of the island's accommodations, which mostly consist of private condos, homes and villas, offer fully stocked kitchens. You'll find most of the basic ingredients needed to cook a meal at the island's grocery stores, which have regular sales and surprisingly competitive pricing. Want to make use of your villa's kitchen but don't feel like doing the work yourself? Hire a caterer to cook

for you in-house, allowing you and your companions to enjoy sunset cocktails on the patio while an incredible custom meal comes together just for you.

Dining Dress Code

St. John's casual nature extends to its restaurant scene. Even at the most high-end establishments, you won't be turned away for lack of a tie or sport coat. Men are welcomed in shorts and short-sleeve collared shirts, and women can dine in sundresses. Flip-flops are accepted footwear in all dining venues. Do remember when leaving the beach that shirt and shoes must be worn at all establishments and when you're anywhere other than the beach. Local culture leans toward the conservative side, so please respect the locals and cover up when you leave the beach.

The island's numerous restaurants, bars, and supermarkets make it easy to treat yourself to a sumptuous meal, kick back with the locals over a beer or two, or dine in at your hotel or villa. With plenty of dining options, you and your traveling companions are guaranteed to leave feeling pleasantly full and happy.

TROPICAL RETREATS

BY ANDREA MILAM

From cozy studios to lavish villas and everything in between, your perfect St. John getaway awaits.

Lodging options on St. John are as unique and charming as the island itself. First, you should know that all-inclusive beachfront accommodations don't exist on the island. In fact, beachfront accommodations are hard to come by thanks to the Virgin Islands National Park, which protects much of the island — including those stunning, unspoiled shorelines that surely attracted you to St. John in the first place.

Staying Seaside

That said, there are a handful of seaside accommodations, like Gallows Point Resort, which is located on a peninsula at the mouth of Cruz Bay. This condo community boasts incredibly lush landscaping, creating a serene setting and providing a privacy buffer between each unit. Its small oceanside pool is a wonderful place to unwind and realign with some early morning yoga, or perhaps you'd prefer to pursue relaxation in a different way — with an afternoon poolside cocktail, watching the boats come in and out of the island's main harbor. An on-site restaurant offers the best sunset views for a romantic dinner, and Gallows Point's convenient Cruz Bay location makes it easy to walk into town for shopping or meals, or to grab a taxi to the beach.

The island does offer one beachfront hotel — The Westin St. John Resort, which combines vacation villa-style accommodations with a resort-style getaway on Great Cruz Bay Beach. Just a two-minute drive from Cruz Bay and a short walk across the street from a well-stocked grocery store, the Westin offers two restaurant options, watersports and boat excursions, and the largest pool on island, where vacationers gather by afternoon to engage in fun games and competitions with resort staff.



Courtesy of Gallows Point Resort

Chill in a Villa

Despite those shoreside options, most St. John visitors seek out their own private condo or villa. In fact, this style of accommodations makes up most of the island's inventory, and there are numerous villa management companies who will guide you to the property that's perfect for you. Decide what you're looking for, whether it's stunning panoramic views, a private pool, air conditioning, or proximity to your planned activities, and your management company will do the rest. VRBO and Airbnb are fast becoming a popular way to book a vacation villa, or you can reach out directly to book with the property's owner, which can help you save on fees. Check out www.stjohn-villarentals.com, an easy-to-navigate website that allows vacation rental owners to connect directly with prospective guests. Note that most St. John rentals will charge based on the size of your party, allowing owners to mitigate the costs associated with larger parties, including providing additional linens and extra power and water used. Some villas only allow Saturday to Saturday bookings, so you'll want to consider this when booking your flight.

GALLOWS POINT RESORT

Discover the sweeping panoramic views and stunning sunsets from the Gallows Point Resort's private oceanfront location on a lushly landscaped five-acre peninsula. Offering newly renovated, one-bedroom oceanfront villas, a gift and gourmet coffee shop, concierge service and fine dining at the highly proclaimed on-site restaurant, Ocean 362, the resort was especially designed with your vacation experience in mind. Five-minute stroll from Cruz Bay; 340-776-6434; www.gallowspointresort.com



Sweeping panoramic views. Stunning sunsets.
Lush 5-acre, private oceanfront peninsula.
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STEEL PAN MAN

BY ANDREA MILAM

Victor Provost has taken St. John's steel pan sound around the globe.

Music was always a part of St. John native Victor Provost's young life, but his passion was never truly ignited until a piano lesson at the St. John School of the Arts. It wasn't the ivory keys that tickled his fancy — it was the sounds of steel pan band Steel Unlimited II drifting down from the arts school's main room up above that grabbed Provost's attention.

"I went to check it out and saw all my friends were there, and it seemed much cooler than playing the piano by myself in the basement," Provost laughs. "I joined Steel Unlimited II that day."

Steel pan instantly became Provost's instrument of choice,

and he even managed to monetize his musical talent as a high school student, when he'd perform on his tenor outside Bamboula in Mongoose Junction to help attract customers and later at the Caneel Bay Resort. His prowess behind the pan would later see him heading up the Love City Pan Dragons' Baby Dragons program, performing with a Pittsburgh-based band that took him on two European tours, and running an after-school music program similar to the Pan Dragons in Virginia Beach.

At the age of 26, Provost decided it was finally time to pursue a music degree. He studied for five years at George Mason University, earning his bache-

lor's and graduate degrees, and was hired at the school upon graduation. Provost founded a program at the university specifically for students wanting to study steel pan as their primary instrument. His teaching schedule is flexible enough that he's been able to tour and record with jazz greats like Paquito D'Rivera, Monty Alexander, the late Hugh Masekela and Dion Parson's 21st Century Band; and Provost's music career has taken him around the world to a dozen European countries, the Middle East, China, South America and, of course, throughout the Caribbean. The steel pannist makes sure to return to St. John annually, where he performs at the very place his music career

began — the St. John School of the Arts.

When Provost is back home, a fresh, hot beef pate, an icy cold Heineken and a trip to Hawksnest Beach are high on his to-do list. He likes to hike down Reef Bay and across the beach to a small trail that leads right to his childhood home's backyard. Provost says he hopes visitors will sample the local cuisine while they're on island at venues like Hercules Pate, Miss Lucy's, De Coal Pot or Hillside Terrace.

"I want them to get a beef pate, or some oxtail or conch in butter sauce," he says.

Listen to Provost's music, see his performance schedule or buy his CDs at www.victorprovost.com.



Courtesy of Victor Provost (2)

ST. CROIX

DINE — SHOP — EXPLORE



Danish Customs House