

COASTAL

Curriculum | st. john

*Celebrating the history
and ecology of the
U.S. Virgin Islands*

Cultural & Environmental Vistas

Enjoy the rich ecological and historical value of signature bays in the VI

Virgin Islands Parks

Conserve essential coastal and marine habitats and species in Territorial and National Parks

Discover Historic Landmarks

Appreciate the complex and fascinating history of the VI



Rich Coastal *History*

This Coastal Curriculum Guide celebrates the rich coastal history and ecology of the Virgin Islands.

The history of the Virgin Islands is complex, spanning occupation, exploitation, enslavement, revolt, freedom fighting, and emancipation. Recording and sharing this accurate history is crucial for current and future generations.

The diverse coastal and marine natural resources of the Virgin Islands, including coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds, and associated fish and invertebrate species, define the beauty and productivity of our marine environment. These resources face threats from natural and anthropological sources such as climate change and associated impacts and poor water quality from land and marine-based sources of pollution. Ongoing efforts in coral reef and mangrove restoration in the Virgin Islands aim to safeguard

these critical resources. Protecting and stewarding these natural resources is essential, as the sustainability and well-being of present and future Virgin Islanders hinge upon it.

The marine industry in the Virgin Islands is thriving and expanding. We encourage all Virgin Islanders, from professional and recreational mariners, to engage with this coastal information on cultural and natural resources.

The Department of Planning and Natural Resources extends gratitude to the Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association and the Virgin Islands Conservation Society for authoring this guide. Appreciation also goes to the historians, scientists, and mariners of the Virgin Islands whose valuable time, expertise, and local knowledge contributed significantly to its creation.



Two Women Chatting by the Sea, St. Thomas, 1856, Camille Pissarro



Acknowledgments

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The Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association (VIPCA) unifies, supports and furthers the capabilities of the marine charter industry within the U.S. Virgin Islands by providing compliance guidance, youth training, and one voice to assist in the development of industry standards for the continued growth and strength of the charter industry.



The Virgin Islands Conservation Society (VICS) promotes the conservation and restoration of island ecosystems, sustainable development of islands, and awareness of conservation issues.

Teal Earth Solutions helps organizations achieve their conservation and natural resources management goals.



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On the cover

Caneel Bay, St. John. Located on a 150-acre peninsula on the northwest side of St. John, Caneel Bay boasts seven stunning beaches, many of which offer natural seclusion.



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St. John History

The Tainos settled the Antilles from 1200–1500 AD, traveling and trading by canoe. The Tainos boasted an elevated political organization and arts, spoken language, and ceremonial religious life.

Semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers settled the islands of the Caribbean, arriving in two waves around 6000 and 4000 BC. The Tainos settled the Antilles from 1200–1500 AD, traveling and trading by canoe. The Tainos boasted an elevated political organization and arts, spoken language, and ceremonial religious life. The Tainos made pottery and sculpted bones, shells, and stone; cultivated cassava and sweet potatoes; exhibited piercings; and lived in family dwellings. The oldest found prehistoric site on St. John dates to around 800 BC.

Despite common belief, Columbus did not come to St. John (although his expedition did encounter the Kalinago people on St. Croix). Spain and England both laid claim to St. John. However, the Danish were the first permanent European settlers on St. John, as recorded in the 1680 census records. On March 25, 1718, the then Governor of the Danish West Indies, Eric Bredal, officially claimed St. John on behalf of Denmark, and a small defensive fort was established at Coral Bay.

Revolutionaries on St. John started and sustained the first successful revolt in the Western Hemisphere, controlling the island from November 1733 to May 1734. This revolt is often credited to inspiring other large-scale revolts across the Caribbean. The 18th and 19th-century colonial sugar plantations only survived with enslaved labor. The Danish sold St. John, St.

Thomas and St. Croix for \$25 million in 1917 to the United States. St. John still celebrates Emancipation Day in early July with a traditional carnival.

Today, St. John offers tremendous historical, recreational, and scenic opportunities. Established in 1956, the Virgin Islands National Park (VI National Park) encompasses two-thirds of St. John and over 5,000 acres of its surrounding waters. Hiking trails, historical sites, petroglyphs, and access to bays with exquisite snorkeling and vibrant marine life are enjoyed by visitors and residents alike.

The African Revolution of St. John

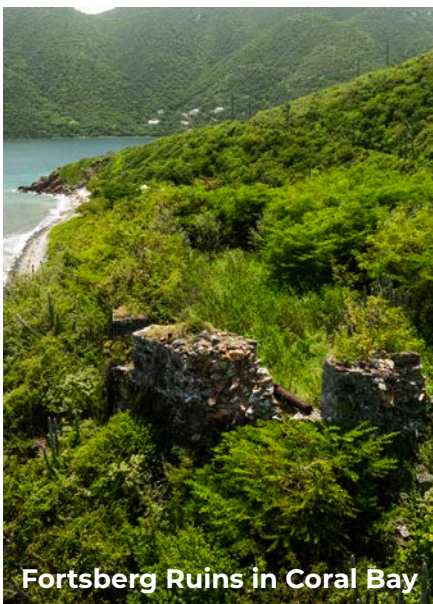
The 1733 Rebellion of St. John, also known as the Slave Revolt of 1733, Enslaved Peoples Revolt, and hereafter in this text as the African Revolution of St. John, was the first successful revolt in the Western Hemisphere. Freedom fighters proudly held the island of St. John from November 1733 to May 1734.

In 1733, a severe drought marked the beginning of a tumultuous year for St. John. In July, there was a devastating hurricane, followed by a plague of insects. There was extreme suffering across the island, disproportionately diminishing the enslaved peoples' access to food and water. A strict mandate that inflicted harsh punishments was put into place by the Danish in September in an attempt to control the disorder among the enslaved. All of these factors were the foundation of the African

Revolution of St. John, a heroic and successful attempt at freedom.

The Revolution began in November 1733 when an organized group of enslaved Akumal people took possession of the fort in Coral Bay. The Akumal were militarily skilled and slew all but one soldier stationed there. Simultaneously, a second group of freedom fighters slew the overseers of the Danish Company Plantation and then proceeded to attack the plantations on the north shore. Their goal was to remove all the Europeans from the island, creating the first free African state in the Americas.

The Revolution lasted until fatigue and lack supplies quelled the rebellion. While there were European holdouts at the Durloe plantation, they could not suppress the revolt until the Danes received reinforcements from the French military. By the time it was over in 1734, the island had endured significant losses of life and property; forty-four plantations were damaged, approximately 300 enslaved people were dead, and three-quarters of the European settlers were killed. The African Revolution of St. John was the first successful enslaved people's revolt in the Western Hemisphere, a testament to resistance and freedom on St. John.



Fortsberg Ruins in Coral Bay



Cruz Bay

St. John's vibrant main town and port, Cruz Bay, is the island's commercial center, boasting numerous restaurants, bars, and shops.

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t. John's vibrant main town and port, Cruz Bay, is the island's commercial center, boasting numerous restaurants, bars, and shops. On the west coast of St. John, Cruz Bay is the primary access point to the island from St. Thomas. Frequent barge and ferry service connects St. John to St. Thomas as well as Tortola, Virgin Gorda, and Jost Van Dyke in the British Virgin Islands. The VI National Park Visitor Center and the U.S. Customs and Immigrations Office are in Cruz Bay. The Cruz Bay Historic District was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 2016. Cruz Bay is a quaint town with a beach, however, beachwear is not acceptable to wear in town.

Cruz Bay Battery & Historic District

In the mid-1700s, the island-wide revolution prompted Governor-General von Prok to visit and assess the idea of establishing a fortress. A second fortress on St. John was constructed at Cruz Bay, along with officers' quarters, barracks, and a church. The first fortress built in 1718 in Coral Bay was decommissioned, and the weapons, including

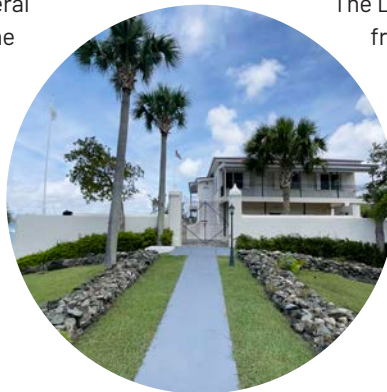
the cannons and ammunition, were moved to Cruz Bay.

In 1824, the Cruz Bay battery was built on the site of the original fortress. Johannes Wright, a mason born into enslavement on St. John, was the contractor. Due to its higher elevation, the battery survived a category three hurricane, earthquake, and the 18-foot tsunami of 1867. The battery was damaged in the 2017 hurricanes and has undergone extensive renovations, re-opening in 2021 as government offices and the governor's official home on St. John.

Additional historical locations in Cruz Bay include the historic cemetery and the Wharfside Village, constructed in the mid-1980s to resemble Caribbean cottages.

Lind Point Trail

The Lind Point Trail, departing from the steps behind the Park Service Visitor Center or the North Shore road, boasts beautiful views of the Cruz Bay Harbor and access to stunning Honeymoon and Salomon Bay beaches. From the NPS Visitor Center, climb the stairs, turn left at the top, and follow the





road up the hill to the trail on the right. The Cruz Bay Overlook provides a peaceful spot to enjoy a view of the harbor. Proceed down the trail to find Honeymoon Bay and Salomon Bay and enjoy the beach or go for a swim or snorkel.



Caneel Bay

In 1956, Rockefeller donated over 5,000 acres of land to the National Park Service (NPS) and preserved 150 acres, which became the Caneel Bay Resort, in a Rockefeller family land trust.



located on a 150-acre peninsula on the northwest side of St. John, Caneel Bay boasts seven stunning beaches, many of which offer natural seclusion.

Historically, Caneel Bay hosts an extensive pre-Columbian native site. The 18th-century sugar plantation in Caneel Bay was the only area the Colonial planters held during the African Revolution of St. John and used as their base. The plantation was not a beneficial strategic location and contributed to the colonizers' fatigue and ineffectiveness during the revolution's six months.

Caneel Bay was purchased in 1952 by Laurance Rockefeller. In 1956, Rockefeller donated over 5,000 acres of land to the National Park Service (NPS) and preserved 150 acres, which became the Caneel Bay Resort, in a Rockefeller family land trust. In 1983, the preserved 150 acres were donated to the U.S. government for inclusion within the VI National Park with a 40 year Retained Use Estate (RUE) to enable the resort to continue operations. The Caneel Bay Resort was initially built to be a "working man's resort" intended to increase access to the Caribbean for families of all economic backgrounds.

Various companies have managed the Caneel Bay Resort over the past four decades through

the RUE. The resort was devastated by the 2017 Category 5 hurricanes Irma and Maria. It has not reopened due to the extensive damage and controversy regarding the RUE, which expired in 2023. A legal case regarding the RUE was resolved in mid 2024 and the property is now fully part of VI National Park.

Recreational opportunities along Caneel Bay include hiking, snorkeling, a beach restaurant, and water sports at Honeymoon Beach. Serene hiking trails connect some of the breathtaking beaches, accessible only by foot and boat. Quality snorkeling, with the opportunity to view corals, rays, and turtles, can be found between Honeymoon and Salomon beaches and on the north side of the bay near Cottage Point.



Laurance Rockefeller, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division



Hawksnest Bay

Hawksnest Bay offers quality snorkeling on three coral reefs adjacent to the shore

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awksnest Bay offers quality snorkeling on three coral reefs adjacent to the shore, nearby Oppenheimer and Gibney Beaches. Snorkel the perimeters of the three reefs to avoid causing damage to fragile corals, such as Elkhorn, a federally protected species.

During the 1733 Revolution, the Durloe women stayed at Gibney Beach to keep them away from the revolt. In the 1950s, the Gibney family purchased forty acres in Hawksnest Bay. The property and home are now known as Gibney Beach. The Oppenheimers purchased a small parcel from the Gibneys. Robert Oppenheimer,

“Father of the atomic bomb,” constructed a vacation home. Later, donated to the people of St. John, the Oppenheimer property is a recreation center today.

North of Hawksnest, with access from the North Shore Road, there is a short hike to Peace Hill windmill located on Denis Bay plantation, land donated by Colonel Julius Wadsworth in 1975 to the VI National Park. The view from Peace Hill offers views of Hawksnest Bay, Denis Bay, and Trunk Bay. Another trail connects to the Denis Beach trailhead for a downhill hike to the serene Denis Beach.



Trunk Bay

An underwater snorkel trail at Trunk Bay offers signs to learn about coral reefs and ways to protect these fragile and valuable habitats.

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here is a pre-Columbian native site with indigenous artifacts dating to 900 - 1000 AD found at this site. The underwater snorkel trail offers signs to learn about coral reefs, associated marine animals that depend on coral, and ways to protect these fragile and valuable habitats. Unfortunately, the coral health along the snorkel trail has degraded over the years. Facilities that make this a very comfortable destination include a snack/sandwich bar, restrooms, and showers. Guests by land are expected to pay a \$5 per person expanded amenity fee.

The Boulon family purchased Trunk Bay in 1928 and ran one of the first guest houses on St. John during the 1940s and 1950s. This was used as a getaway by many famous people during its operation, highlighted with meals prepared by Erva Hartwell Boulon. The Boulons at Trunk Bay sold to Laurance Rockefeller in 1957 when he was purchasing land to create the VI National Park. They did retain a small beach to the east of Trunk Bay named Windswept.



Cinnamon Bay

The archaeological sites at Cinnamon Bay provide valuable insights into the lives of the indigenous Taino people, offering a window into the life before European colonization.

Cinnamon Bay on St. John not only captivates with its natural beauty but also tells a story steeped in historical and cultural significance. Its rich history encompasses pre-Columbian indigenous settlements, the impact of Danish colonialism, and its pivotal role in the sugar trade and the trafficking of enslaved peoples, making it a vivid testament to the diverse cultural and economic activities that have shaped the Virgin Islands. The remnants of Cinnamon Bay Plantation, including the ruins of a sugar factory, reflect the complex history of colonization, enslavement, and sugar production that characterized the Caribbean during the colonial era. Furthermore, the archaeological sites at Cinnamon Bay provide valuable insights into the lives of the indigenous Taino people, offering a window into life before European colonization. Today, Cinnamon Bay serves as a stunning natural reserve and historical site, educating visitors about the rich and multifaceted history of St. John and the broader Caribbean region. However, the small museum/displays that were located at Cinnamon had

to be removed before the 2017 hurricanes, and the building was destroyed.

Between 1999 and 2001, archaeologists from the VI National Park undertook excavations at Cinnamon Bay, uncovering undisturbed deposits that span prehistoric and proto-historic times. An early 1600s sand road was built over the site, minimizing subsequent subsurface disturbance. A timeline from AD 1060 to AD 1810 was established through radiocarbon dating, correlating with observed shifts in pre-Columbian ceramic and historic material culture styles. These findings suggest a rapid development of Taino culture, with evidence of classic Taino effigies and offerings prevalent at certain levels. Intriguingly, the absence of specific Taino designs in the upper-

most level suggests that Taino culture on St. John may have vanished prior to Columbus' arrival in the Caribbean.

Visible from the beach, the Dutch warehouse remains a reminder of the area's colonial past in a setting where Danish, Dutch, and French populations intermingled. The impact of National Park's conservation efforts is evident, though climate change presents





new challenges, with north swells eroding the beach and leading to findings from an underwater enslaved peoples cemetery. The 1733 Revolution was a pivotal event where 80-85% of the Europeans on St. John were killed. Notably, Cinnamon Bay was a site of complexity during the revolt, with some enslaved individuals warning plantation owners of impending danger and allowing their families to escape.

Today, Cinnamon Bay offers a full-service campground and eco-resort with tent sites and cabins. Amenities include a large restaurant serving lunch and dinner alongside a food truck near the beach for lunch options. The bay is a haven for snorkelers, with two prime locations: around a small offshore cay and where a small plane wreck and a large plateau provide fascinating underwater exploration. Hiking trails link Cinnamon Bay to the ridgeline above the bay, offering breathtaking northside coastline views.

Cinnamon Bay's historical and ecological

significance is deeply interwoven with the natural beauty and cultural legacy of St. John. It stands as a beacon for understanding the past, navigating the present, and preserving the future for generations to come.



Henley Cay

Previously known as Women's Cay, during the 1733 African Revolution of St. John, the island was used as a haven for women and children.

Part of the VI National Park, Henley Cay provides a beautiful snorkeling destination and a colorful history. Vendors offer guided kayak + snorkel tours to the island. While snorkeling, look for hard and soft corals, sea fans, colorful parrotfish, and surgeonfish. Onshore, the 10+ acre cay has the remains of a

short jetty and a small concrete structure built in the 1940s. Previously known as Women's Cay, during the 1733 African Revolution of St. John, the island was used as a haven for women and children. During the early 1950s, the Gibneys lived on the Cay before purchasing land on Hawksnest Bay, subsequently named Gibney Beach.



Maho & Francis Bays

Maho Bay offers a picturesque beach amidst a forested backdrop, home to hundreds of tropical plants and more than fifty species of tropical birds.

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aho Bay offers a picturesque beach amidst a forested backdrop, home to hundreds of tropical plants and more than fifty species of tropical birds. The calm and pristine waters of Maho Bay offer snorkeling and water sports. Ample seagrass beds attract juvenile and sub-adult green sea turtles, calmly feeding and visible to snorkelers. Amenities include rental pavilions and restrooms. A food and beverage concession across the street rents snorkel gear, kayaks, and stand-up paddleboards.

High above Francis Bay are the remains of the uniquely red America Hill Great House, cookhouse, and cistern. Believed to date back to the early 18th century, the great house was used as a guest house for travelers until the 1920s. Standing out amongst other Danish ruins, the guest house hosts a red-tinted exterior made from coral and lime plaster. The sweeping views of Maho and Francis Bays, extending to Tortola, are magnificent.

Start hiking at the Cinnamon Bay Trail Head to view the America Hill ruins up close. The trail to America Hill is a marked path from the Cinnamon Bay trail.





Maho Bay offers a picturesque beach amidst a forested backdrop, home to hundreds of tropical plants and more than fifty species of tropical birds.

Whistling Cay

Whistling Cay hosts a striking stone structure across the bay from Maho. According to documentation from the Danish National Archives, the structure was first built in the 1800s as one of a series of watch stations established to monitor illicit traffic between St. John and the British Virgin Islands, and apprehend escaping enslaved individuals (BVI emancipation was 14 years before St. John's in 1848).

Until early 2024, Whistling Cay was owned by the VI Government. It was traded to the VI

National Park in exchange for land near Catherineberg on St. John for a public school (K - 12). The historic guard house was previously stabilized and partially restored by the National Park Service.

Today, kayak rentals are available at Maho Bay for those who wish to explore Whistling Cay and snorkel.



Mary Point

The bay offers very protected and calm waters, fostering a beachscape adorned with vegetation that plays a crucial role in natural erosion prevention

In the 1700s, rather than cultivating the typical sugar cane, the primary crop at the Mary Point Estate was cotton and, later, cattle grazing after emancipation. The Great House and Factory, servants' house, farm building, and cemetery still remain today and were constructed in the mid-19th century.

Amongst the first free-colored plantation owners on St. John, Fred Claasen came to own

property at Mary's Point in the 1700s, following his assistance to the Von Stell family during the 1733 Revolution. An enslaved laborer himself, Fred Classen diverted rebels by sharing that he had already killed the plantation owners, giving Jacob Von Stell and his family time to escape by boat, delivering word of the Revolution to St Thomas. Following the rebellion, records from the late 1730s state that a slave was granted land in return for assistance during the Revolt.





Leinster Bay

Leinster Bay offers a mix of complex historical significance, recreational opportunities, and natural beauty.

Leinster Bay offers a mix of complex historical significance, recreational opportunities, and natural beauty. The Guard House, Annaberg Plantation, and Great House offer a glimpse into the complicated history of St. John.

The coastline at Leinster Bay was an escape route for freedom seekers from St. John to Tortola. Part of the Underground Railroad network to freedom and recognized as such in 2021, the waterfront at Leinster Bay is one mile from Tortola, British Virgin Islands, where emancipation occurred in 1834, more than a decade before emancipation in 1848 in the Danish West Indies. The Guard House, strategically located above the waters separating Great Thatch and St. John, was armed with soldiers to prevent enslaved people from escaping to the British Virgin Islands. Despite the Guard House, approximately 100 enslaved Africans escaped from St. John to Tortola between 1834 and 1848.

James Murphy was a St. Thomas shipowner, merchant, and trafficker of enslaved people who purchased Waterlemon Bay in the late 1700s and renamed it Leinster Bay. Murphy purchased various estates, amassing the largest amount of sugar cane-cultivated land and the largest number of enslaved people ever controlled by a single individual in the history of St. John. The Great House was Murphy's residence, perched high atop a hill overlooking Annaberg, Leinster Bay, and Tortola. It is also believed to be the site of the first Masonic lodge in the Western hemisphere and it was also used as a boy's reform school at one point.

Leinster Bay is a recreational paradise with exceptional hiking and snorkeling. A picturesque coastal hiking trail connects the Annaberg Plantation, the Leinster Bay Plantation ruins, and the Old Guard House on Leinster Point. Snorkeling around Water Lemon Cay is phenomenal, with the opportunity to see thriving endangered elkhorn coral, soft corals, spotted eagle rays, nurse sharks, parrotfish, and colorful reef fish.





Annaberg Plantation

The Annaberg Plantation ruins – including the enslaved peoples’ quarters, windmill, and animal mill used to extract juice from sugar cane – demonstrate how sugar cane processing worked on St. John. Enslaved people were held in bondage and forced to cultivate sugar cane on the steep hills of St. John so that their enslavers could profit from the immense wealth of the sugar trade. To process the sugar cane, animal mills, and windmills provided power for rollers that crushed the sugar cane, producing a juice that flowed in wooden troughs to kettles in the boiling room. In the steaming boiling room, enslaved people ladled the cane juice between kettles, concentrating it before pouring it into flat pans to cool and crystallize into sugar. Aside from working the plantation, enslaved people were responsible for providing their own food. Plantation owners enforced these inhumane conditions throughout a drought, which led to starvation and mass deaths. The 1848 Enslaved Peoples’ Revolt incited the end of slavery and the economic collapse of the sugar plantations. The Annaberg Plantation, profitable only due to enslaved labor, went bankrupt following emancipation.



Coral Bay

A vast harbor on the east end of St. John, Coral Bay encompasses Coral Harbor, Hurricane Hole, Haulover, Round Bay, and Hansen Bay.

A vast harbor on the east end of St. John, Coral Bay encompasses Coral Harbor, Hurricane Hole, Haulover, Round Bay, and Hansen Bay. In 2001, a Presidential Proclamation established the Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument, designating 12,708 acres of federally owned submerged lands to be protected. A portion of Coral Bay resides in the Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument.

Coral Harbor

In the 1700s, during the prime time of the Danish sugar plantations, Coral Harbor was the main anchorage on St. John. Today, the ruins of one of the first forts and a sugar mill illuminate the past.

The first fort on St. John, located on the top of the steep Fortsberg, was constructed in Coral Bay in 1718 from wood and rough stone. This area is now privately owned land by a family who can trace their lineage to being enslaved on the property. Please respect their privacy and do not trespass. The 1733 African Revolution of St. John began at the fort – firing two cannons was the signal to rise up. After assuming the fort, the freedom fighters took over most of St. John from November



1733 to May of 1734. Following the revolt, the Danes moved their operations to Cruz Bay and decommissioned the fort at Coral Bay.

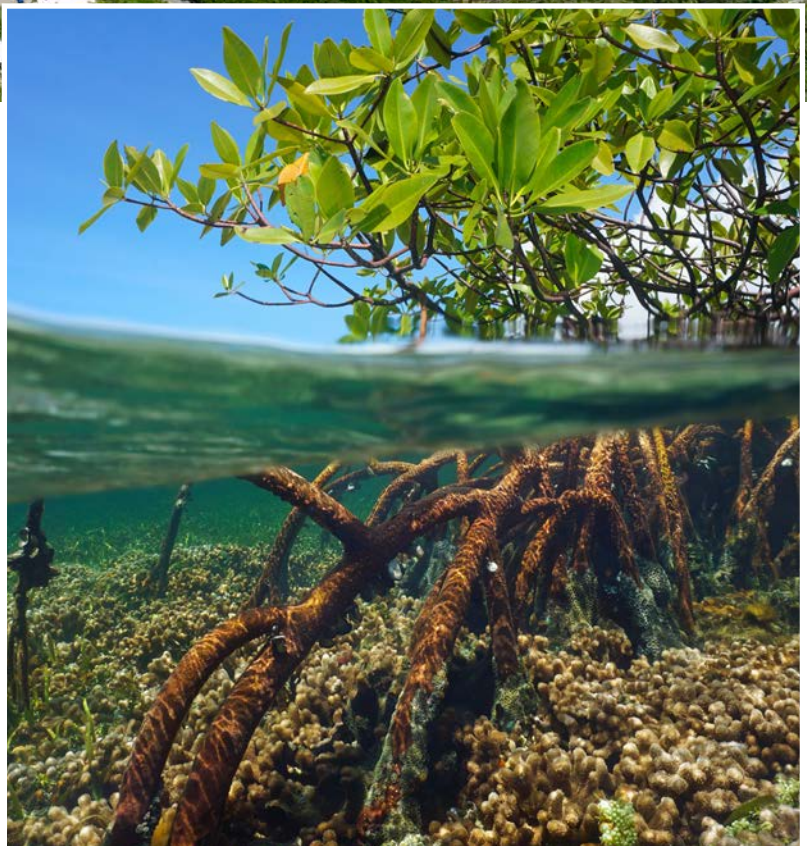
1733 African Revolution Began in Coral Bay

A heroic and successful attempt at freedom, the island-wide rebellion of enslaved peoples on St. John, started in November 1733. Preempted by a devastating year of drought, hurricane, plague, and starvation, the rebellion began when a group of enslaved individuals led by Breffu, an enslaved woman from Ghana, took possession of the Danish West Indian Company fort in Coral Bay. Arriving under the guise of delivering firewood, three recognized members of Akwamu society, King Claes, King Juni, and Kanta, took the Danish by surprise, wielding hidden cane knives and killing all of the soldiers save one. The rebels then fired the fort's cannon, twice signaling to the remaining enslaved community of St. John that the rebellion had begun. By killing soldiers and overseers, the goal was to kill or drive Europeans from St. John. The 1733 African Revolution of St. John was the first time enslaved people gained control of a colony, demonstrating the resilience of the Akwamu and inspiring subsequent rebellions.



Hurricane Hole

Home to valuable tropical marine habitats, including coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds, and remarkable biodiversity in sponges and corals, Hurricane Hole has also historically been a haven for boats during storms. In 2017, prior to Category 5 Hurricanes Irma and Maria, Hurricane Hole was found to have significant biodiversity in the prop roots of red mangrove trees. Studies from the 1980s to present have documented the value of this area as a nursery habitat for many species of coral reef fish. Strong winds and surges in 2017 from Hurricanes Irma and Maria damaged many mangroves, scoured fragile prop root communities, toppled rocks and corals. The recovery or lack thereof of these precious resources will inform researchers about post-disturbance recovery for years to come.



Round Bay

Round Bay, comprised of the smaller Long, Hansen, and Elk Bays, is an ecologically sensitive area rich with essential coral reef and seagrass habitats.

The historic wreck of the HMS Santa Monica is located in Hansen Bay. The Santa Monica was a 28-gun frigate commanded by Don Miguel de Nunes. But on September 14, 1779, just off the Azores, she came under attack by the HMS Pearl. The HMS Pearl being larger, faster, and more heavily armed, quickly brought Santa Monica to the point of surrender. The ship was repaired by the British Royal Navy and was put into service defending British holdings in the Caribbean. She was 145 ft long with 36 guns and a crew of 202. Just

a few short years later, on April 1, 1782, the HMS Santa Monica struck a rock, now called Santa Monica Rock, south of Norman Island. Captain John Linzee put 5 pumps and 40 buckets to the task of keeping her afloat but was forced to run the vessel ashore at the nearest harbor. The closest bay was "Crawl Bay" or Coral Bay on St John. Despite their best efforts, the ship broke up rapidly, removing any hope of making repairs, and the HMS Santa Monica went down in Round Bay just 100 yards offshore in about 40 feet of water.



Dominic Serres - Captain George Montagu of the 'Pearl', 32 guns, engaging the Spanish frigate 'Santa Monica' off the Azores, 14th. September 1779



The East End School House

Dedicated in April 1862, the East End School House provided a community resource for education, religious practice, and community gatherings. Moravian missionaries provided educational and religious training to the East End community. A testament to education, the East End School and a thriving maritime economy facilitated a population increase on the east end of St. John. The school educated east-end children and drew children of friends and relatives from outside the community to the East End while the rest of St. John was experiencing a population decline.

Ram Head

The Ram Head peninsula offers a 360-degree views of St. John, the British Virgin Islands, and the Caribbean Sea.

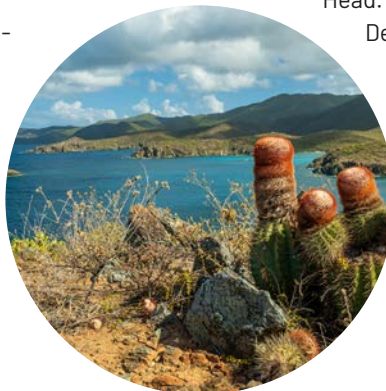
The southernmost point of St. John, Ram Head, is an extraordinary reminder of resistance on St. John. Part of the abolition movement in the Western Hemisphere, the island-wide rebellion of 1733 was one of the earliest and longest-lasting rebellions in the Americas. Revolutionaries took their own lives through ritual suicide at Ram Head rather than allowing themselves to be recaptured by the Danes. A small child who was wounded and survived provided valuable information about the 1733 African Revolution of St. John, occurring valiantly 115 years before the abolition of slavery in the now U.S. Virgin Islands (then, the Danish West Indies) and 132 years prior to the abolishment of slavery in the United States.

The hike to this historical location begins at the Salt Pond Bay Trail Head. Begin on the dirt road and, after a quarter mile, emerge onto picturesque Salt Pond Beach. Follow the beach to the south and arrive at the Salt Pond. Salt ponds in

the Virgin Islands are valuable habitats, providing bird nesting sites and watershed benefits such as flood mitigation. The Ram Head Trail climbs and falls to reach Ram Head, rising dramatically. The dry and barren slopes of this southernmost point of St. John host grasses and the Turk's Cap Cactus. The Ram Head peninsula offers stunning 360-degree views of the south shore of St. John, the British Virgin Islands, and the Caribbean Sea.

The uprising nearly 300 years ago has been commemorated with a physical plaque at Ram Head. Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, representing the U.S. Virgin Islands in Congress, introduced legislation calling for a plaque to memorialize the The 1733 African Revolution of St. John to be placed at the peak of Ram

Head. The resolution became law in December 2022, and the Department of the Interior has installed this historic plaque, forever commemorating the abolitionist movement and resistance demonstrated by revolutionaries on St. John.





Salt Pond Bay

Nestled on the south coast of St. John, within the VI National Park, Salt Pond Bay is a sanctuary that marries profound historical and ecological significance with recreational pursuits.

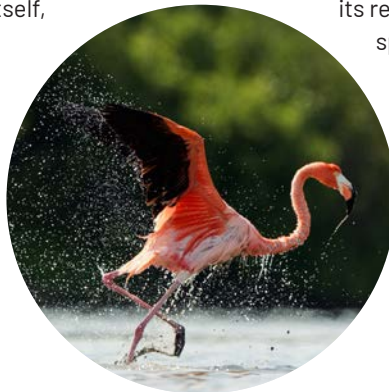
Nestled on the south coast of St. John, within the VI National Park, Salt Pond Bay is a sanctuary that marries profound historical and ecological significance with recreational pursuits. This unique destination stands as a testament to the area's rich cultural heritage while also serving as a pivotal habitat for a myriad of marine and terrestrial species. Its historical and ecological importance emphasizes the need for conservation efforts and enriches the visitor experience, offering a deep dive into the complexities of marine ecosystems and the narratives that have shaped this landscape.

Salt Pond Bay beckons visitors today with its pristine beach and accessible amenities, making it a favored spot for boaters seeking a safe harbor. The beach itself, renowned for its long, curved shoreline and gentle waters, is ideal for families and swimming enthusiasts. A manageable quarter-mile trail facilitates land access, offering a pleasant

journey despite its uneven and rocky path.

Adventure seekers and nature lovers are drawn to Salt Pond Bay not just for its aquatic allure but also for its hiking opportunities. The area boasts two distinctive trails: the Drunk Bay Trail and the challenging Ram Head Trail. Both offer unique ways to explore St. John's natural beauty and history, catering to a broad spectrum of hikers.

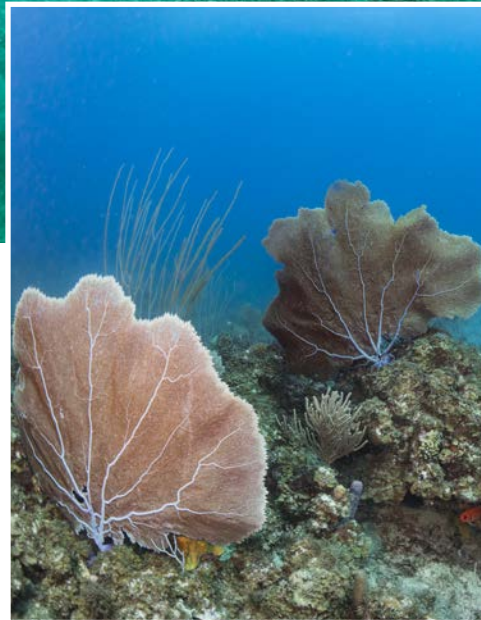
Salt Pond Bay boasts some of the best snorkeling on St. John. Combined with picturesque hiking routes and the serene ambiance of its beach, it is a beloved destination on St. John. The effort to reach this secluded cove rewards visitors with a peaceful beach setting characterized by favorable sun exposure, gentle breezes, and minimal surf. Its ecological diversity, historical significance, and now, its reputation as a good anchorage spot position Salt Pond Bay as a prime choice for those looking to immerse themselves in a day of adventure, relaxation, and appreciation for the interconnectedness of history, nature, and the joys of seaside leisure.





Salt Ponds in the Virgin Islands

Salt ponds in the Virgin Islands are a unique habitat providing valuable ecosystem-based services, including erosion control and habitat for wildlife. Originally bays, salt ponds are created over time by reef or mangrove growth across the mouth. Berms of coral rubble and sand form a barrier, creating a pond. Salinity varies based on saltwater infiltration or fresh water from rainfall. Acting as retention ponds and sediment traps, salt ponds catch the runoff from the land and prevent sediment and pollution from reaching the marine environment, where it can be detrimental to critical coral reefs and seagrass beds. Salt ponds also offer valuable habitat to plants, crabs, and insect larvae. Various birds, such as herons, stilts, sandpipers,



ducks, and coots, feed on organisms in the ponds. Many birds nest or roost in the surrounding mangroves that offer protection from predators. Protecting and preserving salt ponds and their benefits in protecting wildlife, coral reefs, and seagrass beds is crucial.

Lameshur Bays

Great Lameshur and Little Lameshur Bays both offer good snorkeling. For a rewarding snorkeling experience, head to the tip of Yawzi Point, the land separating the two bays, where fish and marine creatures abide along the rocky shoreline.

G

reat Lameshur Bay was the site of a notable underwater NASA program in 1969. The Tektite programs involved pressurized living conditions underwater to study

the feasibility of long-term human habitation beneath the sea. While living in a pair of underwater silos, scientists and engineers were monitored for biological changes in blood and sleep patterns, behavioral changes as well as effects of compression and decompression. Numerous scientific studies were carried out from Tektite after the NASA portion of the project, providing some of the seminal Caribbean marine research which has been used as baseline studies for many of today's more important marine studies. By 1979, the program had concluded, and all related structures were removed, leaving behind only concrete pads as remnants of this pioneering research effort.

In Little Lameshur Bay, cultivated early in the 18th century, Lameshur Plantation was established for sugar production. By the mid-1800s, the present Lameshur Great House replaced the earlier plantation home as the principal residence of the estate. During the same period, cattle replaced cotton as the main product of the plantation, which turned to bay and lime-oil production by the turn of the century. The remains of the buildings and

structures associated with the plantation are in two groups. One is located along the shoreline of the central and western section of the bay, and the second on the hillside north of it. These remains reflect the broad scope of St. John's commercial history.

Great Lameshur and Little Lameshur Bays both offer good snorkeling. For a rewarding snorkeling experience, head to the tip of Yawzi Point, the land separating the two bays, where fish and marine creatures abide along the rocky shoreline. From Little Lameshur Bay, a hiking trail goes west along the south shore, providing access to Europa and Reef bays, both very exciting destinations.



Reef Bay

Reef Bay stands as a testament to St. John's rich historical and cultural heritage. Its historical importance underscores the need for research and conservation efforts to preserve the historical narratives that have shaped this landscape.

Accessible by sea or a strenuous hike, Reef Bay offers a glimpse into the ancient history of St. John. Unique historical features are accessible from the Reef Bay trail – ancient pre-Columbian petroglyph rock art carvings, ruins from the Danish Reef Bay Plantation, and stone walls from cattle grazing.

The petroglyphs are carved into blue basalt rock at the bottom of Reef Bay's highest waterfall, adjacent to a reflecting pool. The designs of the petroglyphs, including faces, bat noses, and the headdress of an ancestral deity, are also found at Cinnamon Bay. The petroglyphs are carved where bats, believed to represent their ancestors, gathered, such as caves and pools. It appears that the Reef Bay petroglyphs date from classic Taino to possibly 1500 years before and were designed to connect with the supernatural. The petroglyphs indicate that the Taino had an advanced complex societal and religious system. However, the rich Taino culture was severely impacted within twenty years of Columbus's arrival in the Virgin Islands, although there has been a resurgence of the Taino culture.

Ecologically, Reef Bay is home to some of the oldest and tallest trees on the island. The Reef Bay trail waterfall is stunning during rainfall.

Signs along the trail provide information regarding the plants and their traditional uses and information regarding the days of the sugar plantations. The Reef Bay Plantation was the longest-running sugar plantation, operational in the early 1900s. In 1864, it converted to steam power. Rangers from the National Park regularly offer guided hikes of the Reef Bay trail.

Reef Bay stands as a testament to St. John's rich historical and cultural heritage. Its historical importance underscores the need for research and conservation efforts to preserve the historical narratives that have shaped this landscape.



Fish Bay

The Fish Bay area on St. John is a captivating blend of historical richness and ecological diversity, characterized by its natural rainwater channels, known as ghuts.



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With rainfall, ghuts transform into temporary streams, carving through the island's lush, mountainous terrain toward the sea. Among the most notable are the Fish Bay and Battery Ghuts, which converge about 200 feet above sea level in the Fish Bay Watershed. These hikes are not for the faint-hearted, demanding good fitness, knowledge of rock scrambling, and utmost caution due to slippery conditions and limited exits.

Historically, the ghuts hold a poignant place in the island's narrative. The Battery Gut, in particular, is named after a battle during the 1733 African Revolution of St. John, where the Free Negro Corps pursued rebelling against enslaved people, highlighting the area's significant past.

Access to Fish Bay Gut is relatively easier from Fish Bay Road, with the trek becoming less vegetated and more accessible to navigate as elevation

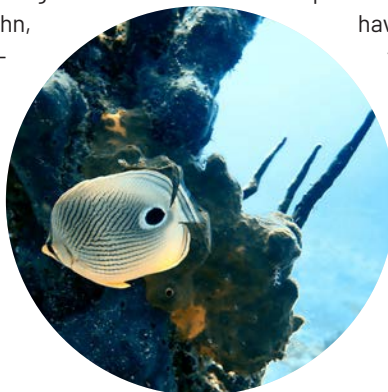
increases. The area is alive with the buzzing of bees and bird songs drawn to the water in the pools. At the intersection of Fish Bay and Battery Ghuts, adventurers can choose their path, with Battery Gut leading up alongside Gift Hill Valley and past historical sites.

The ghuts in Fish Bay are corridors through time, offering insights into the island's history and a glimpse into the vibrant ecosystem of these unique environments. Whether it's the challenge of the hike, the thrill of rock climbing, or the tranquility of the pools and waterfalls, Fish Bay offers an unparalleled experience that beautifully marries the historical and ecological significance of St. John.

Fish Bay has experienced a dramatic development boom during the past 30 years, as land prices in other parts of St. John

have climbed almost exponentially. Fish Bay has remained a more affordable area and many smaller homes have been built there.

This development has impacted most, if not all of the natural habitats in this valley system to some extent through erosion, loss of tree cover

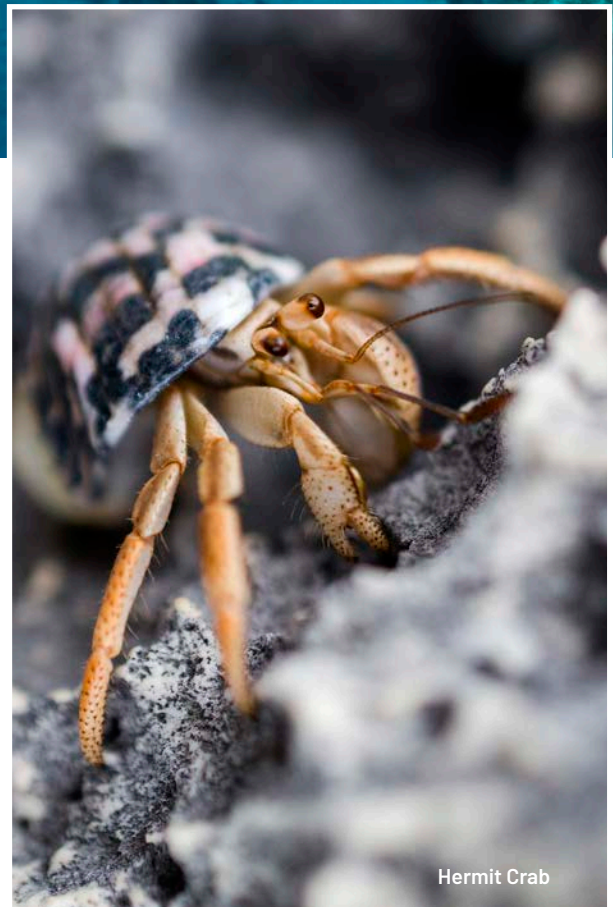




and septic tank effluents. But it remains relatively healthy and the shallow waters of the bay are an important shark birthing area.

Ghuts in the Virgin Islands

Natural rainwater channels, known as “ghuts,” transform into temporary streams during rainfall, carving through the island’s lush, mountainous terrain towards the sea. The ghuts’ dynamic environment, heavily influenced by rainfall and seasonality, hosts a vibrant ecosystem. Permanent water features, such as pools and waterfalls, are rare yet significant, providing habitats for freshwater fish, crabs, and crayfish. This biodiversity is a testament to the area’s ecological importance, with the gut’s dense vegetation and tropical atmosphere offering a haven for orchids, moss, ferns, and various flowering plants. Freshwater pools act as nurseries for fish eggs capable of lying dormant for years, hatching with sufficient rainfall to sustain life. Ghuts are delicate ecosystems and are vital to protect.



Hermit Crab

Rendezvous Bays

Rendezvous Bay, located east of St. John's central commercial hub, Cruz Bay, is an area of significant historical and ecological value.

R

endezvous Bay, located east of St. John's central commercial hub, Cruz Bay, is an area of significant historical and ecological value. Comprised of Klein Bay, Monte Bay, and

Hart Bay, Rendezvous Bay is characterized by its limited land access, making it a less frequented destination by land for beachgoers. For those arriving by sea, it offers an excellent opportunity for snorkeling and beachcombing. A rocky outcropping near the center of the bay provides an ideal spot for snorkeling.

The ecological significance of Rendezvous Bay is further highlighted by its watershed, which also includes Chocolate Hole, reaching up to Gift Hill. This watershed features two salt ponds and a large lagoon at Chocolate Hole, created by connecting a salt pond to the sea. These ecosystems play a crucial role in supporting local biodiversity and offer a window into the region's natural history and ecological dynamics.



Great Cruz Bay

Today, Great Cruz Bay is known for its luxury resort's pristine beach and as a destination for visitors seeking both relaxation and the rich cultural and natural history of St. John.

Initially inhabited by the indigenous Arawak and later the Kalinago people, Great Cruz Bay was a significant site for these early civilizations, who utilized its fishing, agriculture, and settlement resources.

Today, Great Cruz Bay is known for its luxury resort's pristine beach and as a destination for visitors seeking both relaxation and the rich cultural and natural history of St. John.



Carval Rock

Carval Rock is a significant landmark in the Caribbean, its historical relevance stretching beyond its geological presence. Its name derives from the "Caravel," a swift and compact ship pivotal to explorers such as Christopher Columbus. The silhouette of Carval Rock off the north shore of St. John closely mimics the sails of this Spanish/Portuguese ship, rendering it an iconic figure against the sea's expanse. Strong currents make Carval Rock a location for advanced snorkelers and divers only.

The Cays

Crescent Beach, located on the north side of Lovango, offers views of Congo Cay and is actively involved in coral restoration efforts.

Lovango Cay is home to an island resort and beach club, along with a handful of independent residential homes. Popular folklore suggests a history of a brothel catering to pirates and sailors, but this tale is not historically accurate. The island's name likely derives from an African kingdom in the Congo, where many people were kidnapped from and human trafficked in the transatlantic slave trade. The neighboring cays named Congo and Mingo substantiate this theory.

The Cay's history includes the infamous Murder Rock, where a Danish plantation owner met his demise at the hands of the people he enslaved. Fishing served as the primary industry for the island's small population, which fluctuated between 0 and 50 individuals throughout the 19th century. By the early 20th century, the population had grown sufficiently to warrant the establishment of a schoolhouse. Today, fishing remains a popular activity among locals due to favorable currents.

Crescent Beach, located on the north side of Lovango, offers views of Congo Cay and is actively involved in coral restoration efforts. A partnership between the private resort and the University of the Virgin Islands focuses on restoring staghorn coral, known for its rapid growth but facing decline due to climate change and other stressors. The

coral restoration program spans three zones: rescue, research, and restoration, aiming to mitigate threats to coral species and recover lost ecosystems. Snorkelers can easily spot the coral nursery, where underwater structures spell out "Lovango" in large block letters, symbolizing the island's commitment to preserving its marine environment.

Congo Cay

Congo Cay is a primary nesting site for Brown Pelicans and is a favored destination for snorkeling excursions arranged by charter boats. Access to Congo Cay is limited to researchers and biologists from the VI Division of Fish and Wildlife but the spectacular sea cliffs along the north side are wonderful to see by boat. And there is also the possibility of seeing White-Tailed Tropicbirds that nest in the cliffs.

Mingo Cay

Mingo Cay was recently donated to the Trust for the Virgin Islands in 2021, demonstrating a commitment to protecting and preserving the island for future generations. As an uninhabited island, Mingo offers untouched natural beauty and serves as a sanctuary for local flora and fauna.





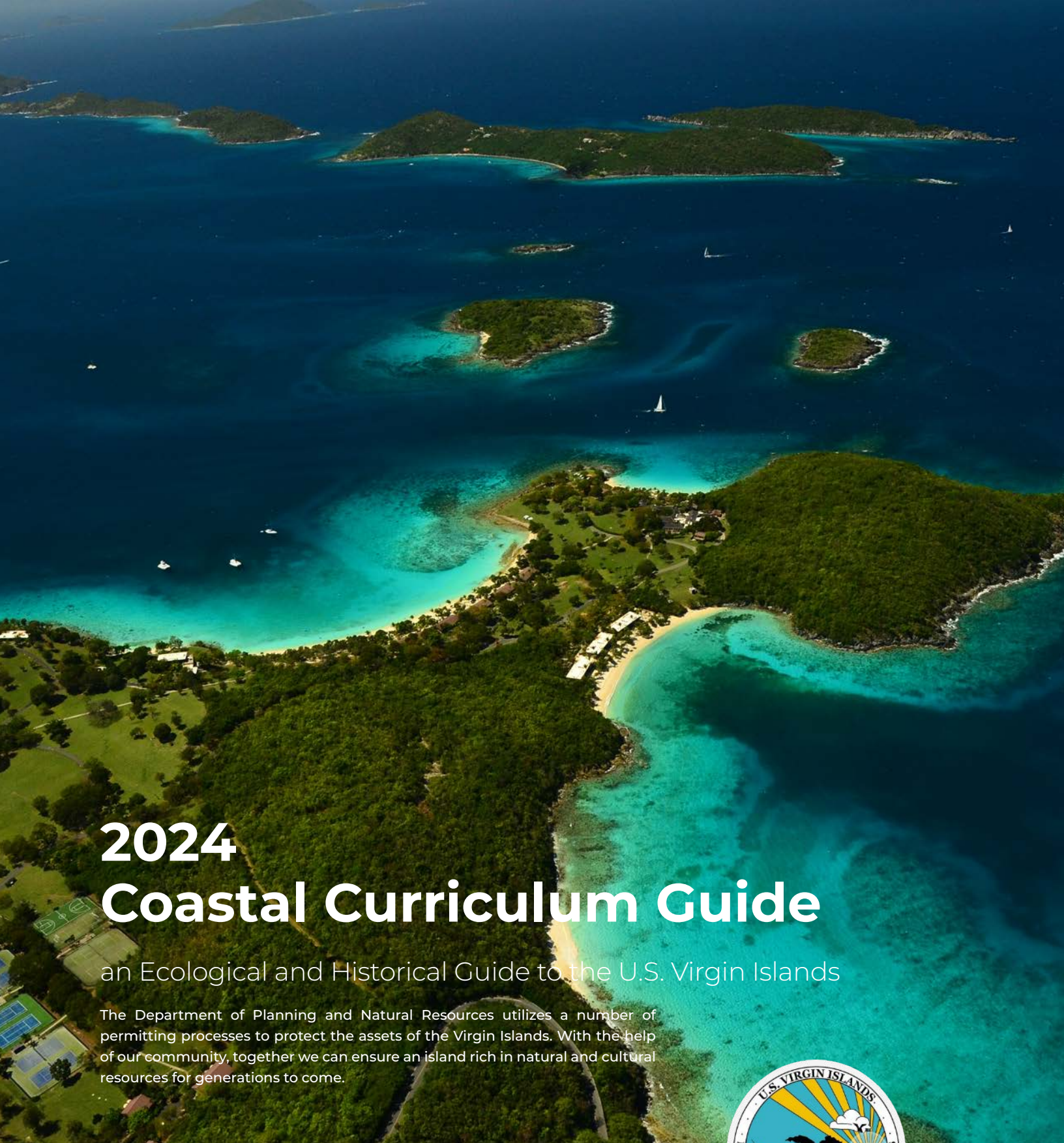


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2024 Coastal Curriculum Guide

an Ecological and Historical Guide to the U.S. Virgin Islands

The Department of Planning and Natural Resources utilizes a number of permitting processes to protect the assets of the Virgin Islands. With the help of our community, together we can ensure an island rich in natural and cultural resources for generations to come.



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