

MASK & FIN

A Dive Guide To The U.S. Virgin Islands



United States Virgin Islands
St.Croix | St.John | St.Thomas



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The beauty of the U.S. Virgin Islands extends far beyond the white sands of the shore. St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas all offer amazing beauty below sea level as well. The reefs, walls and wrecks that surround the islands are all mini-ecosystems, teeming with life. Divers and snorkelers rave about the visibility in the water and all there is to see. Even night dives are spectacular, when nocturnal sea creatures come out to feed and play.

Whether you're a newly certified beginner or are more advanced, diving in the USVI is easy, accessible and offers a variety of experiences for everyone. And because the USVI is a territory of the United States, you'll enjoy the added safety of being within U.S. waters. This means that all dives have to adhere to the United States' strict safety regulations and are protected by the U.S. Coast Guard. So, visit the U.S. Virgin Islands and all that surrounds them.

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ST. CROIX

Not many dive destinations can claim St. Croix's diversity. Diving here will fill your logbook with all types of wall, wreck and reef dives. By boat or from the shore—all on nitrox if you prefer—you'll see turtles ambling along, lobsters easing from their dens, octopi blushing turquoise and schools of fish in every color. Dive all day, then sleep in resorts tucked away on private coves, in downtown hotels or hillside villas. It can all be found on St. Croix. Many hotels have on-site dive centers, making it easy to grab a tank for a shore dive or sign up for a specialty course. No matter how you choose to dive, explore and relax in St. Croix, you'll surely discover what makes this distinct island so appealing.



ST. JOHN



Known as an eco-paradise, St. John is one of the greenest islands in the Caribbean. Two-thirds of its land is preserved as national park thanks to Laurance Rockefeller, who gave the land to the U.S. government in exchange for a promise that it remain protected. There are tropical paths to hike, amazing petroglyphs to view, mangroves to explore and gorgeous beaches to walk. Beneath the waves, the scenery is equally beautiful: 5,650 acres of the national park is underwater. Known for its low-impact diving, St. John offers an amazing array of corals and sea life, including one of the only underwater national monuments—Coral Reef National Monument. So, enjoy the scenery both above and below sea level and don't forget your underwater camera!

ST. THOMAS

A hub of activity above and below the water, St. Thomas is an action lover's paradise. As cosmopolitan as it gets in the Caribbean, Charlotte Amalie's streets are lined with jewelry, clothing, cigar and surf shops as well as art galleries, coffeehouses and sushi restaurants. Starting just outside the harbor, there's even more to do below the water's surface. Visit a few of the island's 14 wrecks, some as deep as 90 feet beneath the surface. You'll find the sea life just as interesting as the island above with dolphins, jawfish, angelfish, sharks, lobsters and turtles. After your dive, join the other tourists or locals at one of the many night spots for dinner, drinks and dancing. Don't worry, you can always relax on another beautiful dive or a pristine beach the next day.



DIVE DESTINATIONS

There are more than 58 dive sites of all different levels off the shores of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Reached by beach or boat, these reefs or wrecks offer a stellar range of experiences. Here are a few examples:



ST. CROIX DIVES:

1. WEST END REEF: Less than 20 minutes from shore by boat, this dive takes you to what feels like a different world. This shallow dive site has hundreds of feet of coral reef patches that will entice divers.

2. FREDERIKSTED PIER at night is a must-see. Giant-stride off the pier or walk in from shore, then start looking for the eye shine of squirrel, trumpet and puffer fish hiding among the rocks. The submerged old pier also protects anemones, Pederson cleaner shrimp, orange coral morph and, if you have a keen eye or know where to look, a sea horse or two.

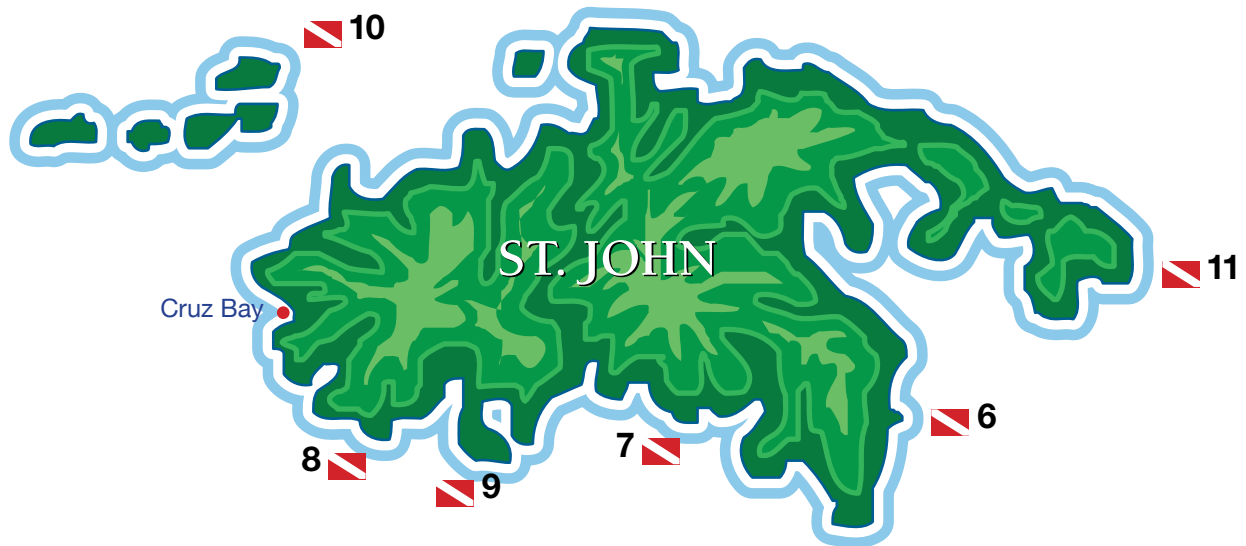
3. SPRATT HOLE: A perfect dive for people with less experience or those who prefer relaxing swims.

Flat conditions allow you to experience more than 40 species of coral at this site long favored by marine biologists for its eco-diversity.

4. CANE BAY: Rated as one of the top dives in the Caribbean, this locale is great for divers of every level. The corals are teeming with tropical fish and aquatic life. Nineteenth-century anchors and larger deepwater sea life can be found along the wall. You'll discover plenty of adventures and great places for underwater photography.

5. BUCK ISLAND: Perfect for snorkelers, Buck Island is one of only two underwater national monuments. Guests to the island can do the snorkel trail, with underwater plaques for a snorkel-at-your-own-pace experience.

DIVE DESTINATIONS *continued*



ST. JOHN DIVES:

6. EAGLE SHOAL: Overhangs, tunnels, arches and an almost overwhelming number of fish are the hallmarks of this site. You'll be accompanied by schooling durgons, grouper, parrotfish, porkfish, snapper, barracuda and tarpon.

7. LEAF LOBSTER HUT: You could spend a week diving just this spot and still not see the entire reef. Patch reefs, spur and groove formations and some large ledges camouflage the turtles, spotted moray eels, nurse and lemon sharks.

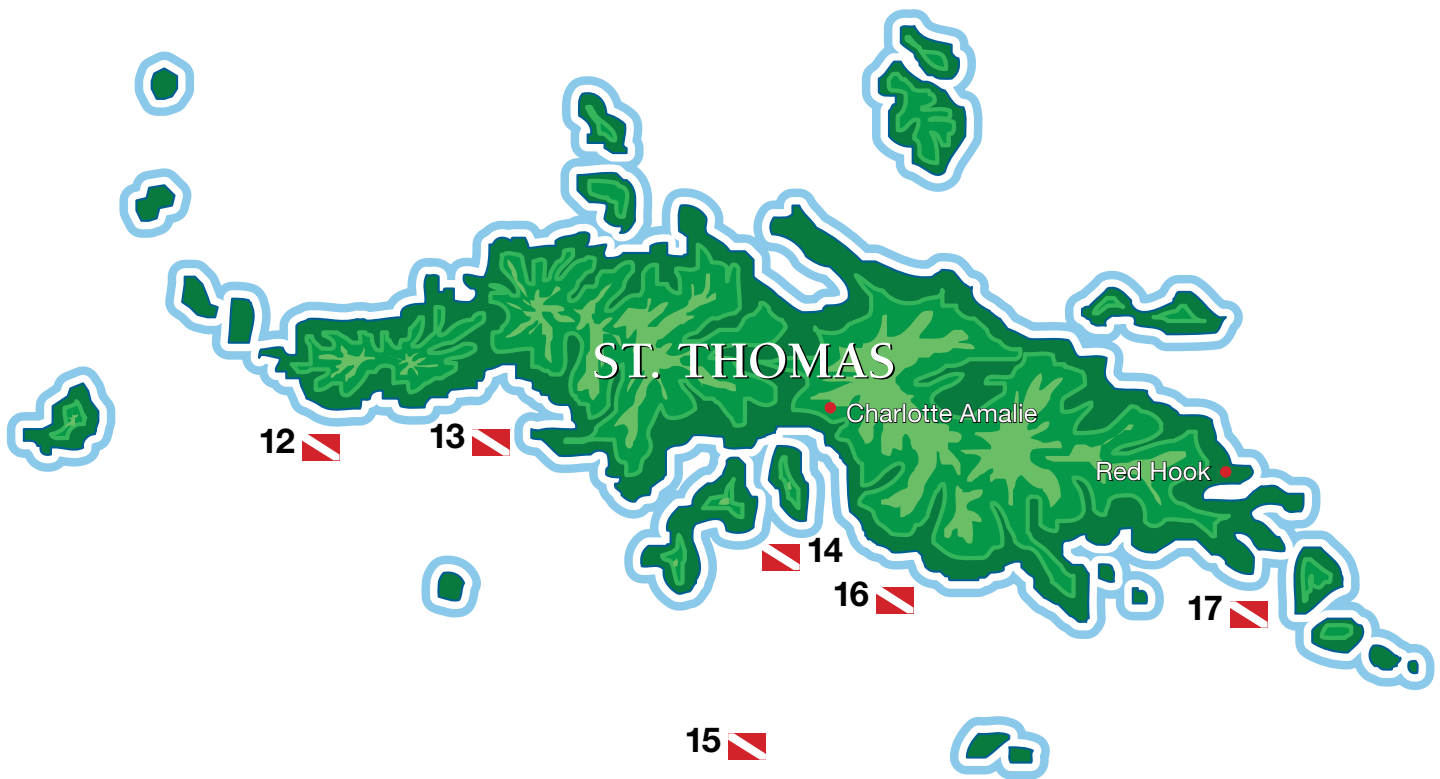
8. DEVER'S CANYON: A gentle sloping reef, this location is a great place to dive or snorkel. Its population includes stingrays, angelfish, triggerfish and beautiful soft coral.

9. HURRICANE HOLE: Protected as a part of the U.S. National Parks of St. John, the mangrove diving in this area is some of the best in the world. The water clarity, calmness and diversity of the marine life are amazing.

10. CARVEL ROCK: An intermediate to advanced dive because of currents, this spot features dramatic rock formations. Dives can range from 20 to 80 feet deep and include a variety of coral, sponges and sea life.

11. FLANAGAN ISLAND: Calm waters and shallow settings make this spot perfect for dives and snorkeling alike. The site has swim-throughs, mini-canyons and dozens of fish species.

DIVE DESTINATIONS *continued*



ST. THOMAS DIVES:

12. WIT SHOALS II: This 1942 wreck is a 327-foot bulk carrier that sleeps 90 feet below the surface. Home to prolific marine life such as goliath groupers, eels and angelfish, the boat exposes much of its inner workings to visitors.

13. FLAT CAY is a reef home to pillar and brain corals, jawfish, a resident turtle, grouper, queen angelfish and lobsters.

14. SPRAT REEF: This spur and groove site is home to schools of blue tang, spotted drum, parrotfish and chain moray eels.

15. SS GRAINTON is one of the deepest and most rewarding dives in the area. The boat, built in 1911, now lies under 110 feet of water and is open for everyone to view her enormous 3-cylinder steam engines.

16. T TABLE is a reef named for its flat top. This reef has a mix of large ledges and gulleys where nurse sharks and other sea life love to hide.

17. COW & CALF: Legend has it that the rocks here were commonly mistaken by sailors as whales—a cow and her calf. Now, divers can take a much closer look at the rough-hewn walls that offer a kaleidoscope of dazzling colorful corals. Enjoy the tunnels, archways, overhangs and undercuts that enhance each dive.

DIVE SHOPS

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