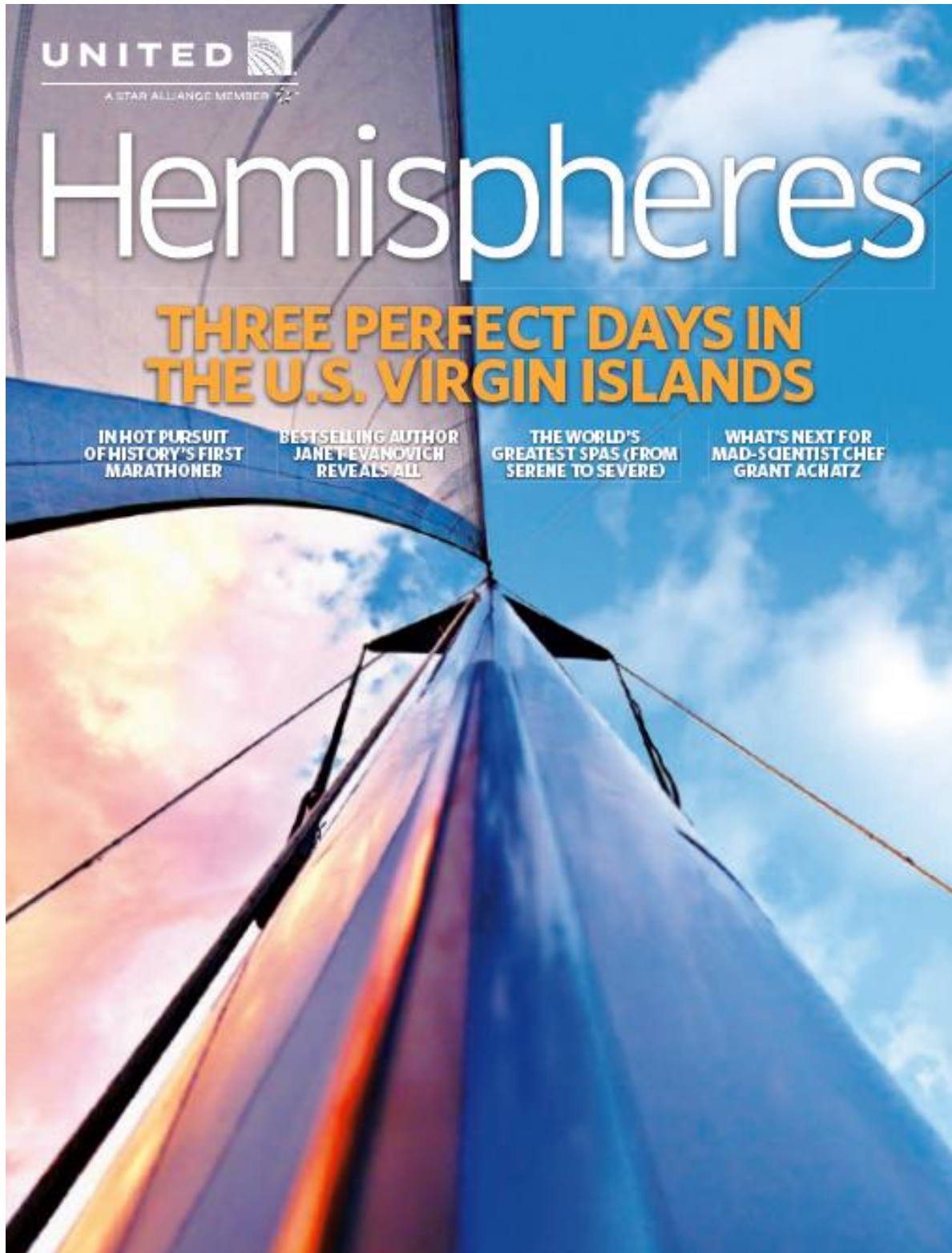


February 2012  
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## TAKE FIVE

Even as newfangled treatments push spa culture far beyond traditional facials and massages, many spas are doubling down on the restorative power of simple physical pleasures. From sound (birdsong) to smell (frankincense) to touch (a 20-hand massage), we round up some of the best spa offerings for all five senses.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
ANDREW BANNECKER

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## RUNNING MAN

When an intrepid writer travels to Greece to retrace the steps of the first marathon runner, he finds the birthplace of democracy at a historic crossroads. He also finds foot pain. Lots of foot pain.

BY GRANT STODDARD  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSH COCHRAN

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## THREE PERFECT DAYS: U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Sparkling turquoise waters and pristine white sand beaches have long drawn travelers to these islands, but it's the friendly locals and unexpected adventures that keep so many coming back.

BY GRANT STODDARD  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
PETER FRANK EDWARDS

**FROM THE TOP**  
A dramatic coastal view from the steps of Concordia Eco-Resort on St. John, U.S.V.I.





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CHRISTINA DEL

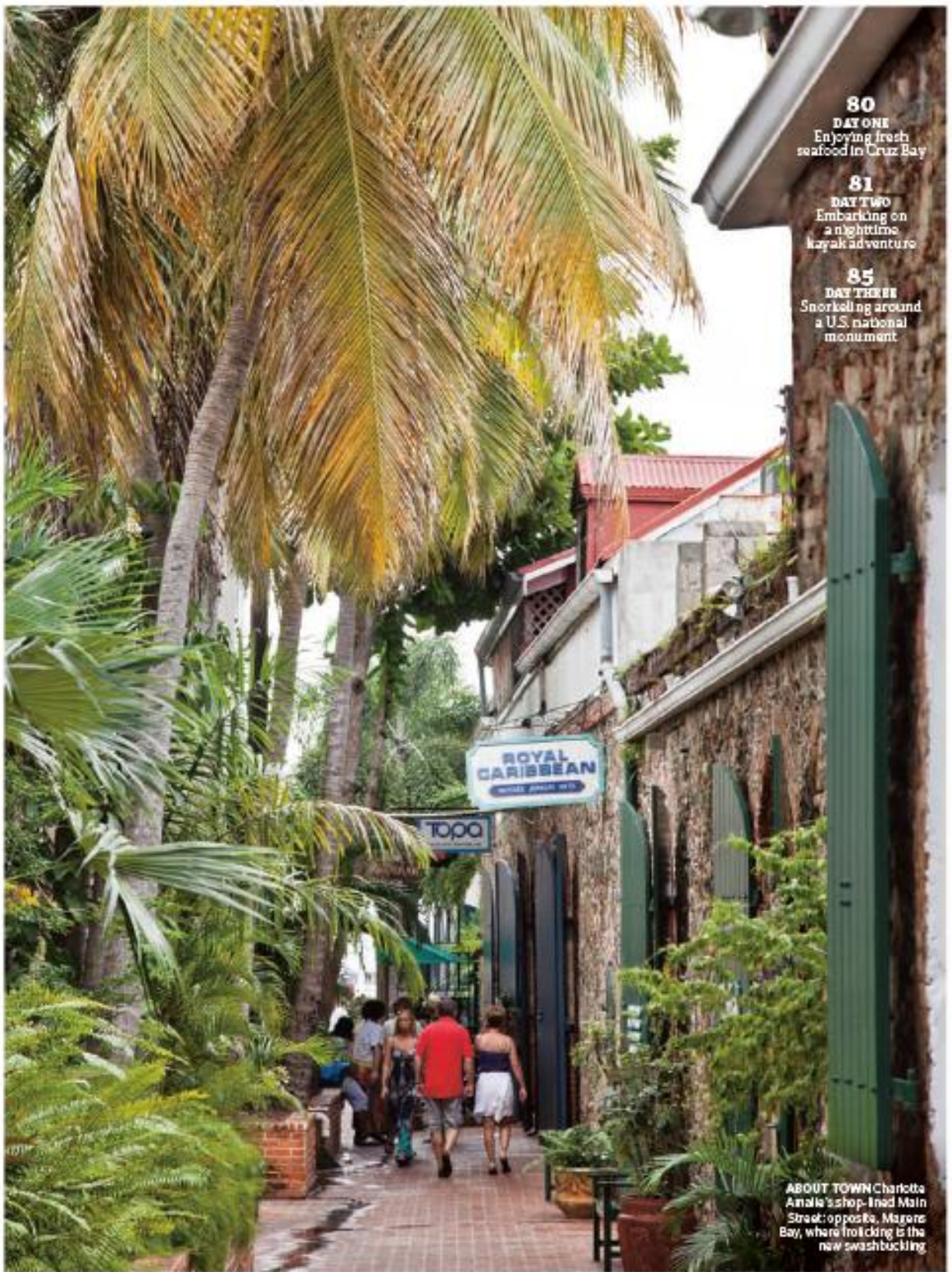


THREE PERFECT DAYS

# U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

White sand beaches and sparkling turquoise waters have long drawn travelers (and pirates, and Christopher Columbus) to these islands, but it's the friendly locals and unexpected adventures that have kept so many coming back.

BY GRANT STODDARD • PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER FRANK EDWARDS



**80**  
**DAY ONE**  
Enjoying fresh  
seafood in Cruz Bay

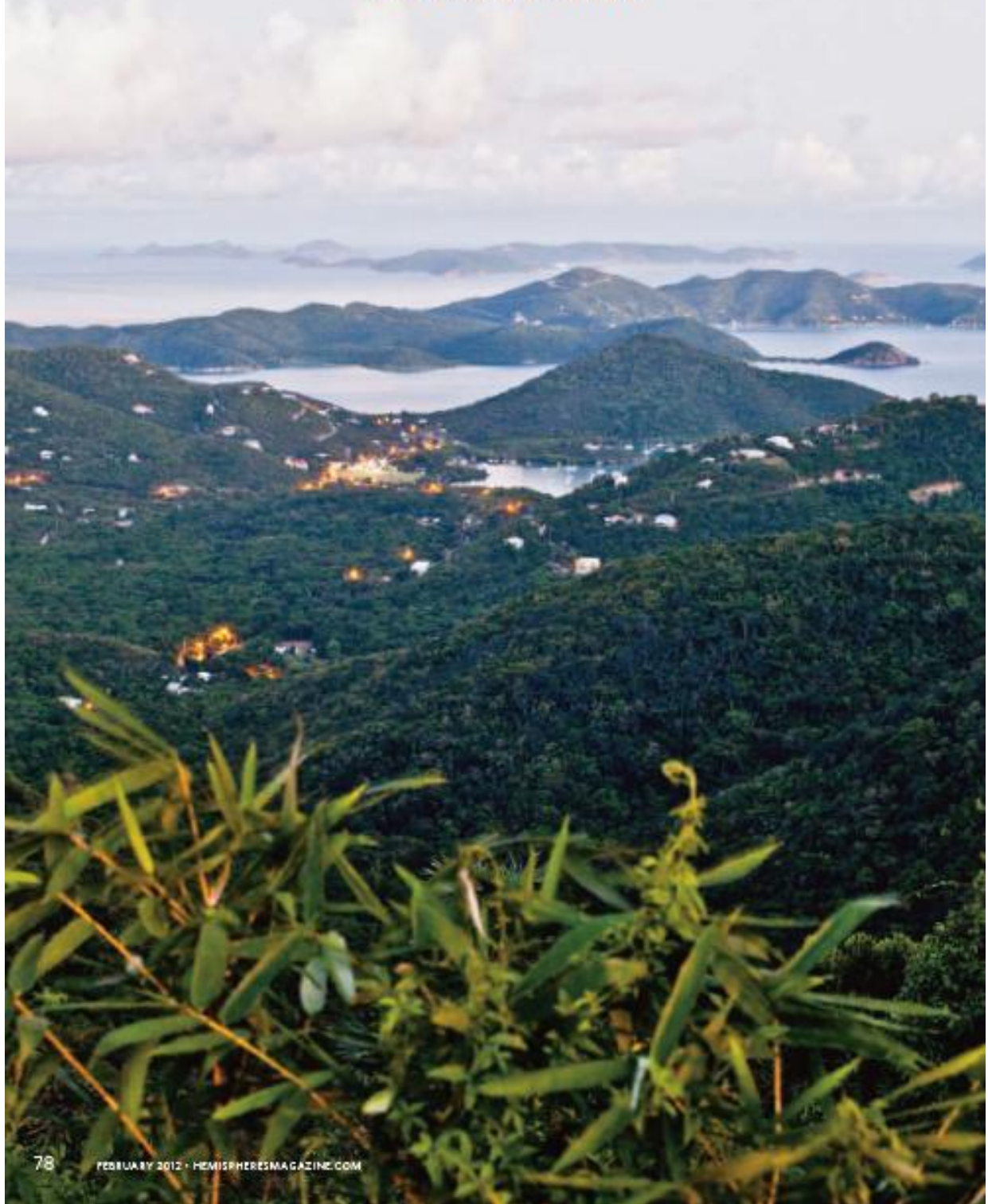
**81**  
**DAY TWO**  
Embarking on  
a nighttime  
kayak adventure

**85**  
**DAY THREE**  
Snorkelling around  
a U.S. national  
monument

**ABOUT TOWN** Charlotte Amalie's shop-lined Main Street, opposite, Magens Bay, where frolicking is the new swashbuckling



**THREE PERFECT DAYS**  
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS





SACRED GROUND The St. Thomas Synagogue, with its sand-covered floor, is a *Charlitta Amalia* highlight: opposite, a sweeping view of Coral Bay

IT'S EASY TO IMAGINE that when the members of the Virginia Company stopped in 1607 on what is now St. Thomas, on their way to establish the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown, their sublime surroundings would have sparked an impassioned debate about the merits of just staying put. It wouldn't have been the first: Native American tribes and Christopher Columbus, among others, also figure in the U.S. Virgin Islands' rich history. Seven different flags have flown here, with the last changeover happening in 1917, when Denmark sold the trio of Caribbean islands to the United States for what was then a princely sum of almost \$300 an acre. The acquisition turned

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## THREE PERFECT DAYS

### U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS



**WELCOME TO PARADISE** Top, the Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas; below, Gladys' Cafe owner Gladys Jones with, at left, the sublime hot sauce that helped make her a local legend

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**HOOFING IT** From left, some of the wilder guests at the Caneel Bay resort; a sunset sail aboard the Ritz-Carlton's *Lady Lysey*

harborfront restaurant, enticing you to order appetizers—the seared foie gras with grape-gewürztraminer compote and the grilled langostinos with passion fruit-cilantro aioli—before tucking into a plate of grilled local yellowtail snapper Basquaise with squid ink orzo.

Batali was certainly onto something, as La Tapa is a gastronomic paradise. But two bays north lies yet another paradise: your hotel, *Caneel Bay* (6), where, full to bursting, you check in under cover of darkness.

**DAY TWO** | Drawing back the curtain, you're left speechless by the scenery. Just steps from the patio of your single-story guesthouse is a palm-lined white sand beach, kissed by a crystal-clear bay. Tramping across the sand are three magnificent white-tailed deer, which, along with donkeys, mongooses and iguanas, were introduced to St. John several hundred years ago. On this 170-acre property, they're a common sight.

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After waving goodbye to Moorehead and the neighborhood guys who've arrived

## LIFE IN THE LEFT LANE

Driving in these islands can take some getting used to

Sixty-six percent of the world's population drives on the right side of the road in left-hand-drive cars. The remaining 33.9 percent drives on the left in right-hand-drive cars. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, however, they drive on the left in left-hand-drive vehicles—and it's no easy skill to master. The trick, say the locals, is to remember to keep your left shoulder to the shoulder. Not everyone is great at doing that, of course, but if you can get through the first couple of hours, you'll be fine. (If not, taxis here are reasonably priced and abundant.)

## THREE PERFECT DAYS

### U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS



**FAREPLAY** Diners at the Old Stone Farmhouse can select cuts from the kitchen's "Butcher's Block," including wahoo, lamb and wild boar.

to drink beer and play dominoes in her yard, you catch the car barge back to St. Thomas, drop off your rented wheels and board a flight at the Seaborne Seaplane terminal in Charlotte Amalie. You splash down in the waters off Christiansted on St. Croix and cruise toward Altoona Lagoon, where your next mode of transportation is a kayak—specifically, a glass-bottom one belonging to Craig and Bryce Scott, the father and son behind **Sea Thru Kayaks (3)**.

Though they offer tours during daylight hours, too, you're setting off on a nighttime adventure. Featuring mounted flashlights that illuminate the water below, the tour begins in a shallow river that many locals believe to be haunted, and you find yourself gliding just inches above puffer fish, crabs, poisonous jellyfish, spiny urchins, giant ink-flinging sea slugs and many more creatures of the not-so-deep. You follow Bryce into the open harbor and several larger fish turn sideways to get a better look; you lock eyes with a barracuda, which Bryce assures you is good luck. The trip culminates with a hover above a shipwreck, the rusting hulk only a foot or two below you.

The Scotts inform you there's no need to dress up for dinner at **Singh's Fast Food (4)** in downtown Christiansted, so you throw on a T-shirt. Served in what amounts to little more than a shack, Singh's roti is consistently voted the island's best. You order the curried goat and are presented with a volleyball-size portion, which you devour. Sated, you thank the proprietor as you waddle out.

It's around 9—high time to check into your next hotel, the **Buccaneer (5)**, where you enjoy yet another alcoholic concoction made of too many tropical ingredients to fully comprehend. Serenaded by a frog chorus, the moonlight reflecting off the water, you end the evening with a dip in the surf. The tranquil environs are like something from a dream, so you take this as your cue to head off to bed.

#### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

THE INSIDE SCOOP FROM THOSE IN THE KNOW ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER JAMES FIELD



**Elgitha Hodge**  
CONCERGE AT THE  
RITZ-CARLTON, ST. THOMAS

"You have to try the food here—it's fantastic! I recommend callaloo, a stew of okra, local greens, meat, seafood and spices. Gladys' Café, Victor's New Hideout, Diamond Barrel and Petta's Pump Room are all great places to try the local cuisine."



**Shomari Moorehead**  
DEVELOPER OF MYVI,  
A USVI TOURISM APP

"There are some beaches by Point Udall on St. Croix that are special because they take a little effort to get to. Also, there are beaches that appear and disappear depending on the currents. What's cooler than discovering a beach that wasn't there yesterday and might be gone again tomorrow?"



**Michael J. Foody**  
CHEF AT AQUA BISTRO,  
CORAL BAY, ST. JOHN

"We're a stone's throw from the British Virgin Islands, like Jost [Van Dyke]. There's a place called Foxy's, which is this crazy beach bar. Cold Coronas, rum drinks... it's a great little island. Or Norman Island. If you can charter a boat and get there, it's perfect."



**STANDING TALL** Molo jumbie stilt dancing, a Caribbean tradition, is performed every week at the Buccanier

# THREE PERFECT DAYS

## U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS



DAY ONE  
DAY TWO  
DAY THREE

### DAY ONE

- (1) **The Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas**  
6900 Great Bay, St. Thomas; Tel: 340-775-3333
- (2) **Charlotte Amalie Historical Walking Tour** Emancipation Gardens Park, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas
- (3) **Gladys' Café** Royal Dane Mall, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas; Tel: 340-774-6604
- (4) **Magens Bay** St. Thomas
- (5) **La Tapa** Cruz Bay, St. John; Tel: 340-693-7755
- (6) **Caneel Bay: A Rosewood Resort** Salomon Bay Road, Caneel Bay, St. John; Tel: 340-776-611

### DAY TWO

- (1) **Salt Pond Hiking Trail** St. John
- (2) **P&P By-the-Sea** Moravian Point, Cruz Bay, St. John; Tel: 340-693-8567
- (3) **Sea Thru Kayaks** Christiansted, St. Croix; Tel: 340-244-8696
- (4) **Singh's Fast Food** 32 King St., Christiansted, St. Croix; Tel: 340-773-7357
- (5) **The Buccaneer** 5007 Estate Shoys Lot 7, Christiansted, St. Croix; Tel: 340-773-2100

### DAY THREE

- (1) **Lalita** 54 King St., Christiansted, St. Croix; Tel: 340-719-4417
- (2) **Big Beard's Adventure Tours** 1247 Queen Cross St., Christiansted, St. Croix; Tel: 340-773-4482
- (3) **Polly's at the Pier** 3 Strand St., Frederiksted, St. Croix; Tel: 340-719-9434
- (4) **Old Stone Farmhouse** Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas; Tel: 340-777-6277



**WATER WORLDS** From left, taking a nighttime paddle with Sea Thru Kayaks; snorkeling off Buck Island during a Big Beard's Adventure Tours outing

**DAY THREE** | You wake up at the Buccaneer and beeline it to downtown Christiansted for breakfast at *Lalita* (1), a health-food restaurant that promises to be the perfect antidote to rich food and free-flowing rum cocktails. Something titled "Morning-After Detox"—a blend of fresh ginger, beet, carrot, apple and lemon—calls your name.

Rejuvenated, you're ready for a morning snorkel-and-sail excursion, so you pick up passes for the Buck Island half-day trip at *Big Beard's Adventure Tours* (2). While there's plenty of great snorkeling in the Caribbean, Buck Island has the added distinction of having been a U.S. national monument since 1961, when President John F. Kennedy bestowed the status by executive order. It's easy to see why he did. After an hour of orientation for inexperienced snorkelers, the boat brings you to one of only three snorkel trails in the U.S., where Atlantic blue tang swarm in formidable clusters and parrot fish audibly munch on the algae that covers the anchor lines.

The appetite of a parrot fish is nothing compared with yours, however, so—once back on shore—you head toward St. Croix's second city, Frederiksted, for lunch. Sleepy Christiansted seems like rush-hour Tokyo next to this supremely laid-back town (though that changes in an instant when a cruise ship docks at the nearby pier). Right on the waterfront is *Polly's* at the *Pier* (3), a welcoming, casual café run by Midwestern transplants. You choose Havarti, Swiss, blue and cheddar along

with avocado, tomato and red onion for a grilled cheese par excellence.

You board another puddle jumper and find yourself back in the heart of Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas. The town's busy shopping streets offer all manner of luxury brands at bargain prices, but the atmosphere is what makes this place special. It reminds you of New Orleans' French Quarter, and little wonder—most of the elaborate ironwork was shipped in from the Big Easy.

Jumping into a cab, you chart a course for your last dinner on the islands. Nestled in St. Thomas' verdant hills, *Old Stone Farmhouse* (4) was originally a stable that adjoined a Danish sugar plantation constructed in the 1750s. In addition to local seafood, it offers exotic meats and fish sourced from around the globe. The best part is that you don't have to decide between the kangaroo steak and the Indian Ocean abalone in a phyllo crust; instead, you're invited to walk down into the kitchen, where chef Greg Engelhardt's staff lets you mix and match selections of meat and fish from the "Butcher's Block." It's a fitting way to dine on your last evening in the U.S.V.I.—picking and choosing what appeals to you at any given moment is what a visit to this glorious troika of islands is all about.

After locking eyes with a barracuda, Hemisphere's contributor **GRANT STODDARD** is feeling pretty lucky.



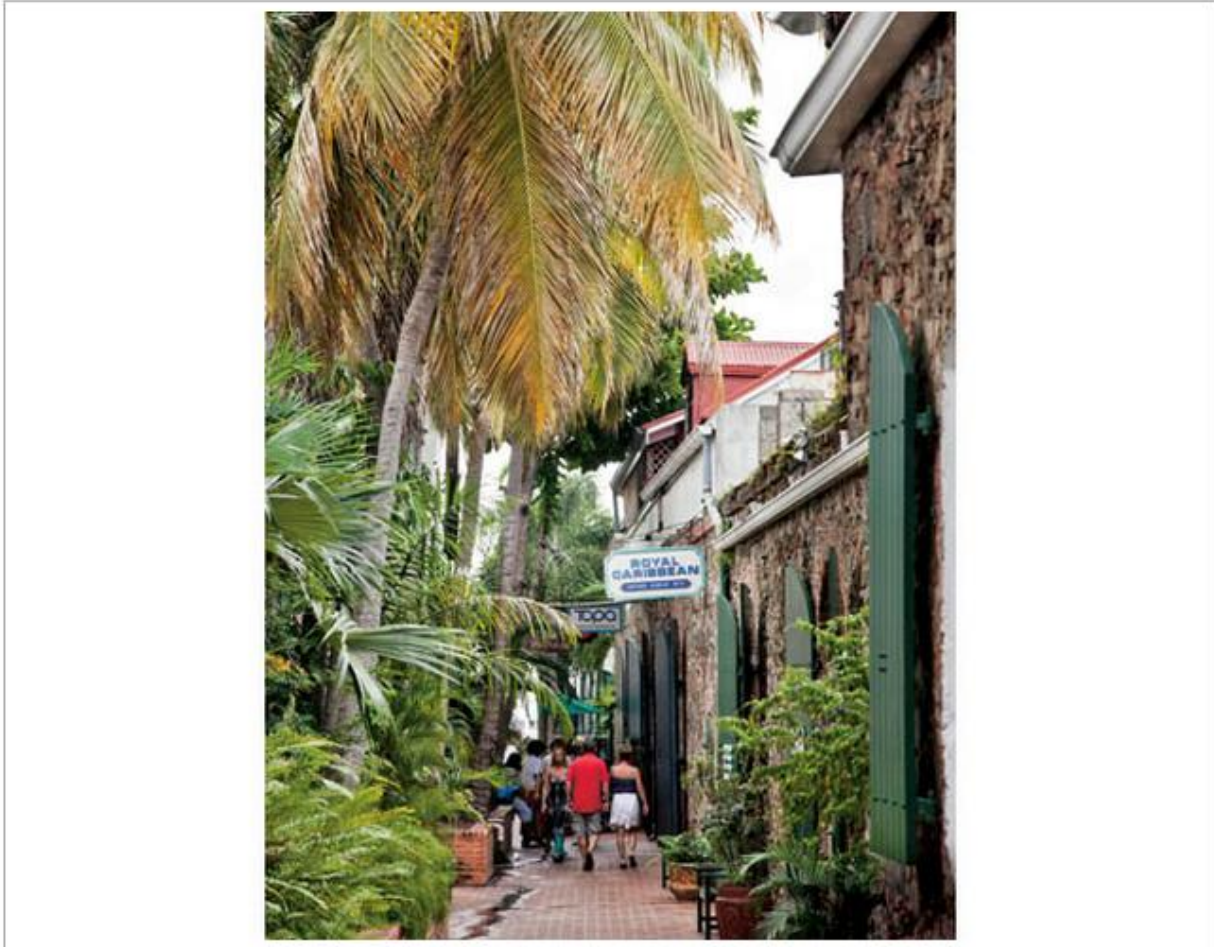
## BEER BELLIES

Bending an elbow with St. Croix's thirstiest residents tucked into the rain forest east of Frederiksted is the *Mt. Pellier Domino Club*, a place known for three things: a honey-and-spice rum called *mamajuana*; stick-to-your-ribs fare from a Trinidadian named Norma George; and beer-guzzling pigs. As the story goes, free-roaming pigs used to snatch beers out of patrons' hands, so the response was to start buying them their own. Order four (nonalcoholic) brews, shake them up and put them in the mouths of your new drinking buddies, who, despite the spray, will enjoy every drop. It's about as lowbrow as it gets, but a whole lot of fun to watch.

# Three Perfect Days: U.S. Virgin Islands

*White sand beaches and sparkling turquoise waters have long drawn travelers (and pirates, and Christopher Columbus) to these islands, but it's the friendly locals and unexpected adventures that have kept so many coming back*

**Author** GRANT STODDARD



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER FRANK EDWARDS

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It's around 9 — high time to check into your next hotel, the **Buccaneer (5)**, where you enjoy yet another alcoholic concoction made of too many tropical ingredients to fully comprehend. Serenaded by a frog chorus, the moonlight reflecting off the water, you end the evening with a dip in the surf. The tranquil environs are like something from a dream, so you take this as your cue to head off to bed.

**DAY THREE** | You wake up at the Buccaneer and beeline it to downtown Christiansted for breakfast at **Lalita (1)**, a health-food restaurant that promises to be the perfect antidote to rich food and free-flowing rum cocktails. Something titled "Morning-After Detox" — a blend of fresh ginger, beet, carrot, apple and lemon — calls your name.

Rejuvenated, you're ready for a morning snorkel-and-sail excursion, so you pick up passes for the Buck Island half-day trip at **Big Beard's Adventure Tours (2)**. While there's plenty of great snorkeling in the Caribbean, Buck Island has the added distinction of having been a U.S. national monument since 1961, when President John F. Kennedy bestowed the status by executive order. It's easy to see why he did. After an hour of orientation for inexperienced snorkelers, the boat brings you to one of only three snorkel trails in the U.S., where Atlantic blue tang swarm in formidable clusters and parrot fish audibly munch on the algae that covers the anchor lines.

The appetite of a parrot fish is nothing compared with yours, however, so — once back on shore — you head toward St. Croix's second city, Frederiksted, for lunch. Sleepy Christiansted seems like rush-hour Tokyo next to this supremely laid-back town (though that changes in an instant when a cruise ship docks at the nearby pier). Right on the waterfront is **Polly's at the Pier (3)**, a welcoming, casual café run by Midwestern transplants. You choose Havarti, Swiss, blue and cheddar along with avocado, tomato and red onion for a grilled cheese par excellence.

You board another puddle jumper and find yourself back in the heart of Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas. The town's busy shopping streets offer all manner of luxury brands at bargain prices, but the atmosphere is what makes this place special. It reminds you of New Orleans' French Quarter, and little wonder — most of the elaborate ironwork was shipped in from the Big Easy.

Jumping into a cab, you chart a course for your last dinner on the islands. Nestled in St. Thomas' verdant hills, **Old Stone Farmhouse (4)** was originally a stable that adjoined a Danish sugar plantation constructed in the 1750s. In addition to local seafood, it offers exotic meats and fish sourced from around the globe. The best part is that you don't have to decide between the kangaroo steak and the Indian Ocean abalone in a phyllo crust; instead, you're invited to walk down into the kitchen, where chef Greg Engelhardt's staff lets you mix and match selections of meat and fish from the "Butcher's Block." It's a fitting way to dine on your last evening in the U.S.V.I. — picking and choosing what appeals to you at any given moment is what a visit to this glorious troika of islands is all about.

## LIFE IN THE LEFT LANE

Driving in these islands can take some getting used to

Sixty-six percent of the world's population drives on the right side of the road in left-hand-drive cars. The remaining 33.9 percent drives on the left in right-hand-drive cars. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, however, they drive on the left in left-hand-drive vehicles — and it's no easy skill to master. The trick, say the locals, is to remember to keep your left shoulder to the shoulder. Not everyone is great at doing that, of course, but if you can get through the first couple of hours, you'll be fine. (If not, taxis here are reasonably priced and abundant.)

## BEER BELLIES

Bending an elbow with St. Croix's thirstiest residents

Tucked into the rain forest east of Frederiksted is the Mt. Pellier Domino Club, a place known for three things: a honey-and-spice rum called *mamajuana*; stick-to-your-ribs fare from a Trinidadian named Norma George; and beer-guzzling pigs. As the story goes, free-roaming pigs used to snatch beers out of patrons' hands, so the response was to start buying them their own. Order four (nonalcoholic) brews, shake them up and put them in the mouths of your new drinking buddies, who, despite the spray, will enjoy every drop. It's about as lowbrow as it gets, but a whole lot of fun to watch.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

The inside scoop from those in the know

### **Elgitha Hodge**

*CONCIERGE AT THE RITZ-CARLTON, ST. THOMAS*

"You have to try the food here — it's fantastic! I recommend callaloo, a stew of okra, local greens, meat, seafood and spices. Gladys' Café, Victor's New Hideout, Diamond Barrel and Petite Pump Room are all great places to try the local cuisine."

**Shomari Moorehead**

*DEVELOPER OF MYVI, A U.S.V.I. TOURISM APP*

"There are some beaches by Point Udall on St. Croix that are special because they take a little effort to get to. Also, there are beaches that appear and disappear depending on the currents. What's cooler than discovering a beach that wasn't there yesterday and might be gone again tomorrow?"

**Michael J. Foody**

*CHEF AT AQUA BISTRO, CORAL BAY, ST. JOHN*

"We're a stone's throw from the British Virgin Islands, like Jost [Van Dyke]. There's a place called Foxy's, which is this crazy beach bar. Cold Coronas, rum drinks ... it's a great little island. Or Norman Island. If you can charter a boat and get there, it's perfect."









