



St John

POP 4300

Includes »

Cruz Bay	85
North Shore	97
Coral Bay, East End & South Shore	103

Best Places to Eat

- » Rhumb Lines (p93)
- » Jake's (p93)
- » Vie's Snack Shack (p106)
- » Skinny Legs (p106)
- » La Tapa (p94)

Best Places to Stay

- » St John Inn (p90)
- » Garden by the Sea B&B (p90)
- » Concordia Eco-Tents (p105)
- » Maho Bay Camps (p100)

Why Go?

Outdoor enthusiasts and ecotourists: welcome to your island. Two-thirds of St John is a protected national park, with gnarled trees and spiky cacti spilling over its edges. There are no airports or cruise ship docks, and the usual Caribbean resorts are few and far between. Instead, the island hosts several tent-resorts (aka campgrounds with permanent canvas structures), keeping costs reasonable and the environment intact.

Hiking and snorkeling are the main must-dos. Trails wind by petroglyphs and sugar mill ruins, and several drop out onto beaches prime for swimming with turtles and spotted eagle rays. Scuba trips, kayaking voyages and cycling trail rides add to the adventure.

All that action can make a visitor thirsty, so it's a good thing St John knows how to host a happy hour, where the party often spills out into the street.

When to Go

Mid-December through April is the perfect-weather high season, when prices and crowds max out. Events that bring bunches include 8 Tuff Miles, an island-spanning road race in late February, and the Blues Festival around the third weekend in March. The St John Carnival in early July is biggest blowout of all. May and early December are good shoulder season months for bargains and decent (if wet) weather. Thursdays and Fridays are the best days to be on the island for live music.

History

Columbus did not stop at St John in 1493 on his sail along the south coast of the island. However, most scholars credit him with naming St John (San Juan) and putting the island on the map for Spanish adventurers, whose slave raids drove the indigenous population off the island by the 1650s.

Starting in the late 1600s, the English and Danes battled over St John. The Danes won out and put down roots. By 1739 St John's population stood at more than 200 white settlers and 1400 slaves. The island's cane and cotton plantations began to mature.

In 1733 a slave revolt broke out, resulting in several deaths and widespread destruction around the island. The Moravian Mission built its first church at Coral Bay in the late 1750s. In 1760 the settlement at Cruz Bay became an official town, and a ferry began service between St Thomas and Cruz Bay.

Economic conditions worsened after the emancipation of slaves in 1848. When the US took possession of St John in 1917, the island's plantations had been abandoned, the island depopulated, and the landscape turned wild again. The last operating sugar mill, at Reef Bay, closed in 1918.

★ Festivals & Events

8 Tuff Miles

ROAD RACE

(www.8tuffmiles.com; late Feb) Popular foot race from Cruz Bay to Coral Bay.

St John Blues Festival

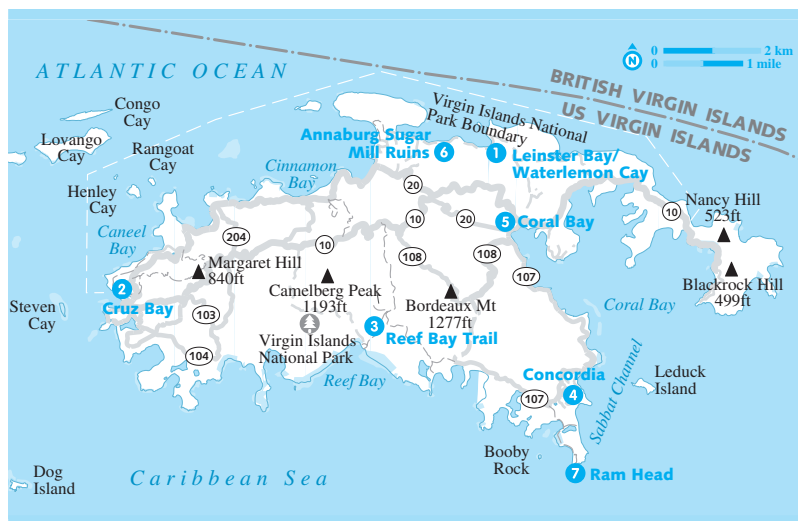
MUSIC

(www.stjohnbluesfestival.com; mid-Mar) Music bash in Coral Bay over a weekend; tickets cost \$30 per night.

St John Carnival

CULTURAL

(www.visitusvi.com; early Jul) The island's biggest celebration, with mocko jumbies (stilts walkers), steel pan bands, parades and musical competitions; surrounds Emancipation Day (July 3) and US Independence Day (July 4).



St John Highlights

- 1 Snorkel with barracudas, turtles and nurse sharks at **Leinster Bay/Waterlemon Cay** (p100)
- 2 Raise a glass to happy hour in **Cruz Bay** (p95)
- 3 Hike the **Reef Bay Trail** past ancient petroglyphs (p103)
- 4 Eco-camp up in the hills at **Concordia** (p105)
- 5 Slow down to local speed at the restaurant-bars in **Coral Bay** (p105)
- 6 Explore the impressive **Annaberg Sugar Mill Ruins** (p97)
- 7 Climb to the worth-every-drop-of-sweat cliff-top view at **Ram Head** (p103)