

Suggested Itinerary: U.S. Virgin Islands

The first thing visitors to the U.S. Virgin Islands will notice is the stunning landscapes of these lush volcanic islands. However, travellers are soon captivated by the islands' rich history and lively cultural heritage. Explore St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix to discover each island's distinct personality.

St. Thomas

Suggested: 5 days

St. Thomas is a tax-free shopping haven, with options all across the island. Renovated Danish warehouses in downtown Charlotte Amalie's narrow streets are filled with high-end jewellery and name-brand fashions. Eclectic boutiques and gift shops are tucked away in narrow alleyways that open onto flower-filled courtyards. In Red Hook, on the eastern end, find works by local artists and casual holiday attire. At Mountain Top, enjoy jaw-dropping views of surrounding islands, then shop for souvenirs. For a relaxing afternoon, escape to postcard-perfect Magens Bay, where you can swim or snorkel in the azure water or just relax on the white sand. At Coral World Ocean Park, observe tropical marine life from an underwater observatory, ride in a semi-submarine and see sharks, sea turtles and sea lions. The island's steep mountains and winding roads make for stunning views at every turn. Built in 1933, Drake's Seat is a popular lookout near the centre of the island. In Charlotte Amalie, climb the 99 steps on Government Hill, dating to the 1700s, for views of St. Thomas Harbor. Across from the cruise ship dock, ride the Paradise Point Tramway. At the top, enjoy panoramic views and toast the sunset with a tropical drink in hand.

St. John

Suggested: 2 days

Nearly everyone begins their St. John adventure in Cruz Bay, which is where the ferries dock (it's just a 15-minute ride from St. Thomas). Head to Mongoose Junction, a beautiful stone-and-wood complex filled with top-quality arts and crafts plus casual to fine dining options. Pink Papaya in the tiny Lemon Tree Mall specialises in original works by Caribbean artists. Climb aboard an open-air safari bus for the short ride along mountainous switchbacks to Trunk Bay. If the ride doesn't take your breath away, the gorgeous beach will. Rent snorkel gear and follow underwater trails to see corals and tropical fish. In the quirky, quiet town of Coral Bay, relax with a burger at legendary Skinny Legs, the unofficial town hall. Watch for donkeys and goats in the middle of the road as you follow Centerline Road back to Cruz Bay, with a detour to take in the views from Bordeaux Mountain, St. John's highest peak.

St. Croix

Suggested: 2 days

The largest of the U.S. Virgin Islands, St. Croix sits about 40 miles (65 km) south of St. Thomas. Seaplanes deliver locals and visitors to downtown Christiansted, home of shaded walkways, stone arches and lemon-yellow Fort Christiansvaern, which houses an exhibit on local military history. In the island's other town, Frederiksted, visit several historic structures, including the Estate Whim Museum's slave quarters, Great House and sugar mill. Snorkelers and divers will want to book a snorkeling trip to pristine Buck Island Reef National Monument to see the reef and its multi-coloured fish. Enjoy tours and tastings at the Cruzan Rum Distillery and the Captain Morgan Rum Distillery.

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