St Thomas
POP 52,200

Includes
Charlotte Amalie . . . . . . . 55
Crown Bay & West End . . . . . . . 69
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Why Go?
Most visitors arrive in the US Virgin Islands via St Thomas, and the place sure knows how to strike a positive first impression. Jungly cliffs poke high in the sky, red-hipped roofs blossom over the hills, and all around the turquoise, yacht-dotted sea laps. Dizzying cruise-ship traffic and big resorts nibbling its edges make St Thomas the most commercialized of the Virgins, but this is also a fine island to sharpen your knife and fork. Curried meats and hot-spiced callaloo soup fill local tables. Bars pour tropical drinks high and low, from coconut-cake martinis in a mountaintop bistro to cold beers in a parking lot tiki hut. Visitors who make the effort to move deeper into the island will find opportunities for surfing, kayaking through mangrove swamps and getting face-to-face with sea turtles.

When to Go
Mid-December through April is the dry and sunny high season, when prices and crowds max out. Late March sees extra action courtesy of the Rolex Cup Regatta during the fourth weekend. The whopping, party-hearty St Thomas Carnival fills the streets from mid-April through early May. Stormy weather starts in August, though this month also hosts two notable shindigs: the Texas Society Chili Cook-off and the USVI Atlantic Blue Marlin Tournament, a mega-lure for sportfishers. May and early December are good shoulder season months for bargains and decent (if wet) weather.
History
Christopher Columbus sailed by St Thomas in 1493. While he did not stop, the Spanish adventurers and colonists who followed shortly thereafter did, and by 1555 they had totally depopulated the island by kidnapping, murdering and driving off the indigenous Taíno and Caribs.

After 1625 the nations of Europe became hell-bent on acquiring colonies in the New World, yet while the English, Dutch and French fought over plums such as St Croix, the Danes staked a claim on a forgotten piece of fruit, St Thomas.

In the 1700s, St Thomas became a community of merchants and traders that included several nationalities and religions, with English, Dutch, Danes, Germans and Jews among the mix.

On July 4, 1848, the schooner Vigilant arrived at St Thomas from St Croix with the news that the Virgin Islands’ Danish governor had proclaimed the emancipation of all slaves on Danish territory. In the decades that followed, the island’s economy evolved to meet modern shipping needs, establishing itself as a major coaling station for steamships.

Maritime commerce was still bringing sailors to the shores when the US bought the Virgin Islands from the Danes in 1917. The Navy set up camp on St Thomas, and when it left in the 1950s, the naval port facilities and former air base became the crucial infrastructure for facilitating the flow of tourists to and from the island.


Getting There & Around
AIR
St Thomas’ Cyril E King Airport (STT; www.viport.com) is the main hub for the Virgin Islands. Major operators from the US mainland include American Airlines (www.aa.com), Continental (www.continental.com), Delta (www.delta.com), Spirit (www.spiritair.com), United (www.united.com) and US Airways (www.usairways.com).

St Thomas Highlights
1. Kayak past twisted mangroves to a coral rubble beach with Virgin Islands Ecotours (p75)
2. Shop for rum, pirate gear and fiery hot sauces in historic Charlotte Amalie (p67)
3. Wine and dine in Frenchtown (p65)
4. Slow to a leisurely pace on Water Island (p72)
5. Pet sharks and feed stingrays at Coral World Ocean Park (p73)
6. Quaff flaming drinks in funky bars in Red Hook (p78)
7. Join the breezy fun and games at Sapphire Beach (p74)
Between St Thomas and St Croix, Seaborne Airlines (www.seaborneairlines.com) flies cool floatplanes from wharves at Charlotte Amalie and Christiansted. The cost is around $80 each way.

**BOAT**
St Thomas has excellent ferry connections to the rest of the Virgins. The two main marine terminals are at Charlotte Amalie and Red Hook. See the main ferry routes from St Thomas on p239. See VI Now (www.vinow.com) for cost and schedule details. St Thomas also has two cruise ship terminals:

- **Havensight** The primary dock, located about a mile east of Charlotte Amalie.
- **Crown Bay** The newer, secondary dock, located about a mile west of Charlotte Amalie.

**BUS**
Vitrán (fare $1) buses operate over the length of the island. Look for the bus stop signs on Rtes 30 and 38. Services run roughly once per hour.

‘Dollar buses’ (aka ‘safaris’ or ‘gypsy cabs’) also stop along the routes. These vehicles are open-air vans that hold 20 people. They look like taxis, except they’re filled with locals instead of sunburned tourists. Flag them down by flapping your hand, and press the buzzer to stop them when you reach your destination. The fare is $2.

**CAR**
Roads are narrow, steep, twisting and often pot-holed, making for slow travel times. Rte 30 follows the south shore and is the easiest route for getting around St Thomas; it has various names, including Waterfront Hwy, Veterans Dr and Frenchman Bay Rd. Rte 38 is a shortcut between the East End and Charlotte Amalie. This broad road (sometimes four lanes) scales the mountains and is the major commercial artery, lined with businesses and malls as it passes through the island’s interior. A series of mountain-top roads, including Skyline Dr (Rte 40), lead to the north shore beaches. Rental cars are widely available at the airport and resort hotels.
Prices start around $60 per day. Don’t forget to drive on the left.

**Avis** (800-331-1084; www.avis.com)

**Budget** (340-776-5774, 800-626-4516; www.budgetstt.com)

**Dependable Car Rentals** (800-522-3076; www.dependablecar.com)

**Discount Car Rentals** (340-776-4858, 877-478-2833; www.discountcar.vi)

**Hertz** (800-654-3131; www.hertz.com)

**TAXI**

Territorial law requires taxi drivers to carry a government-set rate sheet, and prices are listed in the readily available free tourist guide *St Thomas/ST John This Week*.

Many taxis are vans that carry up to 12 passengers. These service multiple destinations and may stop to pick up passengers along the way, so their rates are usually charged on a per-person basis. The following table shows current per-person rates for popular destinations from Charlotte Amalie. The price drops a few dollars when more than one passenger goes to the destination. Add $2 per piece of luggage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESTINATION</th>
<th>COST</th>
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<tr>
<td>Airport</td>
<td>$7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magens Bay</td>
<td>$10</td>
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<td>Red Hook</td>
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**Charlotte Amalie**

With two to six Love Boats docking in town daily, Charlotte Amalie (a-mall-ya) is one of the most popular cruise ship destinations in the Caribbean. To many travelers, the mere mention of the town spawns images of an exotic shopping bazaar. Indeed, it has the largest number of boutiques, perfume vendors and jewelry shops in the Caribbean, with most housed in architecturally rich, pastel-hued colonial buildings.
Downtown buzzes with commerce by day, when the ships unload. The record to date is the arrival of 20,000 passengers one Wednesday in March 2010. By early evening, the masses clear out, the shops shut, and the narrow streets become shadowy.

Sure, the scene can overwhelm, but why not take a deep breath and focus on the town's lip-licking West Indian cuisine, Frenchtown wine bars and proximity to white-sand beaches?
**History**

In 1666, a year after Denmark laid claim to St Thomas, the Danes began the construction of Fort Christian on St Thomas Harbor. Three years later, the colonists constructed four pubs near the water’s edge on the western side of the fort, and in 1678, the Danes strengthened their military position here by building Blackbeard’s and Bluebeard’s Castles as lookout towers on the crests of two hills. People of the time called the colony Taphus, Danish for ‘brew pub,’ and the settlement outside the fort on St Thomas Harbor was, by all accounts, a rustic, free-spirited pirates’ den.

A series of governors and investors tried to bring the port under control, turn a profit for the Danish West India and Guinea Company and get islanders to pay taxes. Their efforts met with only marginal success. One enterprise did take hold: slave trading.

In the late 1600s and early 1700s the town prospered as a slave market and a neutral port. During these years, the settlement gained the name of Charlotte Amalie in honor of Denmark's queen.

When the US bought the Danish West Indies in 1917, the Navy took control of the islands and made Charlotte Amalie its headquarters. Navy presence in the town truly overwhelmed Charlotte Amalie during WWII, when the harbor became a naval base to protect allied shipping to and from the Panama Canal.

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**One Day**

Stroll the downtown district of Charlotte Amalie and check out historic sites such as the sand-floored St Thomas Synagogue and Emancipation Garden, where the Vendors’ Plaza now stands. Browse the town’s famous shops for a Rolex or pirate eye patch. If you prefer shores to stores, grab a taxi to the beach at Magens Bay, the crowd favorite, unfurling a gorgeous stretch of sand with lifeguards, water-sports vendors and other amenities. Return to Charlotte Amalie for a late lunch of West Indian dishes at Gladys’ Cafe or Cuzzin’s Caribbean Restaurant & Bar or save your appetite for a big dinner later at one of the funky bistro's in Frenchtown.

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**Two Days**

Head to St Thomas’ East End and make the most of the activities on offer: windsurfing at Vessup Beach, diving at Coki Beach, kayaking through the mangrove lagoon with Virgin Islands Ecotours. Alternatively, just pick a beach and lounge – Sapphire Beach and Lindquist Beach are fine options. Hit happy hour in Red Hook at Duffy’s Love Shack or one of the other gin joints, then book in for a lovingly prepared meal at the Old Stone Farmhouse.

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**Sights**

Charlotte Amalie proper is all about shopping and checking out the historical buildings. For beaches and water sports, you’ll have to head to the East End or North Side for the best options.

The red walls of Fort Christian and the open space of Emancipation Garden and its Vendors’ Plaza are the old town’s core. Many of the city’s historic homes and businesses stand on the slopes of Government Hill just north of Emancipation Garden. This area is traditionally known as Kongens (Kings) Quarter.

Havensight (where cruise ships dock) anchors the east side of St Thomas Harbor, while Frenchtown anchors the west side. Around the peninsula from Frenchtown lies Crown Bay, another cruise-ship-filled marina. Many attractions are open only when cruise ships are in port.

**Emancipation Garden**

This park, with its trees, benches and gazebo, is the center of Charlotte Amalie. Here, on July 3, 1848, town officials read the emancipation proclamation to the people of St Thomas after receiving word that Governor Peter von Scholten had freed the slaves on St Croix. A replica of the Philadelphia Liberty Bell stands in the corner.

Carnival celebrations and band concerts take place here, but most of the time it is a place for folks to kick back with a cold drink.
from the Vendors’ Plaza, where sellers also hawk batik dresses, souvenir T-shirts and Prada knock-offs under blue-canopied stalls. Travelers will find this park a convenient rallying point and the easiest place to catch a cab. Vitran buses and safaris stop close by on Waterfront Hwy.

**Fort Christian** (Waterfront Hwy; admission by donation; 8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri) Built with blood-red brick, Fort Christian, east of Emancipation Garden, is the oldest colonial building in the Virgin Islands. The core of the fort dates from 1666. Most of the ramparts were added in the 18th century. The clock tower came during an 1870s renovation of the fort to celebrate the colonial government returning to St Thomas. Over the years, the fort has functioned as a bastion, jail, governor’s residence and a Lutheran church.

At press time, the fort and its artifact-rich museum were closed and undergoing renovations. The reopening date for the multi-year project had not been determined.

**Kings Wharf & Legislature Building** (Waterfront Hwy) This government compound, across from Fort Christian, is the original ship landing for the Danish colony. Today, the US Coast Guard shares the ground with the territorial legislature. The USVI governing body meets in the pale-green neoclassical building that dates from 1874. Once a barracks for Danish and, subsequently, US troops, this building is where the Danes officially turned over the islands to the US. Island politicians have assembled here since the 1950s.

**Frederik Lutheran Church** (Norre Gade) One of Charlotte Amalie’s architectural gems rises a few blocks behind the fort. Frederik Lutheran Church was mostly built between 1789 and 1793. The
original structure was Georgian, but after two major reconstructions in the 19th century, the church now has Gothic Revival elements, including a gable roof and tower. The entrance has a West Indian 'welcoming arms' staircase (a reference to the way the staircase flares at the base). During the 19th century, the church had segregated congregations – one West Indian, the other Danish. The church is open sporadi-cally during the week for a look-see. Services, which are open to the public, take place on Sunday at 9am and Wednesday at 12:15pm.

**Government House**  
**HISTORICAL BUILDING**  
(21-22 Kongens Gade; ☏9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) Ascend the hill behind the church and you’ll come to a grand white mansion, where the territorial governor has his offices. With three stories and a hipped roof, it is one of St Thomas’ most famous structures. It was built between 1865 and 1867, and restored in 1994. You can walk around the first floor, though there’s not much to see.

**Seven Arches Museum**  
**MUSEUM**  
(☏340-774-9295; www.sevenarchesmuseum.com; Kongens Gade; suggested donation $5; ☏by appt) This 18th-century artisan’s home sits in a tiny alley off Kongens Gade just to the east of Government House. The museum takes its name from the seven arches that support the welcoming arms staircase. You can admire the antiques in the great room and take in a view of the harbor before heading out back to the separate Danish kitchen, cistern and walled garden. Call to set up a visit.

**Blackbeard’s Castle**  
**HISTORICAL SITE**  
(www.blackbeardscastle.com; admission $12; ☏9am-3pm when cruise ships in port) Blackbeard’s Castle watches over town from atop Government Hill. In the 18th century this five-story masonry watchtower was said to be the lookout post of pirate Edward Teach, alias Blackbeard. Actually, historians don’t lend much credence to the tale. What’s known for certain is that colonial Danes built the tower as a military installation in 1678. You can climb up for good harbor views. The admission fee includes use of the three pools on the grounds, photos with the myriad pirate statues that dot the property, and entrance to **Villa Notman, Britannia House and Haagensen House** – three colonial homes furnished
ST THOMAS
with West Indian antiques and/or jewelry shops. It also includes entry to the World Caribbean Amber Museum, guarded by a hokey mechanical dinosaur; the amber waterfall, studded with 12,000 yellowy gems; and a rum factory, where a guide explains the distilling process, though there isn’t much to see. The whole thing is kind of a hefty price without much payoff.

A better idea is to attack Government Hill from below and ascend the steep set of stairs – the so-called 99 Steps – that lead from the commercial district near Kongens Gade up into a canopy of trees. These steps, of which there are actually 103 (though you’ll be too out of breath to count), were constructed using ship-ballast brick in the mid-18th century. At the top of the 99 Steps, and about halfway up to the watchtower, you’ll see Haagensen House, which you can sometimes peek in for free. Explore the area in the cool of the morning, before the crowds arrive.

STREET NAMES
Street signs are labeled with original Danish names. North St, for example, is Norre Gade (gaa-da, which is ‘street’ in Danish). Main St (Dronningens Gade) and Back St (Wimmelskafts Gade) have signs in English as well as Danish and are generally called by their English names.

Camille Pissarro Gallery
(Gallery)
(14 Main St) Here in 1830, Jacob Pizarro was born as the son of Spanish Jews. As a young adult, Jacob became a very accomplished painter, moved to Paris, changed his name to Camille Pissarro and emerged as one of the founders of the French Impressionist movement in art. A display case at the building entrance summarizes the family’s history. The gallery sells a few reproductions of Pissarro’s St Thomas scenes, but mostly focuses on works by contemporary artists.

Market Square
(Market)
(Main St at Strand Gade) The square and wrought-iron market shed a few blocks west along Main St is the site of Charlotte Amalie’s renowned slave market. Possibly as many as 200,000 captive Africans arrived at this market to be sold as slaves during the 17th and 18th centuries. The actual auction block is difficult to find today because the square is usually covered with locals hanging out. If you’re up at the crack of dawn on Saturday, a farmers market (www.growvi.org; 4-7:30am Sat) takes over. The square is an intriguing place and worth a visit, but be aware it’s in a bit of a sketchy area.

FRENCHTOWN
Occupying a peninsula on the western side of St Thomas Harbor, this fishing village is now a hot restaurant quarter. The island’s ‘Frenchies,’ aka Huguenots who immigrated to St Thomas from St-Barthélemy, populated the community of brightly painted frame houses during the mid-19th century. At one point, Frenchtown had about 1500 people who spoke a mix of 18th-century Breton French and West Indian Creole, but in recent years, many of the neighborhood’s French citizens have assimilated or moved away.

There are still a number of fisherfolk here, and you can see them bring in their catch from the jetties and sell them at the Quetel Fish Market (5-9am Sat) on the waterfront.

To get to Frenchtown from downtown, take a taxi (per person $4), or walk west on Waterfront Hwy past the Seaplane Terminal and turn left just after the post office. The 1.25-mile walk takes about 25 minutes from Emancipation Garden. The neighborhood is compact, so everything is easy to find once you arrive.

ST THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
HISTORICAL BUILDING
(www.stthomassynagogue.com; 16A & B Crystal Gade; 10am-4pm Mon-Thu, to 3pm Fri) The second-oldest Hebrew temple in the western hemisphere (the oldest is on the island of Curaçao), peaceful St Thomas Synagogue is a National Historic Landmark. Its real name is Synagogue of Beracha V’Shalom V’Gimilath Chasidim, aka Synagogue of Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety. The current building dates from 1833, but Jews have worshipped here since 1796, from Sephardic Jews from Denmark to today’s 110-family Reform congregation. The temple floor is made of sand to symbolize the flight of the Israelites out of Egypt and across the desert. There’s a tiny museum in the back room offering historical and cultural tidbits, such as a display on Jewish governors in the USVI (lookin’ at you, Morris de Castro). A gift shop sells mezuzahs and tchotchkes.

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HAVE YOUR SAY

Found a fantastic restaurant that you’re longing to share with the world? Disagree with our recommendations? Or just want to talk about your most recent trip?

Whatever your reason, head to lonelyplanet.com, where you can post a review, ask or answer a question on the Thorntree forum, comment on a blog, or share your photos and tips on Groups. Or you can simply spend time chatting with like-minded travelers. So go on, have your say.

FREE Frenchtown Heritage Museum (www.frenchheritagemuseum.com; Rue de St-Barthélemy; ☏ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) The little yellow museum preserves the history of St Thomas’ French inhabitants. Exhibits show old photographs of the community’s first families and artifacts like fishing nets, musical instruments, French lace and mahogany furniture. It’s located next to the Joseph Aubaine Ballpark.

HAVENSIGHT

A hundred years ago, the area on the east side of St Thomas Harbor (known today as Havensight) was a bustling steamship wharf and coal station. Today it’s still busy, but with behemoth cruise ships that tie up to the West Indian Company Cruise Ship Dock.

When passengers disembark, they find Havensight Mall (www.havensightmall.com), a compound with row upon row of shops and restaurants. This mall, as well as the shops and restaurants across the street in the Al Cohen Mall and the Buccaneer Mall, constitute the largest shopping area on St Thomas outside the historic district of Charlotte Amalie. Jewelry shops, clothing boutiques, banks, a Hooters bar – you name it, it’s here.

Taxis travel regularly to and from Havensight ($5 to $6 per person). It’s about 1 mile east of downtown Charlotte Amalie following Waterfront Hwy.

Butterfly Farm (☎ 340-715-3366; adult/child $15/9; ☺ 8:30am-4pm) The Butterfly Farm lies at the cruise-ship dock’s far south end. Amid the garden full of fluttering beastsies, you’ll learn about metamorphosis during a 25-minute guided tour. Wear bright colors and perfume if you want the butterflies land on you. A cheesy tropical bird show takes place in the front area. Coral World Ocean Park owns and operates the farm. Look for discount coupons in the free tourist guides.

Paradise Point Skyride (☎ 340-774-9809; www.stthomasskyride.com; adult/child $21/10.50; ☺ 9am-5pm when cruise ships in port) From a base station across the street from the Havensight Mall, gondolas whisk visitors 700 feet up Flag Hill to a scenic outlook; the ride takes seven minutes. At the top you’ll find a restaurant, bar, gallery of shops and a short nature trail. The attraction stays open late twice per week: Tuesdays until 8pm, and Wednesdays until 9pm.

Yacht Haven Grande (www.growvi.org; ☺ 10am-2pm) This marina and chic shop complex is located east of downtown Charlotte Amalie, abutting Havensight. Gucci, Ferragamo and Louis Vuitton headline the tony roster, along with a hookah bar and several waterfront bistros where you can sip cosmos and watch mega-yachts drift in to the dock. A farmers market is a comprehensive website put together by locals. Useful facets include St Thomas ferry and cruise ship schedules, ‘beaches at a glance’ information, taxi rates and an active message board. The ‘Colors of Paradise’ videos and ‘Podcasts from Paradise’ audio clips are good for setting the mood pre-departure.

Virgin Islands Now (www.vinow.com/stthomas) is a free magazine widely available on the island. The website has links to restaurant menus, happy hour drink coupons, maps and a handy events schedule.

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THE ISLAND LOWDOWN

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produce and crafts sets up on the grounds the first and third Sunday of the month. If you’re coming from Charlotte Amalie you’ll pass the marina en route to Havensight, from which it is about a five-minute walk.

Sleeping

Small, simple, independently owned hotels and guesthouses comprise Charlotte Amalie’s lodging scene. For chains and resorts, you’ll have to motor outside of town. Lodgings add an 18% tax to your final bill.

**Green Iguana**  
**HOTEL $**  
(340-776-7654; www.thegreeniguana.com; 1002 Blackbeard’s Hill; r $140-170; Wi-Fi) Way the heck up the hill behind Blackbeard’s Castle, this well-run establishment is set in lush gardens and overlooks St Thomas Harbor. The nine rooms come in several configurations, but all have free Wi-Fi, satellite TV, microwave, refrigerator and bright decor; some also have a fully equipped kitchen and private balcony. You can do laundry on-site for a small fee, and the office has a little cantine where you can buy snacks and drinks. The Green Iguana is great value if you don’t mind the steep walk.

**Miller Manor**  
**GUESTHOUSE $**  
(340-774-1535, 888-229-0762; www.millermanor.com; 26 Prindsesse Gade, Frenchman’s Hill; r $91-145; Wi-Fi) Marge and Harry run this 26-room hillside establishment, which has been a guesthouse for more than half a century, and it has the feel of your Aunt Josie’s summer place. A 150-year-old Danish townhouse anchors the complex, with a bar (with free Wi-Fi) overlooking the town and harbor. The manor offers a wide range of rooms, from singles with a shared bathroom to large rooms with balconies looking over the harbor. Some of the guests are long-term lodgers, ie local waiters and scholars, who sometimes can be found in the bar giving the lowdown on local hot spots. While Miller Manor is in a safe neighborhood, the dicey Savan district lies between here and the heart of town. Take a cab at night.

**Crystal Palace B&B**  
**B&B $**  
(340-777-2277, 866-502-2277; www.crystalpalaceusvi.com; 12 Crystal Gade; r incl breakfast $119-149; Wi-Fi) Ronnie Lockhart owns this five-room property in a colonial mansion that has been in his family for generations. Two rooms have private bathrooms; the other three share a bathroom. Antique West Indian decor pervades, and there’s a viewtastic patio on which to eat the continental breakfast or swill a drink from the honor bar. While Crystal Palace is certainly not luxurious, it is mighty full of character. Ronnie is a fountain of local lore; he’ll pick you up at the airport or ferry dock for free. The B&B is located up a steep hill by the synagogue. There’s a $15 surcharge for stays of less than three nights.

**Hotel 1829**  
**HOTEL $**  
(340-776-1829, 800-524-2002; www.hotel1829.com; 30 Kongens Gade; r incl breakfast $105-190; Wi-Fi) Built in 1829, this seven-room inn blends the atmosphere of a Victorian gentleman’s club and a colonial villa. Exposed rubble walls, beamed ceilings and period West Indian furnishings characterize the rooms. The result is a romantic, Old World island vibe. Be aware the ‘modest’ rooms are tiny, and multiple flights of stairs will be your destiny. There is free in-room Wi-Fi, free continental breakfast and a small pool for guests, plus free access to Blackbeard’s
Castle, to which the hotel is attached. The owners also operate the Inn at Blackbeard's Castle, higher up the hill, which has six additional units.

**Villa Santana**

**HOTEL $**

(2) 340-776-1311; www.villasantana.com; 2602 Bjerre Gade No 2D; r $150-235; 
Set on Denmark Hill overlooking Charlotte Amalie, Villa Santana was the 19th-century estate of Mexico’s famous General Antonio López de Santa Anna. Guests can stay in one of six suites located around the property, in the villa’s former wine cellar, kitchen, pump house and library. All rooms come with full amenities and Mexican decor. This is where you hear the Gypsy Kings on the stereo, rather than Bob Marley, while you’re lounging poolside among well-traveled couples. You’ll want a car if you’re staying up here.

**Bellavista B&B**

**B&B $**

(2) 340-714-5706, 888-333-3063; www.bellavista-bnb.com; 2713 Murphy Gade; r incl breakfast $195-265; 
Bellavista is a classic B&B in the quilted, canopy bed, full cooked breakfast mold. Four bright-hued rooms each have their own bathroom. Three of the rooms face the harbor, offering great views since the property is atop Denmark Hill. A sunny pool and free wi-fi throughout add to the package. The owner is hands-on and happy to help with reservations and advice. Bellavista is located behind the synagogue and on up the hill. You can walk into town easily, but you’ll be huffing and puffing on the return trek.

**Galleon House**

**HOTEL $$**

(2) 340-774-6952, 800-524-2052; www.galleonhouse.com; 31 Kongens Gade; r incl breakfast $85-155; The ‘harbor view’ rooms are a winner at friendly Galleon House, with wood doors that open onto a balcony overlooking the waterfront. The ‘shared bathroom’ and ‘interior private bathroom’ rooms are confining and not recommended unless you’re truly strapped for dough. Those units remind you Galleon House is not luxury lodging, but it does have its share of perks: it’s located in the absolute heart of the town’s historic district, and the veranda and pool are good for hanging out and munching the bountiful cooked breakfast. The property is located behind Hervé restaurant, up lots of stairs.

**Windward Passage**

**HOTEL $$**

(2) 340-774-5200, 800-524-7389; www.windwardpassage.com; Waterfront Hwy; r $210-275; The four-story Windward Passage (formerly a Holiday Inn) is primarily a business hotel. It’s useful for those seeking free in-room wi-fi access, a fitness center, on-site eateries and quick taxi access. It’s also right across from the Marine Terminal, and super convenient if you’re catching an early morning ferry or seaplane. It’s less beneficial to those seeking good value, since the peach-colored, cookie-cutter rooms are overpriced. However, when other hotels are

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**HASSEL ISLAND**

The 120-acre floater in the middle of St Thomas Harbor is **Hassel Island** (www.hasselisland.org), which was actually part of the main island until 1865. That year, the Danish dredged Haulover Cut to separate Frenchtown and Hassel Island in an attempt to help water flow more freely out of the harbor, thereby reducing the sewage buildup that promoted cholera epidemics.

Today, the entire mile-long island is on the National Register of Historic Places, and most of it is under National Park Service jurisdiction. During the late 19th century, Hassel Island was a coaling station and repair facility for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company and several other shipping lines. Ruins from that era, and old forts from even earlier, lie disintegrating under island vegetation. While the NPS has been working to preserve the ruins and develop Hassel Island as a recreational facility, it is still a work in progress.

Currently, the only way to visit the island is with a guided tour. **Virgin Islands Ecotours** (2) 340-779-2155, 877-845-2925; www.viectours.com; 3hr tours $99 offers a kayaking/hiking/snorkeling excursion that departs from Frenchtown’s marina. It involves a 20-minute paddle to reach Hassel Island, followed by a trek around the ruins and a snorkel along the surrounding reef. It concludes with the paddle back to Frenchtown. The tour runs on Mondays, Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings.
booked, there's usually room at the inn. The free shuttle to Magens Bay Beach is a nice bonus. The hotel is located at the edge of downtown, not far from Frenchtown; you'll have a 10-minute walk to reach either dining hub.

**Inn at Villa Olga**

HOTEL $$(340-715-0900; 800-524-4746; www.villa-olga-inn.com; Frenchtown; r $150-175; @) Villa Olga offers 12 motel-like rooms off the beaten path in Frenchtown. While the faded rooms have seen better days, they are spacious and scattered over pretty, palm-shaded grounds. The bonus here is free access to the beach and water-sports equipment at Bolongo Bay Beach Resort, Olga’s sister property. The inn has poolside wi-fi access. It’s on the waterfront, on a road that runs behind Frenchtown’s cluster of restaurants.

**Bunker Hill Hotel**

HOTEL $$ (340-774-8056; www.bunkerhillhotel.com; 7A Commandant Gade; r incl breakfast $99-125; @) You’re gonna get what you pay for: the 16 rooms are cheap, but they’re also relatively dark, shabby and mosquitoey. Each unit does have a big bathroom; some have patios, and the sunny deck and cooked breakfast are nice touches. Still, Bunker Hill have seen better days, they are spacious and relatively dark, shabby and mosquitoey. The streets around the breakfast are nice touches. Still, Bunker Hill have patios, and the sunny deck and cooked breakfast are nice touches. The bonus here is free access to the beach and water-sports equipment at Bolongo Bay Beach Resort, Olga’s sister property. The inn has poolside wi-fi access. It’s on the waterfront, on a road that runs behind Frenchtown’s cluster of restaurants.

**Eating**

Charlotte Amalie is arguably the best place in the Virgin Islands to stuff your face given the large concentration of eateries and types of food on offer. Options cluster in four zones: downtown, which is good for breakfast and lunch, though dinner options are scare (the area relies on cruise ship business, which dries up by late afternoon); Frenchtown, which is home to several great restaurants that buzz in the evening, all in a compact area; Havensight, which is more touristic and chain-oriented but in a fun, high-energy atmosphere; and Yacht Haven Grande, a complex of stylish bars and eateries that lies between downtown and Havensight.

**DOWNTOWN CHARLOTTE AMALIE**

**Gladys’ Cafe**

WEST INDIAN $$ (340-774-6604; Royal Dane Mall; mains $13-21; 7am-5pm Mon-Sat, 8am-3pm Sun) With the stereo blaring beside her, Gladys belts out Tina Turner tunes while serving some of the best West Indian food around. Callaloo, fungi, Ole Wife (triggerfish), fried plantains and sweet potatoes hit the tables along with Gladys’ homemade hot sauce (for sale at the front, making a fine souvenir). There is no view here, but the bistro setting, art-covered walls and fun, breezy atmosphere make up for it. This is a great place to come for a full breakfast, too.

**Cuzzin’s Caribbean Restaurant & Bar**

WEST INDIAN $$ (340-777-4711; 7 Back St; mains $10-21; 11:30am-4:30pm Tue-Sat) With exposed-brick walls, burnished wood furnishings and red-clothed tables occupying a restored livery stable, classy-but-casual Cuzzin’s is everybody’s favorite stop for West Indian cuisine. The scent of onions, peppers and curry will draw you to this place from half a block away. Try the conch (curried, buttered or Creole style) or the Ole Wife fish alongside fungi, johnnycakes and a Blackbeard Ale.

**Green House**

BURGERS, SEAFOOD $$ (340-774-7998; www.thegreenhouserestaurant.com; Waterfront Hwy at Store Tvaen Gade; mains $12-24; @) Green House has been an oasis for both locals and travelers for years. Raised a half-story above the surrounding sidewalks, the cavernous, open-air restaurant overlooks Hassel Island and the wharf where interisland trading boats tie up. The cuisine is predictable American pub fare, but the menu is extensive, with burgers, pizzas and seafood. Green House rocks hardest during happy hour (from 4:30pm to 7pm, when drinks are two for the price of one) and evenings after 10pm. Staff know how to work the scene: the host commonly places women by the window saying, ‘Let me seat you here to showcase your beauty.’

**Natural Livity**

VEGETARIAN $(www.naturallivitykulchashop.com; 9A Norre Gade; mains $6-12; 8am-8pm Mon-Sat; @) ‘Your food is medicine’ is Natural Livity’s tagline. No surprise, then, that it is all healthy vegan fare. Lentil burgers, pumpkin soup and scrambled tofu are on the menu, or pick and mix a platter of daily specials (stewed eggplant, soy duck, veggie lasagna) from the glass case. Owner Jahleejah Love Peace also offers fruit smoothies, bush tea and vegan cakes and muffins at her little cafe, which is attached to her Kulcha Shop that stocks reggae CDs, books, jewelry and clothing. Only three tables sit in the steamy cafe, so it’s best to carry out. Have a picnic
at Veteran’s Memorial Park, which offers shaded benches a block to the east.

**Petite Pump Room**  
**WEST INDIAN $**  
(www.petitepumproom.com; mains $10-20; Waterfront Hwy; breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) The Pump Room sits above the Marine Terminal, but it’s more than just a place to kill time waiting for a ferry or seaplane. The family who operates it cooks delicious daily lunch specials like stewed mutton, callaloo, garlic-butter sautéed conch, and saltfish in sweet pepper sauce. They make their own hot sauce, as well as their own mango and soursop (a tropical fruit) ice cream. Omelets and pancakes emerge from the kitchen for breakfast.

**Virgilio’s**  
**ITALIAN $$**  
(340-776-4920; 18 Main St; mains $20-35; lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Virgilio’s has been heaping upscale northern Italian fare onto plates for many moons. The vaulted ceilings, 18th-century furnishings, opera music and scent of garlic and Chianti might remind you of a restaurant you would discover on an alley in Firenze. Pasta, veal parmesan, calamari, salmon and many more standards fill the menu. Several of the pasta dishes are meat-free. There’s a carryout window fronting Back St (how’s that for an oxymoron) where you can order salads and sandwiches ($10 to $14) piled with blackened tilapia and other ingredients.

**Hervé Restaurant & Wine Bar**  
**FRENCH $$**  
(340-777-9703; www.herverestaurant.com; mains $28-45; dinner) Longstanding Hervé focuses on French-Caribbean cuisine served in a candlelit, Old World ambience. The setting is a formal terrace in a historic townhouse with views of the downtown rooftops and the harbor. Nightly specials such as spinach flambé, seafood bouillabaisse and stuffed quail join standards like lamb chops and lots of buttery, spicy fish and shellfish options. Make reservations. Hervé’s wife Paulette operates the adjoining patio which works well for a glass of wine.

**Trenchtown Rock**  
**JAMAICAN $$**  
(340-774-1996; Back St at Raadets Gade; mains $10-20; 11am-6pm Mon-Thu, to 8pm Fri & Sat; ) Trenchtown Rock serves Jamaican fare, mon. All the traditional dishes are here: brown stew, jerk chicken, curried goat, oxtail and saltfish. They go down well with a Red Stripe to a reggae beat (happy hour is from 4pm to 6pm). Vegetarians will find options, too, such as barbecue tofu and veggie pasta.

**Beans, Bytes & Websites**  
**CAFE $**  
(340-777-7089; 5600 Royal Dane Mall; sandwiches $6-8; breakfast & lunch; iW) Join the queue of shop workers in the morning and cruise shippers in the afternoon for Charlotte Amalie’s best java at this chic little cyber-bistro. Order a bagel and toasted sandwich to go with your drink, then sink into the couches to escape the surrounding mall hubbub. The back room holds an internet cafe with several terminals ($4.50 per 30 minutes) and wi-fi access ($3 per 30 minutes).

**Bumpa’s**  
**CAFE $**  
(340-776-5674; Waterfront Hwy; mains $9-14; breakfast & lunch) Climb the stairs to the second floor, order at the counter, then carry your plastic silverware and hearty oatmeal pancakes, pumpkin muffin, veggie burger, chicken pate or grilled fish wrap to the small patio overlooking the street. It’s slow but friendly service.

**FRENCHTOWN**

Frenchtown’s restaurants huddle near the waterfront and around the main parking area. They’re all within a few minutes’ walk of each other, so you can check out the options. Dinner reservations are a good idea.

**Pie Hole**  
**ITALIAN $$**  
(340-642-5074; mains $13-17; lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Six tables and nine bar stools comprise this cozy eatery next to Bella Blue. The 13-inch, crisp-crusted, brick-oven pizzas are the claim to fame. Super-fresh ingredients, ie spinach and ricotta or mozzarella and basil, top the white or wheat crust. You can even get wacky and order a beer-braised
ST THOMAS

66

chicken pie. Several house-made pasta dishes and a robust beer list raise Pie Hole to near perfection.

Craig & Sally's    FUSION $$$
(340-777-9949; www.craigandsallys.com; mains $22-40; lunch Wed-Fri, dinner Wed-Sun) Chef Sally Darash lives up to the claims that she is a 'kitchen witch.' Her fusion cooking draws a crowd every night to the limited seating in the open-air alcoves of this 'Frenchie' cottage. The menu changes according to Sally's whim, but expects elaborate mains such as pan-seared jumbo scallops with avocado slices, garlic and a lemony avocado sauce served with mozzarella mashed potatoes. Eclectic small plates are available too, such as lamb-burger sliders and barbecue eel. Reserve several days in advance, if possible.

Epernay Wine & Champagne Bar    INTERNATIONAL $$
(340-774-5348; www.epernaystthomas.com; mains $16-28; dinner Mon-Sat) Epernay, next to the Frenchtown Deli, is a favorite roost for the St Thomas in-crowd. The hip, the powerful and the beautiful come to hang at the bistro's bar, gnash appetizers like tuna tartare and steamed mussels, before they settle at a shadowy table for a main course of Kobe beef meatloaf or seared salmon with mustard dill aioli. At time of research, plans were afoot to open for lunch, too.

Hook, Line & Sinker    BURGERS, SEAFOOD $$
(340-776-9708; www.hooklineandsinkervi.com; mains $13-25; lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, brunch Sun) This open-air, mom-and-pop operation feels like a real sea shack, where you smell the salt water, feel the ocean breeze and see sailors unload their boats dockside. The menu mixes sandwiches, salads, pasta dishes and seafood mains, such as the jerk-seasoned swordfish, with plenty of beer to wash it down. The Sunday brunch draws a throng of locals. Look for a pack of cute iguanas patrolling the concrete by the water.

Bella Blue    MEDITERRANEAN, AUSTRIAN $$
(340-774-4349; mains $18-30; lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Tagine and schnitzel aren’t usually found on the same menu, but they are at this warm, inviting restaurant. Bella Blue's old chef was from Austria and earned a reputation for serving dishes from his homeland. He has since retired, but his greatest hits remain. The new chef focuses on dishes with a Mediterranean bent, such as hummus, lamb tagine and a variety of pasta options and grilled fish.

Frenchtown Deli    DELI $
(340-776-7211; mains $5-12; 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, to 4pm Sun) The deli is a popular stop for breakfast and lunch. Order at the counter, then plop down in a booth with an egg sandwich, bagel or good ole cup of coffee. Lunch is all about thick-cut sandwiches.

HAVENSIGHT & YACHT HAVEN GRANDE
Several chain-style restaurants and bars, such as Hooters, line the malls at Havensight. Nearby Yacht Haven Grande harbors several trendy restaurants along the waterfront; they’re better for happy-hour martinis than dinner, but at least they stay open late.

Pizza Amore    ITALIAN $$
(340-774-2822; www.pizzaamorestthomas.com; 18 Estate Thomas; large pizzas from $22; 9am-8pm Mon-Thu, to 9pm Fri, 10am-9pm Sat) Pizza Amore is Charlotte Amalie's favorite independent pizza joint. The simple, congenial room packs locals of all stripes into its smattering of tables inside; many more tables spill onto the deck outside. You’ll find it by following your nose to Al Cohen's Mall, across the street from Havensight Mall. Cash only.

Barefoot Buddha    CAFE $
(340-777-3668; 9715 Estate Thomas; mains $8-11; breakfast & lunch) The island's yoga-philites hang out at yin-yang decorated wood tables, tucking into organic specials, such as the blackened tofu wrap, and the everyday list of toasted sandwiches (go for the hummus and rosemary goat cheese). The Buddha is also popular for breakfast, thanks to the long list of organic coffee drinks and egg sandwiches. Cash only. It’s attached to an incense-wafting gift store located in the Guardian Building, a strip mall near the road that leads to Paradise Point.

Drinking & Entertainment
Most live music happens at the resorts and bars on the East End. Downtown Charlotte Amalie doesn’t have much of a scene, except for a couple spots on Waterfront Hwy. Havensight and Yacht Haven Grande have bars where martinis swirl for happy hour and DJs take over as the evening progresses. Check St Thomas/St John This Week (www.virginislandsthisweek.com) to see what’s on. The Reichhold Center for the Arts
Green House  
(www.thegreenhouserestaurant.com; Waterfront Hwy, Charlotte Amalie; ☛) Charlotte Amalie’s long-time, go-to bar-restaurant attracts a big dance crowd on Tuesday nights when a DJ spins hip-hop, R&B and Caribbean rhythms and drink prices dive to two-for-one. The revelers are mostly under 30, West Indian and dressed in some fine threads. The party begins at 9:30pm.

Tavern on the Waterfront  
(www.tavernonthewaterfront.com; Waterfront Hwy, Charlotte Amalie) The Euro-tinged tavern hosts live jazz on Fridays from 7pm to 10pm. It’s typically a piano-drums-vocal trio, but other musicians sometimes drop in. The room is also a fine-dining establishment that attracts an older crowd.

Big Kahuna Rum Shack  
(www.bigkahunausvi.com; Waterfront Hwy, Charlotte Amalie; ☛) The Big Kahuna caters to 20-somethings smoking it up at the open-air bar, listening to rock and using the free wi-fi. It’s a good setting to try a USVI-made Blackbeard Ale.

Epernay Wine & Champagne Bar  
(www.epernaystthomas.com; ☛Mon-Sat) Guess what they pour here? Epernay is a popular hangout for St Thomian professionals, politicians and snowbirds. Friday evening’s happy hour is the biggest scene. Cocktail dresses, slacks and collared shirts set the fashion.

Le Petite Fenetre  
(Frenchtown) ‘The Little Window’ sits across from the Frenchtown Heritage Museum, but you may learn more about the local lifestyle here, at this old-timers’ bar where neighborhood fisherman sit, sip and chat on the front porch.

Ship Wreck Tavern  
(www.shipwreckstthomas.com; Al Cohen Mall, Havenight; ☛) This place is your basic gin mill with pool tables, air hockey and a cast of the young and restless. Lots of cruise-ship crew members favor the bar. It also appeals to local continental. DJs commandeer the turntable on Wednesday and Saturday nights, and dancing ensues.

Fat Turtle Bar  
(www.fat-turtle.com; Yacht Haven Grande) Fat Turtle is the stalwart in the Yacht Haven Grande complex. Play foosball or glue yourself to the plasma TVs for big games. A DJ and light show ratchet up the action on Friday nights.

Shopping
As a duty-free port with a long tradition of importing pretty things from all over the world, St Thomas is a shopper’s paradise. Each US citizen can leave with up to $1600 worth of goods without paying the customs agent – the highest duty-free allowance in the Caribbean.

Jewelry is the big deal in town. Electronics can be a good buy as well. It’s best to research what you want ahead of time to understand the market price; some shoppers claim they can get better bargains at home from big-box retailers, even though there’s no sales tax to pay on St Thomas. You can haggle with shopkeepers, and often they’ll bundle items (ie you might get a case, rechargeable batteries and an extra memory card to go with a new camera as part of the deal).

Vendors’ Plaza, in front of Fort Christian, is a bazaar for crafts, costume jewelry, T-shirts and African imports. The area around Main St, Back St and the colonial warehouses that stretch down to the waterfront has been converted into what amounts to a large outdoor mall. Here, you will find more than 100 elegant shops and boutiques cloistered in historic 18th- and 19th-century buildings and tucked along narrow alleys scented with spices and echoing with jazz and West Indian rhythms. The best place to park is in the large lot on the east side of Fort Christian.

Havensight Mall is adjacent to the cruise ship wharf on the east side of St Thomas Harbor. It’s a modern compound of buildings housing more than 50 businesses; there are more right across Rte 30 at the Buccaneer Mall, the Guardian Building and the Al Cohen Mall. All of these malls have plenty of parking.

Most stores are open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Saturday, and to 1pm Sunday if cruise ships are in town. If it is a day with low ship volume, many places don’t bother to open.

DOWNTOWN CHARLOTTE AMALIE
AH Riise  
(www.ahriise.com; 37 Main St) This is the famous store that most visitors beeline to, where you can buy everything from watches and
jewelry to tobacco and liquor. There’s another outlet at Havensight.

**Boo Chand’s** **ELECTRONICS** (31 Main St) Boo Chand’s has been one of the Caribbean’s largest retailers of cameras for more than 60 years. There’s another outlet at Havensight.

**Pirates in Paradise** **SOUVENIRS** (38A Waterfront Hwy) Argh! Here’s your treasure trove of pirate gear, including eye patches, fake doubloons, kids’ toys and party decorations. The shop is located underneath Bumpa’s restaurant.

**Natural Livity Kulcha Shop** **MUSIC, CLOTHING** (www.naturallivitykulchashop.com; 9A Norre Gade; ☏Mon-Sat) Attached to a vegetarian takeaway restaurant, the Kulcha Shop features African clothing, herbs, incense, reggae CDs and funky peace-logoed jewelry.

**Native Arts & Crafts** **SOUVENIRS** (Tolbod Gade) This is the place to buy local hot sauces, honey, straw dolls and painted gourd bowls made by island craftspeople, as well as books by local authors.

**Camille Pissarro Gallery** **FINE ARTS** (14 Main St) Located in Pissarro’s boyhood home (a display case outside summarizes the family’s history), the gallery sells a few reproductions of the famous impressionist’s St Thomas scenes, but mostly focuses on works by contemporary artists.

### Havensight

**Dockside Bookshop** **BOOKSTORE** (www.docksidebooks.com; Havensight Mall) The island’s only real bookstore – and an impressive one at that – carries plenty of regional titles, kids’ books and best-sellers.

**Urban Threadz** **CLOTHING** (Buccaneer Mall) It has all the Bob Marley shirts you ever dreamed of.

### Information

**Dangers & Annoyances** Charlotte Amalie has some big-city issues including drugs, poverty, prostitution and street crime. Waterfront Hwy and Main St in the town center are fine at night, but move a few blocks away and the streets quickly get deserted. Avoid the Savan area, a red-light district that surrounds Main St west of Market Sq and north of the Windward Passage hotel; this is where the island’s underworld takes root. In general, savvy travelers who take reasonable precautions should have no problems.

**Internet Access** Some restaurants and bars have free wi-fi, such as Green House.

**Beans, Bytes & Websites** (5600 Royal Dane Mall; per half hr $4.50; ☏7am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun) Connect with your electronic mailbox at the 12 or so terminals, plus wi-fi and data ports for laptops.

**Media**

- **St Thomas/St John This Week** ([www.virginislandsthisweek.com](http://www.virginislandsthisweek.com)) Widely available free monthly magazine that has events listings and the cruise-ship schedule.
- **VI Daily News** ([www.virginislandsdailynews.com](http://www.virginislandsdailynews.com)) The main newspaper.
- **St Thomas Source** ([www.stthomassource.com](http://www.stthomassource.com)) Online news.

**Medical Services**

- **Roy Schneider Community Hospital** (340-776-8311; 48 Sugar Estate Rd at Rte 313; ☏24hr) On the east side of Charlotte Amalie, this full-service hospital has an emergency room, recompression chamber and doctors in all major disciplines.

**Money** FirstBank, Scotiabank, Banco Popular and other banks are on Waterfront Hwy.

**Post**

- **Main post office** (340-774-3750) It’s on the west side of Emancipation Garden. There are several satellite post offices, including one west of the Marine Terminal (at Frenchtown’s entrance), and one in the Havensight Mall. Most are open 7:30am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday and 8:30am to noon Saturday.

**Tourist Information** There is no official tourist office downtown, but the free St Thomas/St John This Week magazine has maps and everything else you’ll need; it’s available at most businesses.

**Websites**

- **USVI Department of Tourism** ([www.visitusvi.com](http://www.visitusvi.com)) Official tourism site.
- **VI Now** ([www.vinow.com/stthomas](http://www.vinow.com/stthomas)) Useful weather info and ferry and cruise-ship schedules.

### Getting There & Around

**Air**

The airport is 2.5 miles west of town. Taxis (ie multi-passenger vans) are readily available. The fare for one passenger going between the airport and Charlotte Amalie is $7; it’s $15 to/from Red Hook. Luggage costs an additional $2 per piece.
**Boat**

Charlotte Amalie is a hub for boat travel. It has two cruise ship terminals: one at Havensight, which is the primary dock, about 1 mile east of Charlotte Amalie; and the other at Crown Bay, the secondary dock, about 1 mile west of town. It holds the main Marine Terminal for ferries to Tortola, Virgin Gorda and St Croix; the terminal is west on Waterfront Hwy, about a 10-minute walk from downtown.

**TO TORTOLA (ROAD TOWN)** Between all the companies, ferries depart several times daily from 8am to 4pm (one way $30, 45 minutes direct):

- **Speedy’s** (284-495-5240; www.speedysbvi.com) Goes direct.
- **Smith’s Ferry** (340-775-7292; www.smithsferry.com) Goes via West End.
- **Native Son** (340-774-8685; www.nativesonferry.com) Goes via West End.

**TO VIRGIN GORDA (SPANISH TOWN)** There’s direct service on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (one way $40, 90 minutes):

- **Speedy’s** (284-495-5240; www.speedysbvi.com)

**TO ST CROIX VI SEATRANS** (340-776-5494; www.goviseatrans.com) sails twice on Friday and Saturday, and once on Sunday and Monday (round trip $90, 90 minutes) to the Gallows Bay terminal in Christiansted. Look for humpback whales during winter crossings.

**TO ST JOHN** There’s a ferry to Cruz Bay (one way $12, 45 minutes) that departs at the foot of Raadet’s Gade (ie, not at the marine terminal) at 10am, 1pm and 5:30pm daily.

**Taxi**

Following are costs to popular destinations from Charlotte Amalie (these are per one passenger; fares go down for multiple passengers):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESTINATION</th>
<th>COST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frenchtown</td>
<td>$4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havensight</td>
<td>$6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Bay</td>
<td>$5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magens Bay</td>
<td>$10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coki Beach</td>
<td>$12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Hook</td>
<td>$13</td>
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**Beaches**

**Lindbergh Bay**

You reach this sheltered horseshoe beach by turning south off the airport access road. The Best Western Emerald Beach Resort and Island Beachcomber Hotel sit on the best bits; you can rent snorkels, masks and other water-sports gear at the Emerald Beach’s shop. Amenities include a public change room and bathroom and a couple of restaurants. The beach is steep and a bit narrow. Lots of families with children frequent the resorts, but the depth of the water drops off pretty quickly and can be dangerous for kids. There is some good snorkeling among the rocks and coral heads along the arms of the bay.

**Brewers Bay**

Located behind the University of the Virgin Islands on Rte 30, Brewers Bay is beloved by students, local families and shell collectors alike. The long strand has almost no shade but features very sheltered water and plenty of shallow areas for kids. On weekends, lots of West Indian families come here to cool off. There are no facilities other than snack vans serving pates and cold Heineken beers. Quietude can be in short supply because the airport’s busy runway lies just across the bay. The area clears out fast come nighttime. Brewers is the one beach that can be reached easily by Vitran and safari buses, which make runs to the college campus.

**Honeymoon Bay Beach**

When handsome Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett needed a handsome beach as a backdrop for the film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, Honeymoon won the role. See the Water Island boxed text, p72, for details on this gem.

**Activities**

**Blue Island Divers** (340-774-2001; www.blueislanddivers.com; Crown Bay Marina) heads out to nearby sites for two-tank dives ($99) and night dives ($80).

**Sleeping & Eating**

All the lodgings listed are near the airport. Other than the resort restaurants and the pubs and shops at Crown Bay Marina, you’ll
have to travel to Frenchtown or downtown Charlotte Amalie for more eating options.

Best Western Emerald Beach Resort  
HOTEL $$  
(340-777-8800; 807 Lindbergh Bay; $260; * * *)

This 90-room resort is a step up from the Carib, its sibling down the road. The butter-and-coral-colored rooms are snazzier, with private beachfront balconies, flat-screen TVs and free in-room wi-fi. Staff is professional, and the place bustles with visitors hanging out at the beach and restaurant. It’s a short distance down the road from the airport, so you’ll hear noise from planes (they stop around 10pm). You’ll need to take a cab ($6 to $7 per person) to get into town.

Best Western Carib Beach Hotel  
HOTEL $$  
(340-774-2525; 70C Lindbergh Bay; $159-179; * * )

It’s as close as you’ll get to the airport, barely 0.25 miles from the terminal. Rooms are fine, with balconies, but nothing special. They’re usually a bit bigger than those at the Emerald Bay Resort. The trade-off is beach access. While the Carib is on the water, there’s just a tiny man-made beach from which you cannot swim (for that you have to walk down to the sister resort). There is a park next door with swings and slides for children. Wi-fi is available in the bar and lobby only. Like the Emerald Beach Resort, you’ll hear noise from planes and need a taxi to eat anywhere besides the on-site restaurant.

Island Beachcomber Hotel  
HOTEL $$  
(340-772-5250; 8071 Lindbergh Bay; $170-230; * * *)

The Island Beachcomber is right next to the Best Western Emerald Beach Resort and shares the shore. It is a much more humble property, but one of the least expensive hotels you’ll find for a beachfront stay in the Caribbean. While there is nothing very remarkable about the flimsy motel-like structure, the rooms are decent-sized and equipped with air-con, TV, fridge and private patio. The beach, restaurant and festive bar are just steps away from the rooms. The departure end of the airport runway is only 300 yards away, so prepare for some noise by day.

Island View Guesthouse  
GUESTHOUSE $$  
(340-774-4270; 800-524-2023; Scott Free Rd; $115-175; * * )

You will find 12 clean but simple units here, all with private bathrooms. The higher-end rooms also have balconies overlooking the town and harbor, and catch the trade winds for ventilation (not all rooms have air-con). Rooms have a TV/DVD (and a library to choose from), some have kitchenettes, and all have access to the small pool and honor bar on the property. You will need a car or cab to get around from here. It is about a 10-minute drive west of Charlotte Amalie, halfway up the mountainside. Take Waterfront Hwy to Crown Mountain Rd; go right for a short distance, past the Old Mill, then veer right onto Scott Free Rd.

Tickles Dockside Pub  
BURGERS, SEAFOOD $$  
(340-776-1595; 8168 Crown Bay Marina; $10-21; * breakfast, lunch & dinner) 

Tickles appeals to wan-

LONE EAGLE IN PARADISE

Lindbergh Bay takes its name from Colonel Charles Lindbergh, who landed at a field here with his famous Spirit of St Louis in 1929. The ‘Lone Eagle,’ or ‘Lucky Lindy,’ was on a goodwill tour of the Caribbean and Latin America following his 1927 nonstop solo crossing of the Atlantic by airplane. Lindy definitely had luck with him when he plopped the Spirit down in a small open space between the sea and the mountains on the edge of the bay that now bears his name.

A year later, Lindbergh returned to the bay in a Sikorsky seaplane. Lindy became convinced that St Thomas was the perfect refueling stop for a commercial flight between the US and South America. And because of Lindbergh’s visits, Pan American Airways’ Flying Clippers began making regular stops at St Thomas in the 1930s. The Cyril E King Airport now has extended its runway to more safely accommodate modern jets. Of course, plenty of contemporary passengers may wish they were still landing aboard one of the Lone Eagle’s graceful clippers after a brake-screeching, gut-in-the-mouth landing aboard a Boeing 757.
nabe Jimmy Buffett types. The open-air, waterfront restaurant overlooks the harbor’s maritime activities and serves up a selection of reasonably priced breakfasts, finger foods and sandwiches. Not hungry? It’s a swell venue to sip a brew; there’s live music several nights a week. Tickles is also where the ferry to Water Island departs.

🌟 Entertainment
The restaurant at the Emerald Beach Resort hosts a steel pan band on Fridays from 6pm to 9:30pm. The Island Beachcomber Hotel’s bar is a good time.

Reichhold Center for the Arts
(www.reichholdcenter.com; 2 Brewers Bay) The Reichhold Center, located at University of the Virgin Islands, is the island’s active concert arena. The outdoor amphitheater has seating for 1200 people. Any list of current artistic events on St Thomas will include doings at Reichhold, including concerts by international celebrity artists like Itzhak Perlman, dance troupes and repertory theater groups.

South Side
A couple of well-known resorts dot the shore between Charlotte Amalie and the East End, offering beaches, steel pan bands and cigar menus.

성 Beaches

Bolongo Bay
A long, broad golden crescent in front of the hotel of the same name, this beach adjacent to Rte 30 has to be one of the most picturesque hotel beaches on the island. You have the hotel’s beach bar and restaurant, Iggie’s, and a water-sports operation to keep you in supplies. Nap under palm-frond umbrellas on the beach’s left side, or hammocks on the right side. The water is pretty calm, with decent snorkeling. Some areas can be rocky. The people who frequent the beach are largely young couples and families on package vacations.

Those interested in diving should stop by well-regarded St Thomas Dive Club (340-776-2381; www.stthomasingeclub.com) on the sand next door to Iggie’s.

Morningstar Bay
A thin, beige strand just east of the Marriott Frenchman’s Reef resort, this site is a manicured hotel beach with all the trimmings. A water-sports vendor rents jet skis, kayaks and sailboats in a shop at the beach’s east end, though they won’t come cheap. Non-guests must pay for beach chair rentals ($10 per day). The water gets deep quickly and often has mild waves; it’s great for a refreshing swim. If you’re an early riser, it’s fun to come here and watch the cruise ships glide into the harbor. Morningstar can be busy. While most of the people you meet here are hotel guests, some West Indians and expats sunbathe here.

 Sleeping

Bolongo Bay Beach Resort
(340-775-1800, 800-524-4746; www.bolongobay.com; 7150 Bolongo Bay; r $230-395; ) Family-owned Bolongo is a casual, convivial resort with fewer than 100 rooms. Its public facilities are its strength: a beach with a full array of free water sports (kayaks, sailboats, snorkel gear etc), tennis courts, a pool and fitness center. Oceanview rooms are on the second and third floors, while Beachfront rooms are on the first floor – all have sea views and private patios. The Value rooms are in a building across the street. The interiors won’t win any awards for size or decor, but who cares? You’ll be outside enjoying fun in the sun, such as the weekly snorkel booze hunt (staff hide bottles of rum in the bay and if you find one, it’s yours). You can opt for the meal plan, otherwise you’ll need a car to access restaurants. Bolongo is about 3.5 miles east of Charlotte Amalie.

Marriott Frenchman’s Reef & Morning Star Beach Resorts
(340-776-8500, 800-524-2000; www.frenchmansreefmarriott.com; Rte 315, Estate Bakkeroe; r from $275; ) Added up, these two resorts offer more than 500 rooms. Seven-story Frenchman’s Reef has most of them. It qualifies as a mega-resort, with three pools, five restaurants and buffets and bars galore. You’ll find Jacuzzis, four lit tennis courts, diving instruction and sailing trips offered from the beach. Morning Star sits next door with fewer than 100 units in several cross-shaped villas tucked among shady palms. It’s the more exclusive, upscale property. Rack rates are steep, but the Marriott almost always has some sort of promotional package going on; ask when you call. In-room wi-fi costs $17 per day. The resorts are 3 miles east of Charlotte Amalie’s center on Flamboyant Pt. Marriott runs its own ferry (one way $6) to town hourly.
**ST THOMAS**

**Eating & Drinking**

**Iggie's**

*BURGERS, SEAFOOD $*

(340-693-2600; www.iggiesbeachbar.com; 7150 Bolongo Bay; mains $13-22; lunch & dinner) At Bolongo Bay Beach Resort and set in a large, open-air pavilion overlooking the broad shore, good-time Iggie's is a cut above standard resort eateries. It serves top-notch sandwiches, burgers, salads and seafood mains, plus a kids' menu. Things kick up at night, when the place grooves on weekends when locals join the scene. Iggie's is a 10-minute walk from the ferry dock. Follow the road uphill from the landing; when the road forks, go right and down the hill to the sand.

**Lobster Grille**

*SEAFOOD $$*

(340-775-1800; 7150 Bolongo Bay; mains $25-40; breakfast, lunch & dinner, closed Tue eve) This is Bolongo Bay Beach Resort's upscale eatery, serving the namesake crustacean, lamb chops, shrimp scampi and a couple of veggie options such as the goat-cheese-topped portobello mushroom tower. A steel pan band hits the metal on Saturday from 6pm to 9pm.

**Mim's Seaside Bistro**

*SEAFOOD $$*

(340-775-2081; www.mimsseasidebistro.com; Bolongo Bay; mains $25-40; dinner) Mim’s has earned a loyal following among villa owners. House specialties include the coconut curry lobster, baked stuffed lobster, seafood bisque and butterscotch walnut bread pudding for dessert. King crab legs, chicken, fish and pasta dishes round out the menu. Thursday is popular for all you can eat shrimp. Choose

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**WATER ISLAND**

Do the Charlotte Amalie crowds have you seeking some peace and seclusion? Water Island is your answer. Sometimes called the ‘Fourth Virgin,’ it floats spitting distance from town, yet with only about 100 residents and very few cars or shops, it feels far more remote.

The 490-acre island takes its name from its freshwater pools. From WWI to WWII, Water Island was a US military reservation. Following WWII, the US government used the island as a chemical warfare test facility. After about 1951, US expats began to trickle onto the island to build homes. In 1996 Water Island was finally ceded to the territory.

The island has a low-key atmosphere in which most people travel by bike or golf cart, and community messages are posted on a bulletin board at the ferry dock. At 2.5 miles tip to tip, it doesn’t take long to walk the whole thing.

**Honeymoon Beach** offers fine swimming and snorkeling (look for fish along the bay’s southern shore). The water is shallow and calm, and so good for kids. Amenities include shade umbrellas, picnic tables and bathrooms (not always open). A boat sometimes drops by selling pizza, and Heidi’s food truck sells snacks. The beach gets lively on weekends when locals join the scene. Honeymoon is a 10-minute walk from the ferry dock. Follow the road uphill from the landing; when the road forks, go right and down the hill to the sand.

**Water Island Adventures** (www.waterislandadventures.com; 3hr tours $60) offers bicycle tours of the island, including time to swim at the beach. Most bikes are Cannondales, and child-size bikes are available. Reserve in advance; the price includes the ferry ride over.

**Virgin Islands Campground** (340-776-5488, 877-502-7225; http://virginislandscampground.com; cottages $170; @) is the only option if you want to spend the night, but it’s an eco-winner. Each wood-frame-and-canvas cottage has beds, linens, electrical outlets and a table and chairs inside. Guests share the communal bathhouse, cooking facilities and hot tub, plus there’s wi-fi access throughout the grounds. Captured rainwater runs through the sinks and showers; solar energy heats it. There’s a three-night minimum stay requirement.

The **Water Island Ferry** (340-690-4159; one way $5) departs roughly every hour from outside Tickles Dockside Pub at Crown Bay Marina. The journey takes 10 minutes. Taxis from downtown to the marina cost $4 to $5 per person.
a table under the stars by the water, or undercover on the patio. The bistro is located in building 15 at Watergate Villas.

Havana Blue

FUSION $$$
(340-715-2583; www.havanabluerestaurant.com; Marriott Morning Star Beach Resort; mains $32-40; dinner) The Marriott goes Cuban at this clubby bar-restaurant. Swill a mojito or caipirinha while puffing a pick off the cigar menu. The cocktail list is extensive. Happy hour is from 5:30pm to 7pm. The drinks are our favorite reason to visit, but Havana Blue also serves Latin meets Pacific Rim dishes like lobster tacos and miso-glazed sea bass. Coco Blue is Havana’s sister bar in Red Hook.

Red Hook & East End

The East End has the bulk of the island’s major resorts, an extensive collection of restaurants and entertainment options (particularly at Red Hook), the most popular tourist attraction (Coral World Ocean Park), well over a dozen beaches and easy access to neighboring St John. Here, the island has the feel of a vacation destination, rather than a multifaceted West Indian island.

Sights

Coral World Ocean Park

MARINE PARK
(340-775-1555; www.coralworldvi.com; 6450 Estate Smith Bay; adult/child $19/10; 9am-4pm; ) This 4.5-acre marine park, at Coki Point, is the most popular tourist attraction on St Thomas. Pick up a schedule when entering – staff feed the sea creatures and give talks about marine biology and conservation throughout the day, and it’s during these times that you’ll engage in behaviors you never thought possible, such as petting baby nurse sharks, touching starfish and feeding raw fish right into a stingray’s mouth. Many of the park’s creatures have been rescued (ie the sea turtles were orphans and the sea lions were in harm’s way in Uruguay, where fishers were shooting them as pests). Pay an extra $40 to $125, and you can swim with the sharks, turtles or sea lions.

The Sea Trek is another popular activity, where you walk on the floor of the Caribbean Sea wearing a special helmet. A guide leads you along a trail equipped with a handrail 12 to 30 feet below the water. The helmet provides air and allows you to communicate with the guide while keeping your head dry.

Coral World has restaurants and gift shops, along with changing rooms if you want to visit nearby Coki Beach. Look for Coral World discount coupons in the free tourist guides.

Tillett Gardens

ARTS CENTER
(www.tillettgardens.com) This collection of artisan studios and shops off Rte 38 (Smith Bay Rd) in Tutu, between Charlotte Amalie and the East End, is several cuts above most of the island’s tourist attractions. English silkscreen artist Jim Tillett started this artists’ compound on a Danish farm in 1959 as a ‘peaceful sanctuary of creativity and wonderment.’ Fifty-plus years later, the compound is just that. You can stroll the grounds, eat in a cafe, meet working artists and buy handcrafted fabrics, jewelry and other objets d’art. The gardens sponsor an ongoing concert series (www.tillettfoundation.org) that features performances by superb jazz, blues and classical musicians, so try to time your visit to coincide with a concert.

Beaches

The East End holds the bulk of St Thomas’ popular resort beaches. Sapphire and Coki are the amenity-laden favorites. We’ve listed the following beaches starting from southeast and moving around the point to the northeast. Expect to pay between $12 and $15 per person for a taxi to reach them from Charlotte Amalie.

Secret Harbour

RESORT BEACH
This west-facing beach in front of the eponymous resort could hardly be more tranquil. It is protected from breezes as well as waves, and the water remains shallow a long way offshore. The resort has a water-sports operation, and this is one of the best places to learn to windsurf. You will find great snorkeling off the rocks here. A platform floats in the middle of the bay that children enjoy swimming to and jumping off.

Vessup Beach

WINDSURFING BEACH
To reach this long, broad strand overlooking St John and the BVI, follow a dirt road around the south side of the harbor at Red Hook until you reach Vessup Bay Marina. Park here and walk east. The beach is just 100 yards away. Serious windsurfers love this spot, as do a lot of continental travelers who have come to roost around Red
Hook. The Latitude 18 bar and restaurant is at the marina, and one of the best sailboarding operations on the island – West Indies Windsurfing – works off the beach.

Vessup has been part of a land dispute, and the government recently gave the OK to let it be developed. Stay tuned for how this plays out.

**BEST BEACHES**

- **Sapphire Beach** Resort guests, continentals and West Indians mix it up on this family-friendly beach that’s known for its snorkeling and volleyball games.

- **Lindquist Beach** This beach is located in an undeveloped, protected park where true-blue water laps the soft white sand, and you’ll likely have it all to yourself.

- **Magens Bay** (p80) St Thomas’ favorite beach is also a protected park, with a broad bay, calm water and a dairy farm with milkshakes nearby.

- **Honeymoon Bay Beach** (p72) Water Island’s pretty patch is ripe for swimming, snorkeling and buying a slice from the pizza boat.

- ** Brewers Bay** (p69) Where West Indian families and university students come to cool off with a pate and cold Heineken from the food trucks.

- **Hull Bay** (p81) Surfers, musicians and fishers hang out at this far-out, north-side shore.

There are lifeguards on duty, chairs for rent, portable toilets and security patrols, but no other amenities. On weekends, plenty of West Indian families and teens come here to picnic and party. At other times, Lindquist is mostly deserted. Access is via dirt road off Smith Bay Rd, north of Sapphire Beach. A paved upgrade reportedly is in the works.

**Pineapple Beach**

SECLUDED BEACH

A short, broad beach at the head of Water Bay about a half-mile off Rte 38, Pineapple Beach (also known as Renaissance Beach or Water Bay) is adjacent to Point Pleasant Resort; take the short trail on the beach’s right-hand side, where you’ll find the cool beach bar Fungi’s. Trade winds often make the water choppy and cloudy, but the beach itself is spacious and manicured, with lots of room for children to play. When the wind is calm, the snorkeling along the south shore of the bay is good.

**Coki Beach**

SNORKELING BEACH

This beach is on a protected cove right at the entrance to Coral World Ocean Park, near the northeast tip of the island. The snorkeling here is excellent with lots of fish action, and you can dive from shore with the Coki Beach Dive Club. Coki is the one beach on St Thomas with touts – as soon as you arrive someone will quickly become your ‘friend’ and try to hook you up a certain beach chair or snorkel-gear vendor. The touts aren’t aggressive, but they come as a bit of a shock since it is so uncommon elsewhere in the Virgin Islands. There’s an undeniable party atmosphere here: reggae-blasting bars line the sand, where locals hang out and shoot pool. Hair braiders,
snack shacks and equipment vendors enhance the fun in the sun.

For years cruise ship passengers mobbed the place. Then, in early 2010, a young passenger was shot and killed at Coki. She wasn’t the target, but a casualty of a stray bullet from a local fight. Many residents said this was the culmination of an unsavory group that had been hanging out at Coki in recent years. Authorities have taken the issue seriously. On our recent visit to Coki, police were on hand keeping an eye on things, and the beach seemed to be back to business as usual with visitors splashing around and enjoying themselves.

Activities

The East End is a prime spot for outdoor action.

Kayaking

Virgin Islands Ecotours

(340-779-2155, 877-845-2925; www.viecotours.com; 2½hr tours adult/child $77/43; 10am & 2pm)

Offers a guided kayak-and-snorkeling expedition where you’ll paddle through a mangrove lagoon to a coral rubble beach. Tours depart just east of the intersection of Rtes 30 and 32, at the entrance to the Mangrove Lagoon. There’s also a three-hour tour (adult/child $88/54) that adds hiking to the mix.

Diving & Snorkeling

St Thomas features several premier dive sites, and most island resort hotels have a dive service on the property. Dive centers charge about $90 for a one-tank dive, or $125 for two. They also rent snorkeling gear for about $15 per day. Recommended dive shops are listed:

Red Hook Dive Center

(340-777-3483; www.redhookdivecenter.com)
The retail center is at American Yacht Harbor. It offers mostly boat dives out of the Wyndham Sugar Bay Resort, but also offers night dives and trips to the British Virgin Islands’ wreck RMS Rhone.

Coki Beach Dive Club

(340-775-4220; www.cokidive.com; Mon-Sat)
Just steps away from Coki Beach, this place offers shore and night dives, plus Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) courses.

Dive In!

(340-777-5255, 866-434-8346; www.diveinusvi.com; Sapphire Beach Resort) Mostly boat dives, plus PADI-certification courses.

Snuba of St Thomas

(340-693-8063; www.visnuba.com; Coki Point; adult/child $68/65) A cross between snorkeling and scuba diving; children older than age eight can participate. The fee includes admission to Coral World, which is where the snuba takes place.

Boat Trips

Expect to pay $70 per person for a four-hour trip and about $125 for a full-day adventure bobbing around St Thomas and St John. The trips generally include a catered lunch, free drinks and snorkel gear, and depart from American Yacht Harbor in Red Hook. Try the Winifred (340-513-2690; www.sailwinifred.com) or Nate’s Custom Charters (340-244-2497; www.natescustomcharters.com).

If you want to drive yourself:

Nauti Nymph Power Boat Rentals

(340-775-5066; www.nautinymph.com) Rents 25ft to 32ft speedboats with snorkel gear for $425 a day and up. You can hire a captain for an additional $115 per day.

See & Ski Power Boat Rentals

(340-775-6265; www.seeski.com) Has 26ft Prowler Cats for $380 per day; hire a captain for $130 more per day.

Fishing

Troll for wahoo, or get the live bait ready for yellowfin tuna. Add blue marlin to the list May through October, when boats haul in 250lb fish and then some. Most trips depart from American Yacht Harbor in Red Hook. Expect to pay about $800 for a half-day excursion, and $1450 for a full day.

Marlin Prince

(340-779-5939; www.marlinprince.com) Captain John Prince operates this 45ft vessel. The boat and crew consistently place among the top spots in local tournaments for marlin, tuna, wahoo and mahimahi. Prince also offers saltwater fly-fishing for marlin.

Nate’s Custom Charters

(340-244-2497; www.natescustomcharters.com) Hits the waves in a 27ft ProKat.

Windsurfing

Most St Thomas resort hotels have windsurfing equipment for beginning and intermediate enthusiasts. The average rental price is $40 an hour. West Indies Windsurfing (340-775-6530; 10am-5pm Sat & Sun, by appt Mon-Fri) on Vessup Beach has advanced equipment (including kite boards) and instruction. Lessons start at $85 per hour.
Sleeping

Resorts and private villas are the East End’s only options. Antilles Resorts (www.antillesresorts.com) manages six properties here, including Pavilions & Pools, Point Pleasant Resort, Sapphire Beach Resort, Anchorage Resort, Crystal Cove Resort and Sapphire Village Resort. Many units are privately owned condos, and they vary widely in quality. Savvy visitors say they have better luck booking through VRBO (www.vrbo.com), where they deal with the condo owners directly and can get more specifics about the unit they’re renting. If you do book through Antilles, there are often discounts off the rack rates listed below.

Secret Harbour Beach Resort

APARTMENTS $$$
(340-775-6550; www.secureharbourvi.com; 6280 Estate Nazareth; apt $345-625; *@*$) Secret Harbour is a family favorite. Of the 60 suites, 42 units sit on the beach and the rest are up a hill behind the beach with sea views. Suites come in three sizes – studio (600ft), one bedroom (900ft) and two bedroom (1300ft); all have a kitchen and a balcony or patio. You can get your exercise at the pool, fitness center and three tennis courts, but the calm, shallow beach is the main draw. Units have free wi-fi. You’ll need a car or taxi to get around from here.

Sapphire Beach Resort & Marina

APARTMENTS $$$
(340-775-6100, 800-874-7897; www.antillesresorts.com; 6720 Estate Smith Bay; apt $335-495; *$) The draw for this condo resort is being on Sapphire Beach itself, a gorgeous half-mile stretch of teal-blue sea and watersports fun. It’s also handy to be so close to Red Hook – a five-minute drive or a 15-minute walk (along the busy road) – where restaurants and bars abound. The condos themselves are studio-style suites that vary in quality. Some are more modern than others, but all have a kitchen and private balcony. This is one of those instances where you might fare best renting from individual owners through VRBO so you’ll have more control over what you’re getting. The suites spread out in a collection of large multistory buildings facing the beach and the resort’s marina. Sapphire Beach Resort is not to be confused with Sapphire Village Resort, which comprises the green buildings on the hillside behind the beach and offers lower-priced, apartment-like accommodations.

Amenities such as wi-fi vary by unit at both resorts.

Pavilions & Pools

APARTMENTS $$$
(340-775-6110, 800-524-2001; www.pavilionsandpools.com; 6400 Estate Smith Bay; apt incl breakfast $325-350; *@*$) The cool thing about this small hotel is that each of the 25 suites has its own pool – yeah, you read that right! Suites have full kitchens, wi-fi access and separate bedrooms with sliding doors that open to the pool. You can spend days here and never put on a stitch of clothing. When you’re ready to get dressed, the friendly staff will shuttle you to nearby Sapphire Beach.

Point Pleasant Resort

APARTMENTS $$$
(340-775-7200, 800-524-2300; www.pointpleasantresort.com; 6600 Estate Smith Bay; apt $300-550; *$) On a steep hill overlooking Water Bay, the property has lots of charm though the rooms are somewhat dated (in a flowery way, akin to your grandma’s 1980 Florida condo). The 128 suites are in multi-unit cottages tucked into the hillside forest. Each unit has a full kitchen, separate bedroom and large porch. The grounds have walking trails, three pools and a beach. The property’s two good restaurants – high-end Agavé Terrace and casual Fungi’s – are an added attraction.

Wyndham Sugar Bay Resort

HOTEL $$$
(340-777-7100, 877-999-3223; www.wyndhamsugarbayresort.com; 6500 Estate Smith Bay; d from $380; *@*$) The Wyndham is the island’s only truly all-inclusive resort. This highrise hotel rises dramatically on a point of rock above a small sheltered beach, with 300 rooms, three interconnecting pools, a fitness center, tennis courts, water sports and a Kids Club program. The rooms are a bit cookie-cutter, but all have first-class amenities. The all-inclusive rate gets you three meals a day, booze, kayaks, Sunfish sailboats and much more. Wi-fi is free in the lobby. It you’re willing to wing it, last-minute deals sometimes surface online. The property also offers a ‘value package’ that provides room and breakfast only, and you pay à la carte for everything else.

Ritz-Carlton

HOTEL $$$
(340-775-3333; www.ritzcarlton.com; 6900 Estate Great Bay; r from $600; *@*$) The 15-acre property with 180 guest quarters exudes a Mediterranean ambience with frescoed walls, imported pink marble and the continental accents of its concierge and
front-desk staff. Accommodations are in multi-unit villas peppered around the property and surrounded by extensive tropical gardens. Rooms have private balconies and marble bathrooms; there’s in-room internet access for a fee. The pools and sun decks are expansive, and the beach is broad and uncrowded. Children’s programs are available for an extra fee.

**Eating**

Red Hook has the biggest concentration of eating and drinking places. The commercial center is all of about two blocks long, so it’s easy to wander around and take your pick. During the 1990s, this area developed the highest concentration of restaurants on St Thomas. Almost all are geared to Continentals – those roosting in East End resorts, and those who have come to work on the island. Few West Indians frequent these establishments. Other eateries are scattered among the resorts.

**Toad & Tart**  
BRITISH $$
(340-775-1153; www.toadandtart.com; Estate Smith Bay; mains $14-21; dinner Thu-Sun) Don’t be put off by the humble exterior. Inside the squat, concrete building you’ll find lovely, British pub food: bangers and mash, shepherd’s pie, steak and onion pie and a curry dish, plus daily specials like fish and chips or pot roast. The owner Anna, aka the ‘tart,’ is quite a character and man, does she know how to cook. Books, board games, dart boards and draft beers from the mother-land complete the experience. The pub is on Smith Bay Rd between Point Pleasant Resort and the road to Coki.

**Duffy’s Love Shack**  
BURGERS $$
(340-779-2080; www.duffsyloveshack.com; Red Hook; mains $9-16; lunch & dinner) It may be a frame shack in the middle of a paved parking lot at Red Hook Plaza, but Duffy’s creates its legendary atmosphere with high-volume rock and crowds in shorts and tank tops. The food is classic, burger-based pub fare with conch fritters and Pacific Rim skewers (satay) thrown in for good measure. The big attractions here are the people-watching and crazy cocktails. Consider the 64oz ‘shark tank,’ or Dr Feelgood’s Vile Foaming Liquid. Hype? Yes. But fun, too. After dark, particularly on Friday, Duffy’s turns into the biggest frat party on the island. Cash only.

**Randy’s Wine Bar & Bistro**  
ITALIAN $$
(340-775-5001; 4002 Raphune Hill; mains $12-33; lunch & dinner Mon-Fri) Randy’s is probably the most unlikely restaurant on all of St Thomas. You will never find it unless you make the effort. Located mid-island off Rte 38, it is a secret hideaway tucked in a commercial storefront. The attraction is the scent of fresh basil, grilled mushrooms and the best wine list on the island. Tables in the bistro are spread among crates of wine. Sip reds and whites by the glass (or order a martini) to go with Randy’s sandwiches like the chicken and Brie, or main dishes such as the pan-seared tuna with lentils and rice. The bistro is located in Al Cohen’s Plaza, a few miles east of downtown Charlotte Amalie en route to the East End.

**Latitude 18**  
BURGERS, SEAFOOD $$
(340-779-2495; www.latitude18usvi.com; Ves-sup Bay Marina; mains $20-28; lunch & dinner) Latitude 18 is Red Hook’s funkiest bar and restaurant. The place is a patio protected by a roof of old sails and blue tarps that blow away in every hurricane. The decoration is a mix of marine flotsam, a huge plastic shark, Christmas lights and a pirate flag. Most of the clientele are world-cruiser types who come in off their boats and local continentals who are – or dream of being – seafaring ramblers. Locals rave about the flavorful dishes coming from the little kitchen, such as the seared tuna roll with papaya salad. Latitude brings in live entertainment most nights and the local buckos get fired up. It’s located down a bumpy dirt road around the south side of Vessup Bay.

**Blue Moon Cafe**  
CAFE $$
(340-779-2262; www.bluemooncafevi.com; 6280 Estate Nazareth; mains $23-30; breakfast, lunch & dinner) Set at the Secret Harbour Beach Resort, Blue Moon gets rave reviews from locals and travelers. This is not your average hotel restaurant. The attraction is the casual elegance of the waterfront setting overlooking the harbor and the care that goes into preparing dishes like the lemon-thyme roasted chicken, and pork chop topped with a crimini mushroom reduction. There is an extensive wine list with some reasonably priced grapes, and Scotch, port and cognac for postmeal sips. Kids get their own menu.

**Fungi’s on the Beach**  
BURGERS, WEST INDIAN $$
(340-775-4142; 6600 Estate Smith Bay; mains $9-18; lunch & dinner) The rasta-colored beach bar at the Point Pleasant Resort wins big
points for its food and fun vibe. Rotis and platters of native dishes, such as conch fritters, snapper creole and the namesake fungi, are the specialties of the house, along with well-made burgers. The building is right on the water, so close you can dangle your feet in. The friendly bartenders crank the reggae and will offer you a spritz of insect repellent to fight off the mosquitoes.

**Agavé Terrace & Bar**

SEAFOOD $$$

(340) 377-7142; www.agaveterrace.com; 6600 Estate Smith Bay; mains $22-38; dinner) Located at the Point Pleasant Resort, Agavé is one of the island’s most respected restaurants and one to dress up for. The deck hangs out in thin air over a steep slope, giving diners a breathtaking view of St John and the BVI. Expect candlelight, linen, crystal and professional waitstaff. Agavé specializes in fish, lobster and crab legs; vegetarians will find a couple of pastas and vegetable curry dishes. Make reservations early for weekend dining.

**Molly Malone’s**

BURGERS, SEAFOOD $$

(340) 377-1270; www.mollymalonestthomas.com; Red Hook; mains $13-27; breakfast, lunch & dinner) A re-creation of a friendly Irish pub, Molly’s has a huge menu, from omelets to shepherd’s pie to veggie lasagna. It’s a great place to chow down for breakfast, watch sports on overhead TVs, or cool off with a brew at the bar. It’s on the lower level of the American Yacht Harbor complex.

**Romano’s Restaurant**

ITALIAN $$$

(340) 377-0045; www.romanorestaurant.com; 6697 Estate Smith Bay; mains $25-40; dinner) Romano’s gets many St Thomians’ votes for the best Italian cuisine on the island. The setting is dark, with no view to speak of, but is rich with candlelight and violin music. Chef Tony’s paintings hang on the walls, while his artful sweet clam and white wine linguini, four-cheese lasagna and braised veal fill the plates. The restaurant is located off Smith Bay Rd near Coki Point.

**Caribbean Saloon**

BURGERS, SEAFOOD $$

(340) 377-7060; www.caribbean.saloon.com; Red Hook; mains $13-27; lunch & dinner) Caribbean Saloon is another longstanding player in Red Hook’s pub-and-grub scene. Set on the top floor of the American Yacht Harbor complex, the venue is a contemporary rendering of a classic beer garden. Burgers and sandwiches scent the air at lunchtime, while the dinner menu revolves around steak, chops, seafood and pasta dishes. Like its rival saloons up and down the street, this place can rock with a young crowd on winter nights. It serves a late night menu until 4am.

**XO Bar & Bistro**

INTERNATIONAL $$

(340) 377-2069; www.xostthomas.com; Red Hook; mains $15-25; lunch & dinner) This narrow little hideaway in Red Hook Plaza has an exclusive, romantic feel. Patrons come dressed in cocktail dresses and long slacks to sample the hot artichoke dip or entrees like the capellini pomodoro (angel-hair pasta with garlic, basil, mushroom and tomatoes). The staff serves until midnight or later, when the bistro bar starts to hum.

**Coco Blue**

FUSION $$$

(340) 377-7253; www.cocobluerestaurant.com; Red Hook; mains $29-39; dinner) Swanky Coco Blue fuses Latin, island and Pacific Rim flavors in dishes like piña colada chicken and guava-glazed pork ribs. Chefs will substitute tofu for meat in many of the dishes. It’s a good place to come for happy hour (5pm to 7pm) to hoist a posh mojito and nibble off the light bites menu on sushi rolls or coconut-chipotle ceviche. It’s in the American Yacht Harbor building. Make reservations.

**Big Bambooz**

BURGERS $$

(340) 374-7244; Red Hook; mains $7-12; breakfast, lunch & dinner) You know it’s gonna be a good time when you walk into the thatched-roof, tiki-studded Big Bambooz. Bite into burgers, fish tacos, chicken curry or a mahimahi sandwich with a side of sweet-potato fries. It sits next to the American Yacht Harbor center.

**Burrito Bay Deli**

MEXICAN $

(340) 377-2944; Red Hook; mains $8-12; breakfast & lunch) Longing for healthy-leaning sandwiches, wraps or breakfast foods (including tofu and vegetarian options)? Or maybe a roasted pork burrito? Burrito Bay is your place. It’s in the American Yacht Harbor complex.

**Señor Pizza**

PIZZA $

(340) 377-3030; Red Hook; slice $3-4, large pizzas $16-24; lunch & dinner) Across from the ferry dock, this little pizza joint can get very busy with takeout orders in the evening, when vacationers in East End condos decide they don’t feel like cooking.

**Drinking & Entertainment**

Several of the island’s restaurants double as great bars. And don’t forget: you can always zip over on the ferry to Cruz Bay in St John for the party scene there.
Shopping
Since the development of the American Yacht Harbor complex, Red Hook has become the favorite shopping area for East Enders. The compound of multistory buildings is home to upscale shops and restaurants, and there are more shops across the street in Red Hook Plaza. You can park for a fee in a protected lot at American Yacht Harbor or for free at the shopping center.

Marina Market
(www.marinamarket.com) The main supermarket on the East End, where self-caterers can stock up on produce, cheese, wine and spirits; it’s across from the ferry dock.

Tutu Park Mall
(www.tutuparkmall.com) This is where most St Thomians do their everyday shopping. The complex includes supermarkets, discount stores, a theater and a Kmart. It’s between the East End and Charlotte Amalie, on Rte 38 in Tutu.

Getting There & Around
Red Hook is a busy hub for ferries to St John, Jost Van Dyke and Tortola’s West End. You can park in the marine terminal’s lot for $10 per day.

To St John
Passenger ferries ($6 one way, 20 minutes) zip over to Cruz Bay at 6:30am, 7:30am and then on the hour between 8am and midnight. There’s a $2.50 charge per bag for large pieces of luggage.

To Jost Van Dyke
Inter-Island (340-776-6597; www.interislandboatservices.vi; round trip $70) operates a passenger ferry twice daily to Jost at 8am and 2pm. No service Wednesday or Thursday. It takes about 45 minutes.

To Tortola
A couple of companies alternate departures to the West End four or five times per day. The trip takes 35 minutes:
- Smith’s Ferry (340-775-7292; www.smithsferry.com; one way $28)
- Native Son (340-774-8685; www.nativesonferry.com; one way $25)
- Road Town Fast Ferry (284-494-2323; www.roadtownfastferry.com) This company differs from the others by offering a night service that departs Red Hook at 9pm Thursday through Sunday and goes to Road Town (one way $35).

Car Ferries to St John
Three different companies run car ferries between Red Hook and Enighed Pond beside Cruz

**Duffy’s Love Shack**
(www.duffysloveshack.com; Red Hook) Almost every night of the week is a party scene here, but the crowd overflows into the parking lot on Ladies Night (Wednesday) and Friday. Saturday features themes like Bathrobe Night. Driving rock & roll fuels this crowd of under-30 continentals and travelers who pursue the rites of spring with bottomless gusto. Duffy’s hosts a whopping party the Friday closest to the full moon each month. Happy hour sets the mood from 3pm to 6pm daily.

**Latitude 18**
(www.latitude18usvi.com; Vessup Bay Marina) Latitude 18 is a down-and-dirty sailors’ bar. Most nights of the week there is live music, when island legends like Mighty Whitey, Dick Solberg (also called the Fiddler) and the Sun Mountain Band show up to play acoustic, rock, bluegrass, country and folk. Open-mike nights (usually Tuesday) with Mighty Whitey are a hoot – and so is the crowd. Just picture every character you have ever heard about in a Jimmy Buffett ballad.

**XO Bar & Bistro**
(Red Hook) XO gets going on weekends, when middle-aged Continentals out for a night on the town stop in for cigars and martinis against a background of progressive jazz CDs. The crowd gets younger after midnight, when you find owners, managers and employees from other local businesses drifting in to stir up the party. Bands play Wednesday and Sunday.

**Caribbean Cinemas – Market Square**
(340-776-3666; www.caribbeancinemas.com) If it’s first-run Hollywood films you are seeking, head for these cinemas between the East End and Charlotte Amalie, on Rte 38 in Tutu Park Mall.

**BARS WITH CHARACTER(S)**
Don’t leave St Thomas without raising a glass at one of these timeless watering holes:
- Duffy’s Love Shack
- Molly Malone’s
- Latitude 18
- Tickles Dockside Pub (p70)

**Marina Market**
FOOD
(www.marinamarket.com) The main supermarket on the East End, where self-caterers can stock up on produce, cheese, wine and spirits; it’s across from the ferry dock.

**Tutu Park Mall**
MALL
(www.tutuparkmall.com) This is where most St Thomians do their everyday shopping. The complex includes supermarkets, discount stores, a theater and a Kmart. It’s between the East End and Charlotte Amalie, on Rte 38 in Tutu.

**Caribbean Cinemas – Market Square**
CINEMA
(340-776-3666; www.caribbeancinemas.com) If it’s first-run Hollywood films you are seeking, head for these cinemas between the East End and Charlotte Amalie, on Rte 38 in Tutu Park Mall.
Bay (round trip around $50, 20 minutes), with sailings almost every hour between 6am and 7pm. Note that most St Thomas car-rental companies do not allow you to take their vehicles to St John.

North Side

The north side of St Thomas is the quieter section of the island. Steep-sloped mountains rise almost from the water’s edge. Large coves such as Magens Bay have exquisite, secluded beaches at their heads. Largely residential, the north shore features a mix of undeveloped forests and fields with middle- and upper-class villas perched on the mountainside.

Sights

Drake’s Seat

Legend has it that Sir Francis Drake came to this overlook, on a mountaintop just off Rte 40 south of Magens Bay, to plot the passage of his fleet through the British Virgin Islands east of here. Tour buses and street vendors flood the scene by day, but if you come late in the afternoon you’ll have more elbow room.

Mountain Top

(340-774-2400) This restaurant and shopping complex, off Rte 33 (Crown Mountain Rd) on St Peter Mountain, offers vistas from 1500ft above sea level. On a clear day, you can see almost all of the British Virgin Islands to the east and the Spanish Virgin Islands of Puerto Rico to the west. Mountain Top’s bar specializes in banana daiquiris, which staff claim were invented here. A fire destroyed the complex in 2009, but the owners rebuilt and opened again in early 2011, so everything is shiny new.

You’re likely to share the vista with a busload of folks on an island tour. The views you get by simply driving east from here on Crown Mountain Rd may not be quite as spectacular, but you will have them all to yourself.

Estate St Peter Greathouse & Botanical Garden

(www.greathousevi.com; admission $15; 8am-4pm) Like Mountain Top, this contemporary great house at the corner of Barrett Hill Rd and Rte 40 is a popular attraction for tour groups. The 11-acre property overlooking Magens Bay has been the retreat of a French consul, an island governor and the Johnson & Johnson Corporation. Largely destroyed by Hurricane Hugo, the great house and botanical gardens have been restored. The house has photos of hurricane damage, a local art collection and views of the northshore bays from an expansive deck. There are also a few shops, a bar and a cafe on the premises. The site is open only when cruise ships are in port.

Beaches

Magens Bay

(adult/child $4/2; 6am-6pm) The sugary mile that fringes heart-shaped Magens Bay, 3 miles north of Charlotte Amalie, makes almost every travel publication’s list of beautiful beaches. The seas here are calm, the bay is broad, and the vista of the surrounding green hills is dramatic.

The beach and much of the surrounding land is protected as a territorial park (hence the admission fee). In a sense, Magens Bay is the public beach for St Thomas. It has lifeguards, picnic tables, changing facilities, a couple of food vendors and water-sports operators renting kayaks and paddle boats ($20 to 30 per hour). On weekends, when the locals come to party, and on days when the cruise ships bus in their passengers, you’ll find mobs of people here, but the beach is so long that you may not feel claustrophobic. If you do, head for the west end, which is always sparsely populated.

Snorkeling is not very good at Magens, but swimming and walking are. Children will do well here since the water is calm and shallow. There’s a nature trail about midway down the bay that takes off into the bush, but be prepared for attack by biting insects if you decide to venture forth.

No regularly scheduled public transportation stops here, but there’s a taxi stand on-site with bountiful cabs. A taxi to/from Charlotte Amalie costs $10 (it goes down to $8 per person in a multi-passenger vehicle). If you drive, parking costs $2. Don’t forget to stop at Udder Delite Dairy Bar for a milkshake on the road down.

Little Magens Bay

This is the only nude beach on the island, and it is beautiful. To reach it, start at Magens Bay and, as you face the water, head right along the beach to the end. Then wade along the rocky shore around the point. It is about a quarter-mile trek. It can be tricky when the tide is high, as then you’ll be sloshing in water up to your chest; early morning
is usually the best time to go. The beach has no amenities and most of the time it's empty.

**Hull Bay**

Lying to the west around Tropaco Point from Magens Bay, Hull Bay is the island’s most popular surfing beach and usually a gem of solitude when Magens Bay is overrun with people. The strand lies at the base of a steep valley and features excellent shade along its entire length. Amenities include a boat ramp, which the 'Frenchie' fisherfolk use; the Hull Bay Hideaway beach bar; and changing facilities. The surf is at its best during the winter, when the swells roll in from the northeast and you get a 4ft point break. On days when the surf is up, Hull Bay can be a major surf scene with youths from all over the island abandoning jobs and schools to catch a wave.

**Homer's** (340-774-7606, 866-719-1856; www.nightsnorkel.com; 10am-5pm) has a water-sports shack on site and rents surfboards ($50 per half day) and kayaks ($40 per half day) and conducts raved-about night snorkel tours ($38 per person). Taxis are scarce, so you'll need a car to get here.

**Stumpy Bay**

If solitude is what you’re seeking, head for Stumpy Bay near the northwest end of St Thomas. Look for the dirt road that leads off Rte 30 and down a steep hill. The road ends after a half-mile, and beachgoers must park their cars here and then walk another half-mile down a trail to the beach. The beach features shade trees, brown sand and calm water within the arms of this northwest-facing bay. Some people risk nudism here, but they are a definite minority. The car park at Stumpy Bay is not secure, so take precautions with your valuables.

### Activities

**Mahogany Run Golf Course**

(340-777-6006; www.mahoganyrunigolf.com) East of Magens Bay is the island’s only option for golf – but what an option it is. The 18-hole championship course owes its design to George and Tom Fazio and features the famous ‘Devil’s Triangle’ seaside holes. Greens and half-cart fees are $165. Club rentals cost $60.

**Mafolie Hotel**

(340-774-2790, 800-225-7035; www.mafolie.com; 7091 Estate Mafolie; r incl breakfast $150-200; $$$$) On Mafolie Hill, 850 feet above Charlotte Amalie, the eponymous hotel has the feel of a Danish colonial villa, and offers a dramatic vista and popular alfresco restaurant. The good points: killer harbor views considering the relatively low prices. The not-so-good points: room furnishings are reminiscent of a budget motel chain in the US, and Mafolie's location is far from town, making wheels necessary. Try to avoid the rooms above the restaurant, which are tiny and can be noisy. If the free wi-fi is important to you, be sure to ask for a room with good reception.

**Udder Delite Dairy Bar**

(340-777-6050; milkshakes $5; 1-6:30pm Mon, 10am-6:30pm Tue-Sat, 11:30am-6:30pm Sun; $$) It doesn’t get any sweeter than this working dairy farm that swirls its own ice cream, blends it into milkshakes and then spikes the treats with alcohol. The flavor board provides plenty to choose from, but the crowd pleaser is the coffee-chocolate Jamocha shake blended with Bailey's, usually served up by a smiling gentleman named Bailey.

### Top Choice

**Coki Beach Dive Club** (p75) Swim from shore to active coral reefs.

When you’ve had enough lazing on the beach, pick up a paddle (or golf club or fishing pole...)

- **Virgin Islands Ecotours** (p63 and p75) Kayak to the ruins around Hassel Island, or through the mangrove swamp on the East End.
- **Marlin Prince** (p75) You’ll have a mighty-fine fishing tale to tell after reeling in a mighty blue marlin.
- **Mahogany Run Golf Course** Tee off on the Devil’s Triangle seaside holes.
- **Water Island Adventures** (p72) Cycle around the fourth Virgin’s beaches and old plantations.
- **Coki Beach Dive Club** (p75) Swim from shore to active coral reefs.
You can order without booze, of course, so no need to worry about the kids lined up at the window. Udder Delite is about 1 mile from Magens Bay beach, up a steep hill.

**Old Stone Farmhouse**

CARIBBEAN $$

(340-777-6277; www.oldstonefarmhouse.com; Mahogany Run Golf Course; mains $24-36; dinner Wed-Mon) The 200-year-old farmhouse sits high on a hill overlooking St Thomas’ only golf course. The rustic, low-lit room impresses with its arched stone walls and mahogany ceiling. The chef invites guests back to the kitchen to select their own meat and fish and discuss their preferences; he then prepares the dish accordingly. The menu changes, but local fish (snapper, wahoo, mahimahi, live lobster) are always available, as well as a vegetarian option. A robust wine list accompanies the fare. The stellar service, setting and chef make this one of a-kind evening.

**Hull Bay Hideaway**

BURGERS $

(340-777-1898; www.hullbayhideaway.com; mains $9-14; lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) Beckoning next to the entrance to Hull Bay beach, the Hideaway looks like a cross between a campground and a Mexican cantina. The basic ‘Arthur burger’ has fans worldwide, and the Presidente burger (seared in the name sake beer, then topped with pepperjack cheese) runs a close second. Other house favorites include gyros, chicken sandwiches and beer-battered onion rings. Lots of locals hang out for the live music on Sunday afternoons and the Monday night blues jam.

**Northside Bistro**

CAFE $$

(340-775-5098; www.northsidebistro.com; 15 Hull Bay Rd; mains $15-26; dinner Mon-Sat) Northside’s offerings include meatloaf, seafood ravioli, apple-and-pear-stuffed pork chops and baby back ribs among its arsenal. Several vegetarian options (veggie lasagna, hummus and couscous) also make appearances. There’s a nice selection of wine by the glass. Musicians play piano or strum guitar most nights. This is the rare place where you can have your cake and drink it too, compliments of the coconut-cake martini. So if nothing else, stop in for a drink. After you pass Drake’s Seat veer right onto Hull Bay Rd. The bistro is 2 miles from there.

**Mafolie Restaurant**

CARIBBEAN $$

(340-774-2790; www.mafolie.com; 7091 Estate Mafolie; mains $19-25; dinner Wed-Mon) Sitting high above the bay at the Mafolie Hotel, the dining patio here offers incredible alfresco dining. Cool breezes, candlelight and striking vistas complement the Caribbean and Creole-infused seafood, such as seared tuna, crab and lobster, and coconut-crusted chicken and BBQ ribs. An extensive wine list offers choices in all budgets, and the friendly staff can help you pick the perfect meal.

**Sib’s Mountain Bar & Restaurant**

AMERICAN $$

(340-774-8967; Mafolie Rd; mains $17-27; dinner) Sib’s is a small roadhouse with a huge local following. Some folks come to drink and shoot pool. Others claim you can’t get better red snapper anywhere on the island. Meatloaf, baby back ribs, chicken-fried steak and prime rib form the core of the meaty menu.