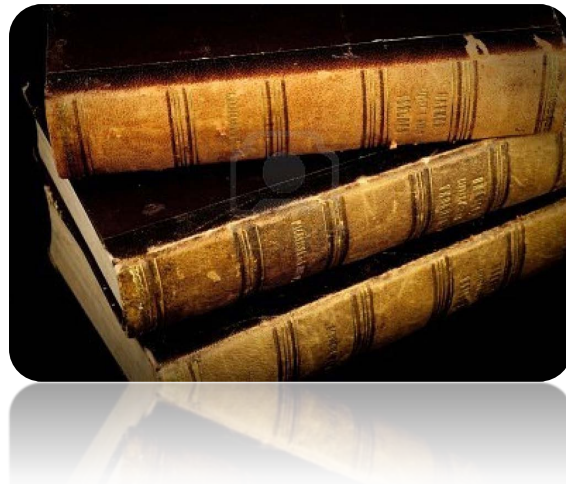


A Cruising Guide to the Lesser Antilles

Volume I: THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

by
Frank Virgintino



A CRUISING GUIDE TO THE LESSER ANTILLES

IN THREE VOLUMES

Book 1 ~ Virgin Islands

Book II ~ Leeward Islands

Book III ~ Windward Islands

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Dedicated to:

*All the cruising sailors who have a desire to sail far and wide,
May this guide provide you with insights that will make
your trip through the Virgin Islands, both British and US,
an unforgettable experience.*



Figure 1. LESSER ANTILLES

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PART I: OVERVIEW OF THE LESSER ANTILLES

This section contains an overview of the entire Lesser Antilles, including a brief preview of each island in the chain. It sets the stage for the three volume cruising guide, the first part of which is devoted to the Virgin Islands, American and British, and follows this overview. The Leeward Islands and the Windward Islands are featured in Volumes II and III respectively.

ORIENTATION

The Lesser Antilles are a chain of islands that begin with the Virgin Islands to the north and can end at Grenada or Trinidad depending on how all inclusive one wants to be. Trinidad and Tobago can be included or excluded depending on who you speak to. Tobago has the greater claim to be included; and Trinidad is so close to Venezuela and South America, that many times it is excluded.

I have not included either Trinidad or Tobago here mainly because I have written a guide to Trinidad for those who want to pass hurricane season there and to provide information on the repair and refit facilities that are available in Trinidad. (www.trinidadcruisingguide.com) In the event, I do not consider Trinidad to be a cruising area; at least by boat.

The ABC Islands (part of the Netherland Antilles) of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao are sometimes referred to as the **Leeward Antilles** and **may be considered the westernmost part of the Lesser Antilles**. They likewise are not included in this guide due to the fact that I have covered them in a separate guide (www.freecruisingguide.com).

The Lesser Antilles are also known as the Caribbees and are part of the ANTILLES. Together with the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico), they make up the Antilles. Add the Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos Islands to the above and you have the WEST INDIES.

There are two main groups within the Lesser Antilles; the Leeward Islands to the north and the Windward Islands to the South. Since the Trade Winds blow east to west, the Windwards receive their name because the wind, and thus the ships coming from the east approached them first. After that all other islands are downwind or leeward.

The Lesser Antilles have more volcanic and earthquake activity than the Greater Antilles because they were formed in a different way geologically.

There is a tendency today to refer to the two islands off the east coast of Puerto Rico, Vieques and Culebra, as the Spanish Virgins. The correct name for those two islands is the Passage Islands. There is nothing wrong with referring to them as the Spanish Virgins because a rose by any other name is still a rose. However, when Columbus came upon the Virgin Islands, he did not include those two as part of the Virgin Islands. In fact he called the Virgin Islands Saint Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins, which later evolved to The Virgin Islands.

What I like about the Lesser Antilles, among so many things, is that they define the eastern boundary of the Caribbean Sea and separate it from the Atlantic Ocean. Inevitably you get to sail both on the Caribbean side as well as the Atlantic side but my sense when I am on the Caribbean side is that somehow I am more protected.

Do not think for a moment that the Caribbean Sea cannot be difficult and dangerous; it can be. It is just that on average it is, let's say, more user friendly than the Atlantic.

The Lesser Antilles for many years have been referred to as **THE CARIBBEAN**. As late as 2010 in articles written on how to sail south to the Caribbean, authors clearly are referring to the Lesser Antilles and only the Lesser Antilles. Our dreams of palm trees blowing in the wind, white sand beaches, steel bands playing in the background and drinks made with local rums more often than not originate in the Lesser Antilles.

In reality, the eastern island chain is only a small part of the Caribbean and makes up what I refer to as the "Eastern Quadrant" (see A Thinking Man's Guide to Voyages South ~ the Many Facets of Caribbean Cruising by Frank Virgintino available free at www.freecruisingguide.com).

The Lesser Antilles is a breathtaking expanse to cruise through. There are countless island countries with coves and anchorages, marinas and restaurants. There is a kaleidoscope of local color and such delectable local food. In addition to what is known as "Caribbean Culture," each island will present itself to you through a *filter*. In the Leeward and Windward Islands, that filter can be English, Dutch or French, and frequently a *mélange* of the three based on a complicated history.



A typical “CARIBBEAN” scene!

The local culture mixes these colonial influences in with a strong dose of African ancestry as well as some trace of Taino (Native American, including such tribes as Arawaks and Caribs). The net result is “Caribbean Culture.” It speaks French, English and Dutch as well as Patois. All the islands are the same Lesser Antilles but each one manages to distinguish itself in ways that most often surprise and delight.

There is also the challenge of sailing through the islands. If you have it in your head that once you get to the Caribbean all you need do is put up your sails and follow the Trade Winds, you really need to do some studying in preparation.



The Trade Winds blow early in the trade wind season from east northeast. As the season matures the winds swing to the east and southeast. At the beginning of the Trade Wind season the winds are stronger than average and are referred to as the **Christmas Winds**.

However the Trade Winds are also not as constant early in the season and you will find periods of no wind at all as well.

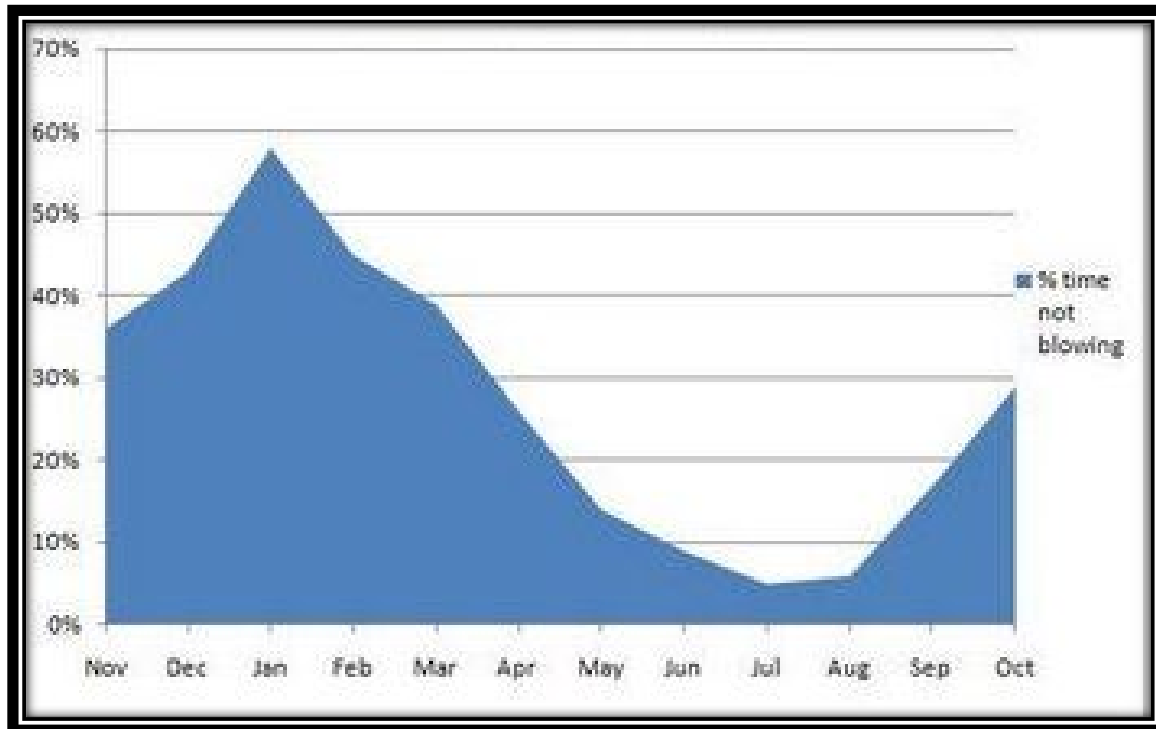


Figure 2. Percentage of time the Trade Wind “DOES NOT BLOW”

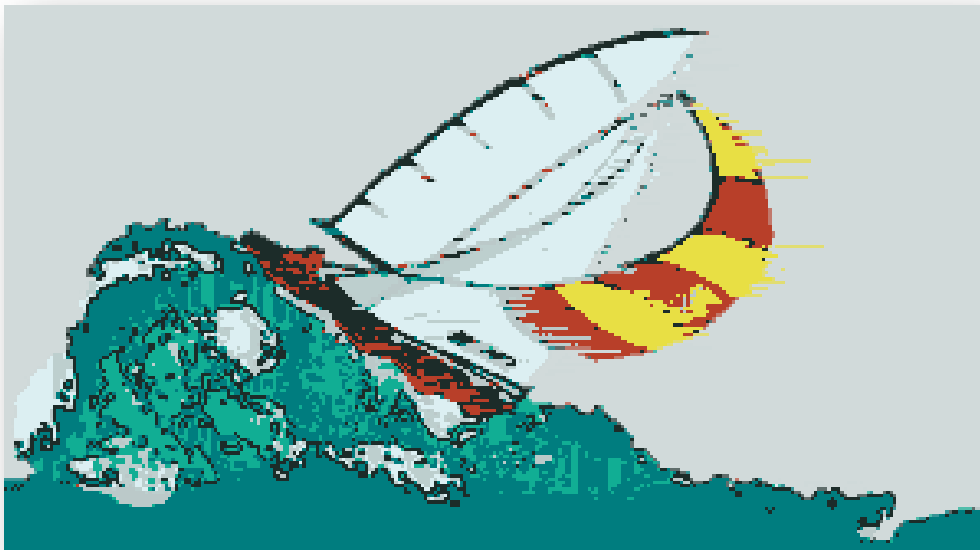
Moreover, to really sail with the wind on the beam or even aft of the beam you need to get to the “top of the hill.” The top of the hill (coming from the north) is normally reached at Martinique. After that the chain starts to turn more south west and, since you are headed south with a prevailing easterly wind, you find yourself with a dry bow. At the north side of the Lesser Antilles, closer to the Virgin Islands as you proceed southerly, you will find many times that you are close reaching. At other times you will find that the wind will head you.

There are many factors that must be taken into account when sailing through the Lesser Antilles. Among these are the “gaps” between the islands where all sorts of things happen to the wind depending on the shape and height of

the islands. You may encounter wind shear, downdraft and even currents that will affect your direction and speed.

Many times you will experience the sea between the gaps as quite fresh, even rousty, and sailing can become invigorating. It is important to stay very alert at these times, especially if a squall line is noted. Squalls can increase wind speed by as much as 15 and sometimes even 20 knots.

The novice sailor will most often give the command to reduce sail and this is a sensible command. However, an alternative that many times can be more convenient is to leave the sail up and “run off” in the direction of the wind. The squalls do not last very long, perhaps 10 minutes or so in most cases. If you **cannot** see *through* the squall it is a good indication that the squall will be stronger than normal. In that case if you have little experience “running off” with sail up, you should shorten sail quickly!



As you go by a high island do not be surprised if, as you pass the gap between it and the next island, the wind heads you. Do not be afraid to bear off a bit and **forget rhumb line sailing**; a technique that chart plotters have produced that is anathema to any intelligent approach to cruising. As you continue on, the wind will begin to “free up” and you will be able to return to your course.

Not too long ago, I passed St. Vincent for what seemed to take an eternity in light winds due to the lee. However, once I really cleared the headland the wind filled in at 22 knots and the boat took off. It will take some time for you to get the feel of it, but if you study it carefully, it will not take long before you become an old pro at predicting what happens next; at least as so far as the wind is concerned.

Usually the first time through the islands you will not be too conscious of all of these factors and variables because you will think that you have died and gone to sailor's heaven. Blue sky and steady wind, and a sea of achingly beautiful colors backdropped by exotic islands, will result in you losing yourself in enchantment more often than not.



THE PITONS/UNDER FULLSAIL

Before you conclude that life is perfect in Paradise there are some things we need to address. There *is* a rainy season that comes during the summer which harkens the hurricane season as well.



**THAT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD. BETTER REEF SAIL.
IF YOU HAVE TO ASK WHETHER IT IS TIME
TO REEF, IT IS ALREADY TOO LATE!**

One can cruise in the Lesser Antilles during the summer but it is often referred to as the off season. Spring and **early** summer are really nice in many ways. Anchorages are less crowded and the Trade Winds more steady. However, as summer comes on the humidity goes up, it rains nearly every day, and you must be very conscious of weather.

A **Tropical Wave**, or an area of low barometric pressure usually flows from east to west over the Caribbean during this time approximately once per week. Some of them turn into tropical storms and some of those storms turn into hurricanes. You **MUST KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE WEATHER AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR VERY, VERY CAREFULLY.**



**GLAD WE REEFED! DID YOU SEE THE WIND METER?
IT HIT 43 KNOTS!**

Some cruisers speak of “hurricane holes”; places where you can hole up during a bad storm. **THERE ARE NO HURRICANE HOLES IN THE CARIBBEAN**; at least none that are bulletproof! There are places you can get into, where there are mangroves and shoal water but in the final assessment, this is not the reason we go cruising. Such storms are dangerous and can cause a great deal of damage.

During the height of hurricane season it is best to be as far south in the Lesser Antilles as possible, or at least heading that way. **The farther south you are; the lower the PROBABILITY of encountering a Tropical Storm or Hurricane.**

All of this means that the cruising season in the Lesser Antilles is roughly from early November through late June.

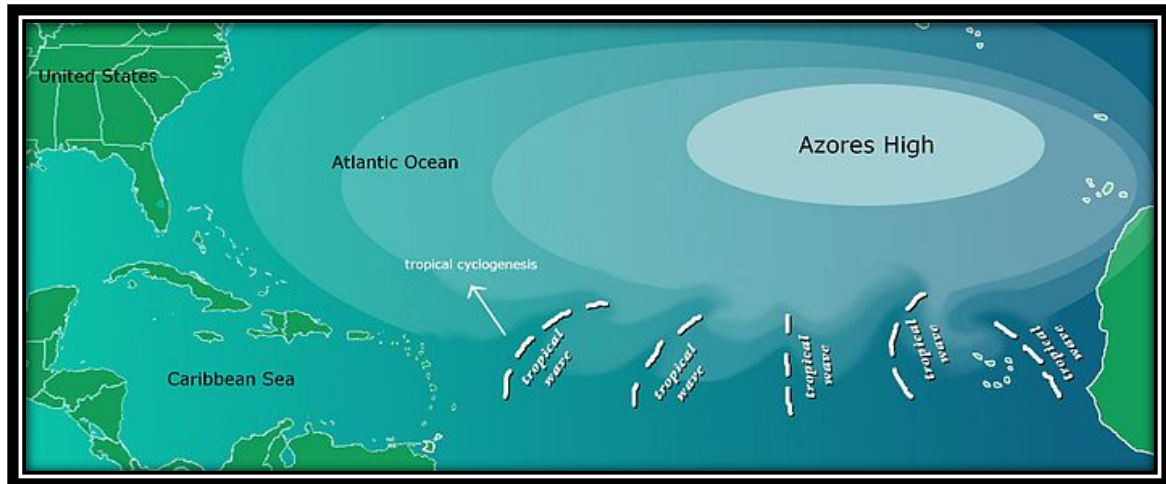


Figure 3. Path of tropical “cyclogenesis” or development of tropical cyclones

The safest places in the Caribbean during hurricane season relative to storms are Grenada, Trinidad, Venezuela and the ABC islands. These four are sufficiently south as to have a history of being “hit” much less frequently by storms.

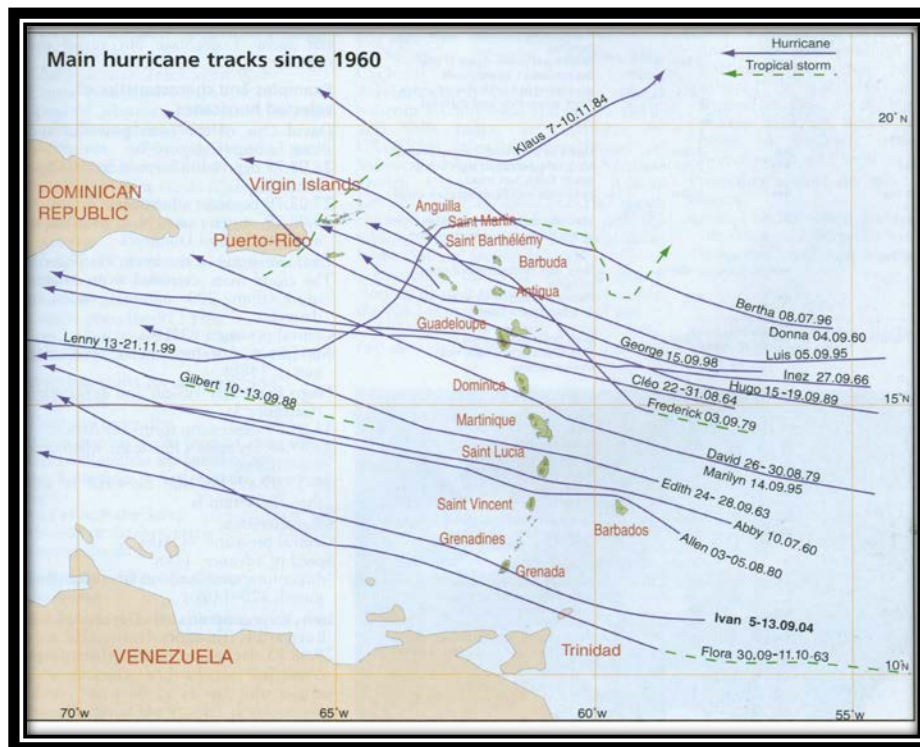


Figure 4. HURRICANES SINCE 1960 in the CARIBBEAN

Keep in mind that the above chart shows ONLY hurricanes and does not include storms that can rage up to 73 mph. If you get caught in a storm of 65 mph sustained wind, more likely than not you will think you are in a hurricane. It is noteworthy that Trinidad, Venezuela and the ABC islands **have not sustained a hurricane in over 50 years**. There was one Tropical Storm in Trinidad in 1974, Alma, which reported sustained winds of 35 mph and gusts to 53 mph.

Cruise the Lesser Antilles and plan to get as far south as you can as the “cruising season” draws to an end.

Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale		
Category	Wind speed mph (km/h)	Storm surge ft (m)
5	≥156 (≥250)	>18 (>5.5)
4	131–155 (210–249)	13–18 (4.0–5.5)
3	111–130 (178–209)	9–12 (2.7–3.7)
2	96–110 (154–177)	6–8 (1.8–2.4)
1	74–95 (119–153)	4–5 (1.2–1.5)
Additional classifications		
Tropical storm	39–73 (63–117)	0–3 (0–0.9)
Tropical depression	0–38 (0–62)	0 (0)

Figure 5. Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale

“THE BEATEN TRACK”

The Lesser Antilles is not virgin cruising ground. It has been sailed by recreational sailors for many years, and from the early 60s on, the numbers have increased virtually each and every year. You will not be welcomed as another Christopher Columbus or as a great adventurer who has crossed great seas to arrive. Many have arrived before you.

There are pluses and minuses to such a well travelled path. The big plus of course is that there are very few surprises. The harbors and stops along the way are fairly well known. You might even come to think of them as a milk run.

In the Lesser Antilles you will find a very well established infrastructure. Charter fleets, reserved park lands and marine parks, areas where there are requirements to moor instead of anchor and many other factors -- some large and some small -- I will impact you.

Those that live in the islands are very familiar with cruising boats and sometimes that familiarity can breed contempt; particularly where unemployment is high and the price of crime is low. As a result always take extra precautions and in cases like your dinghy with a motor, *always* retrieve it at night. If you do not, the chances are you will lose it. While you are using it, always be sure to make the dinghy and its motor as theft proof as possible.

CRIME

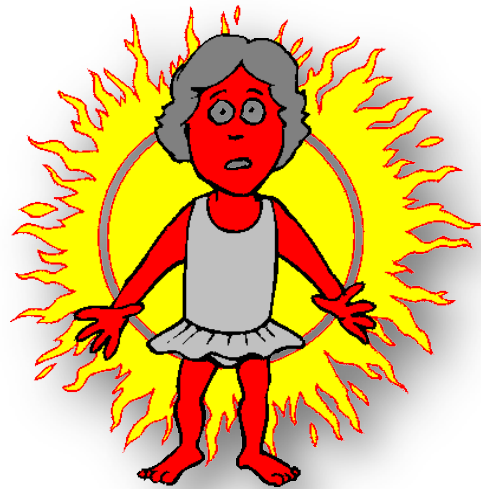
Crime affects cruisers everywhere in the world and the Lesser Antilles is no exception. Over the last decade the amount of crime against cruising boats has risen in the Lesser Antilles. It is imperative that you research the areas you will cruise through as carefully as you can. You can use web sites such as Noonsite (www.noonsite.com) and The Caribbean Safety and Security Net (www.safetyandsecuritynet.com) for news and past history of events.

Additionally you can read the monthly free newspaper for cruisers, *Caribbean Compass* as well as the monthly magazine, *All at Sea*. Speak with other cruisers as well to become familiar with an area. If you find that you are in an area known for a higher level of crime, take the extra precautions that are necessary. Always remember that you should *never* show that you have cash on you or held below decks. Always say to anyone to whom you are speaking, that you have only a credit card and need to go to the local bank to get cash. Never show fancy jewelry. Avoid befriending people whom you do not know well and do *not* bring them aboard your boat. If you allow a local tradesman to work on your boat, especially below decks, prepare the cabin and area before the worker arrives. The best axiom is “out of sight, out of mind!”

OTHER DANGERS

We could spend volumes discussing dangers posed by sun exposure, dehydration and heat stroke, fire coral, ciguatera poisoning, jelly fish, sharks and so forth but that is not the focus of this guide. It is recommended that you research carefully where you plan to cruise and understand what dangers may present.

Here are some of the most frequent of problems encountered and recommended remedies.



EFFECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT BELOW 30° N

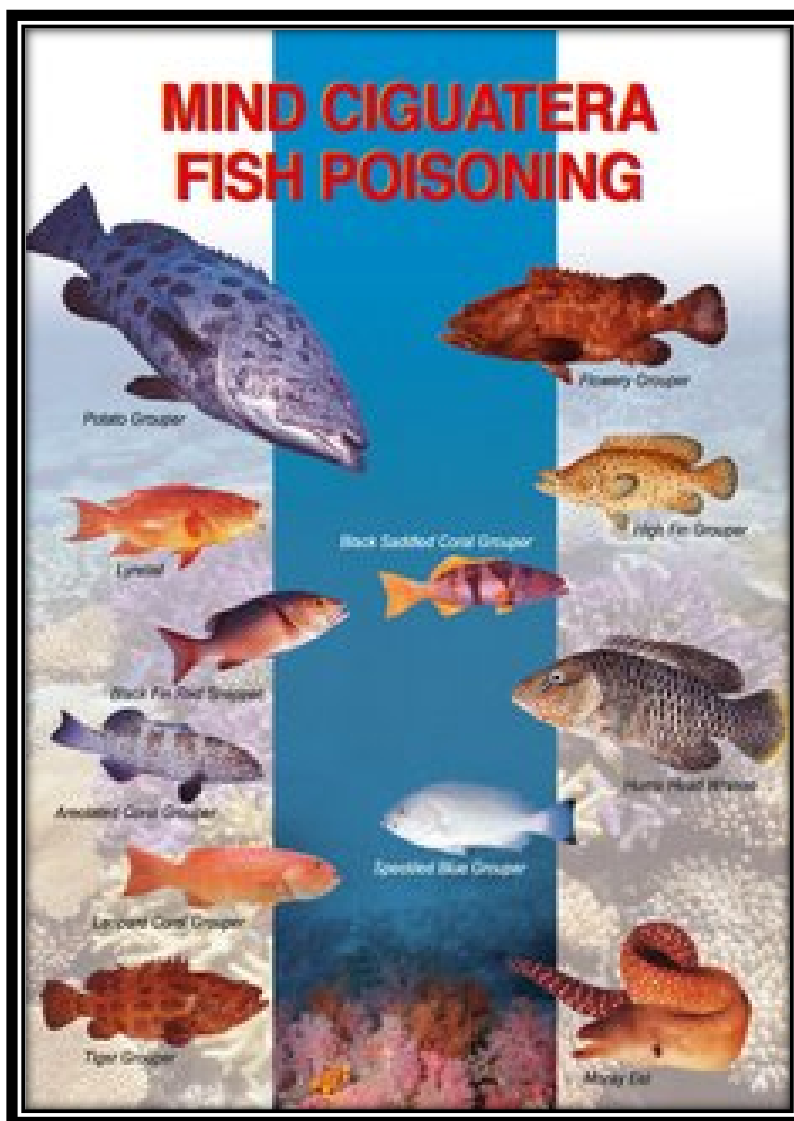
The Lesser Antilles is usually a sunny and at times hot place. You must take steps to avoid overexposure. Use a good sun blocker and use it frequently.

Keep your head covered all the time when you are out in the sun. If you are very fair skinned, consider wearing a long sleeved shirt or blouse to avoid getting burned.

Keep in mind that in addition to sun burn there is also wind burn. This is why so many sailors back in the day (as well as sailors today) grew a beard to protect against the elements. Women, of course, use methods of protection other than growing a beard and are most often seen with large hats and big tubes of sun block.

Glasses and sunglasses go a long way to protect the eyes from windburn.

POISONOUS THINGS



One of the most common poisons you will find in the Lesser Antilles, in some areas more than others, but especially in the northern part of the chain, is **CIGUATERA POISON**. It comes from eating fish that feed on the reefs. **Be VERY CAREFUL WITH FISH;** especially any fish you catch with intent to eat.

There are certain types of fish you should never eat. Barracuda is the first example that comes to mind. Do not underestimate this poison because it can

leave you severely disabled. Predator fish are more likely to have this

poison as they are at the top of their food chain. (Barracudas, snapper, moray eels, parrot fishes, groupers, trigger fishes and amberjacks).

The poison is a “neurotoxin” and will cause nerve damage, usually temporary but in some cases permanent. Most often if you eat in a good restaurant, the fish will be OKAY to eat. However, if you buy fish off the beach, regardless of what you are told, you are taking a chance. There is no way to determine if the fish is poisonous by looking at it. **If you do get poisoned, get professional medical help immediately!**



Many of you reading this will not remember the Andrews Sisters. I have a memory of my parents listening to their music which was very popular in the 40s. One of their biggest hits was “Don’t Sit under the Apple Tree.”

**“Don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me
Anyone else but me, anyone else but me
No-no-no, don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me
Till I come marching home”**

In the case of the Manchineel Tree it is best not to sit under the apple tree **EVER!** If the sap drips on you it will cause severe irritation to the skin. The shade of the tree on a hot sunny day at the beach is very inviting; **but don't do it!**

The fruit looks and smells like an apple. **NEVER** ever eat it. **It is highly toxic.**



The Manchineel fruit and tree leaves



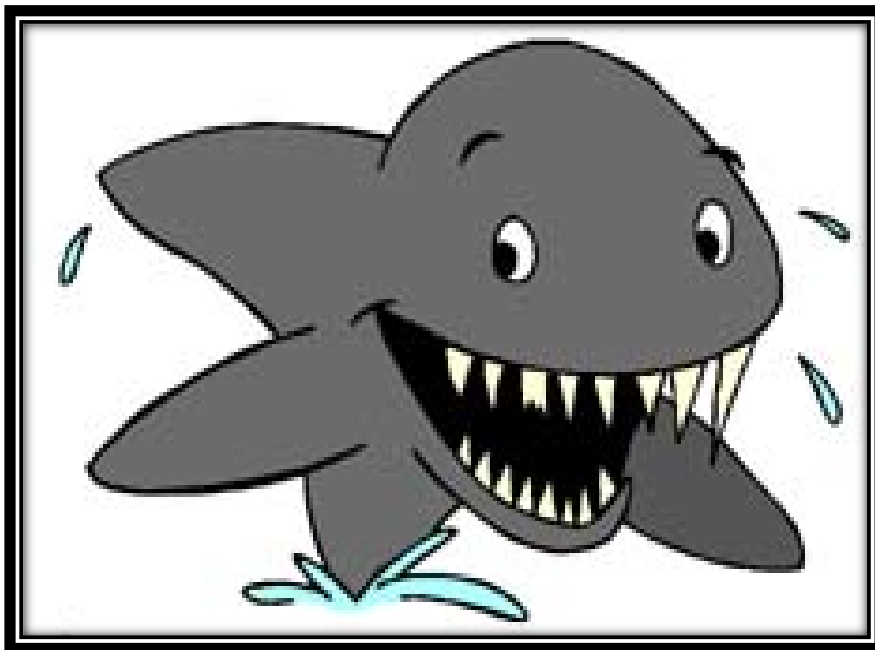
SPIDERS

There have been cases where boats have been laid up for hurricane season and the happy owners returned to their homeland. When they returned and began the job of cleaning and recommissioning their boat, they were bitten by a spider who took up residence in some dark nook. The spiders are not aggressive but if you are doing that



type of work it is wise to put gloves on and watch carefully. You will not die from the bite but it can be painful and uncomfortable.

DANGERS IN THE SEA



Some people are concerned that sharks and barracuda may be a threat. The truth is that shark attacks in the Caribbean are rarer than winning the lottery and barracudas do not normally attack unless provoked.

A greater

danger in the sea would be Fire Coral and Jelly Fish. I remember about 15

years ago when we were anchored off the caves in the British Virgin Islands. Our daughter swam to the caves only to swim too close to the Fire Coral. She brushed it and got a nasty burn. If you are snorkeling or SCUBA diving, be mindful not to come into contact with the coral in any way, both for your sake as well as the sake of the coral.

Jelly Fish are a fact of life and if you see a great number of them in the water, it may be best to wait until they are gone for they do give off a sting. Treatments of Jelly Fish stings vary depending on who you talk to, but doctors consistently maintain that flushing the sting with fresh water is essential. However, other treatments such as ammonia, ice, urine (*A matter of being pissed on rather than pissed off*), antihistamines, and vinegar have proven effective.

ILLNESS

The Lesser Antilles have readily available medical care and overall they are reasonably good at it. One of the most frequent of the maladies that affects the Lesser Antilles and indeed the entire Caribbean is Dengue Fever.

Dengue Fever, also known as breakbone fever, is an infectious tropical disease caused by the dengue virus. Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle and joint pains, and a characteristic skin rash that is similar to measles. There is actually more than one variety; in general terms the lesser one and the more serious one.

Treatment of acute dengue is undertaken using either oral or intravenous rehydration for mild or moderate disease, and intravenous fluids and blood transfusion for more severe cases. Dengue virus is transmitted to humans through mosquito bites and is NOT contagious. Its course usually runs about 10 days but it can in more serious cases last a month. You can reduce the risk of Dengue Fever, which is more prevalent during the rainy season, by avoiding mosquito bites by using repellent and by wearing long sleeved shirts and pants in areas with mosquito infestation. Avoid areas where there is stagnant fresh water.

CULTURE

The culture of the Lesser Antilles is varied and the diversity of different nationals is enormous. One could not begin to sum it up in a paragraph or a single book for that matter.

The short story is that there were Native Americans (Tainos~principally Arawak and Caribes) living throughout the island chain. Subsequently colonial powers from Europe arrived and began to settle. They brought slaves from Africa. The colonial European powers in the Caribbean were principally Spanish, Dutch, English and French. In the Lesser Antilles there are only the remnants of Dutch, English and French.

The resulting culture today is the result of the mixing of Native American, European and African. However, one must remember to include the institution of slavery as part of the culture as it has had and still has a great effect on the Caribbean. Over the last 100 years there has also been the addition of Middle Eastern, East Indian and Chinese immigration to the mix. What results is a culture that is rich and complex through its people, its lifestyle, its food and its art and music. Of all the places you will travel in the entire world, you will find few whose culture is as complex and diverse in its makeup as the Caribbean.

Moreover, in the last 30 years, as communities have become electrified, and radios, then televisions, and now computers have become commonplace in homes. Contemporary western values have been introduced, further impacting the culture and particularly the younger generation in the Caribbean.

Many North Americans and Europeans see the “Caribbean” as a paradise. They see it as a place where life is easy and the weather temperate. They see great beaches, great food and great music; perhaps even cheap rum.

To the locals it is a different matter. Jobs are very hard to come by. Many countries in the Lesser Antilles have unemployment rates approaching 50% and sometimes higher. Exports for most countries are nonexistent. The biggest industry for most of the island nations of the Lesser Antilles is tourism. When tourists do not come, due to weather as during the rainy

season, or when their numbers are decreased by recessionary times, the job market in the Caribbean suffers and families become hard pressed to get by. Each island is somewhat different; some better as to the job market and some worse.

When Ronald Reagan was President of the United States he complained to the then Prime Minister of St. Vincent that the Prime Minister had knowledge of marijuana crops growing on his island and being exported to the United States. The export crop of St. Vincent had been largely bananas for export to North America. That crop was marginalized due to the “Banana Wars.” The Prime Minister replied to President Reagan that if the USA would buy his bananas he would enforce an end to marijuana crops.

There are some important things to remember when cruising through the Lesser Antilles. Generally speaking life is slower; much slower than it is in North America and Europe. The people move slower and live with a sense that life is definitely not all work and no play. In fact socializing in the islands is one of the great pastimes. Many cruisers when they visit cannot understand why, if jobs are so scarce and the economics of families so difficult to manage, everyone is not out pushing as hard as they can as often as they can. That notion, the one of pushing hard, is NOT a Caribbean notion. I have heard some cruisers “write off” the local populace as lazy. However, I do not think it is laziness but rather a significant difference in cultural values.

It brings to mind a story of two young investment bankers who were on vacation in the islands who were walking down the beach at midday. They spotted a man lying under the tree in the shade taking it easy. One said to the other, “Look at that lazy bastard; he will never get anywhere being idle and to think they complain that money is scarce.” The other agreed.

As they approached the fellow the first investment banker could not help but ask the man what his name was. He replied with his eye barely open, “Ya Mon, Jacob.” “Well, Jacob, says the banker, it is certainly nice that you have a great place to relax during the day” with a touch of sarcasm. Jacob made no reply. The banker could not let it go at that and asked Jacob if he had a job. Jacob replied in a quiet voice that he in fact did; “Ya Mon, fishermon, boat mine.”

The banker then said to Jacob, “well if you have a boat and are a fisherman why you are not out fishing?” The sleepy reply was, “Ya Mon, that time gone long so morning!” The banker continued. “Did you catch anything?” “Ya Mon, caught me da fish.”

“Well Jacob, if you continued to fish you would catch more fish; wouldn’t that be better than being idle under that tree.” “No mon,” came the reply. “Me just liming” (hanging out). “Well if you caught more fish you could make more money and with that extra money you could purchase another boat and lease it out and catch still more fish.”

Jacob says with his eyes now open; “Why dat?” “Well if you make more money, you can save it, invest it and retire.” Jacob asks again, “Why do dat?” “Well, if you retire”, says the banker, “you could take life easy and relax.” Jacob finally looks up and smiles a bit at the two bankers. He says, “Ya Mon, take it eeeezzzz and relax; ya mon, dat what I doing right now; no worries.”

The bankers give up and walk away convinced that it is hopeless.

The point is that in the Caribbean most everyone works to live and does not live to work. Social time is considered extremely important and people are always visiting each other and sharing and talking. To not say hello to everyone when you get on a small bus is considered by most to be impolite.

At the minimum you can smile and nod. If you get on that bus with a stern face and do not look at anyone, people will take you for either angry or thinking yourself too good to acknowledge everyone.

**REMEMBER TO BE
SOCIABLE!**

**REMEMBER NOT TO
RUSH ABOUT!**




REMEMBER NOT TO PUT PRESSURE ON PEOPLE REGARDING TIME!

REMEMBER TO NEVER, EVER BE RUDE OR DISMISSIVE! If you do not want the product or service, smile and say “Little more time, mon, little more time!” And keep smiling.

REMEMBER ALWAYS TO NOT JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS. If you think you have been shortchanged or overcharged, approach it slowly and carefully.

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE A VISITOR IN SOMEONE ELSE’S COUNTRY AND THAT IF YOU OPENLY CRITICIZE THE PEOPLE, YOU ARE ASKING FOR TROUBLE AND RESENTMENT.

FINALLY, **REMEMBER** that while you may believe that you can run the country better than the people that live there, whether it is at the immigration office or the supermarket or the car rental franchise that the people of the island have lived there for a long time and have gotten by using their own methods. While you may be well intentioned, they have heard it all before and you will be thought of as naïve. Better to observe more and speak less at least insofar as criticism.



*In the Caribbean,
most everyone works
to live and does not
live to work. Social
time is considered
extremely important.*

LESSER ANTILLES (Leeward & Windward)

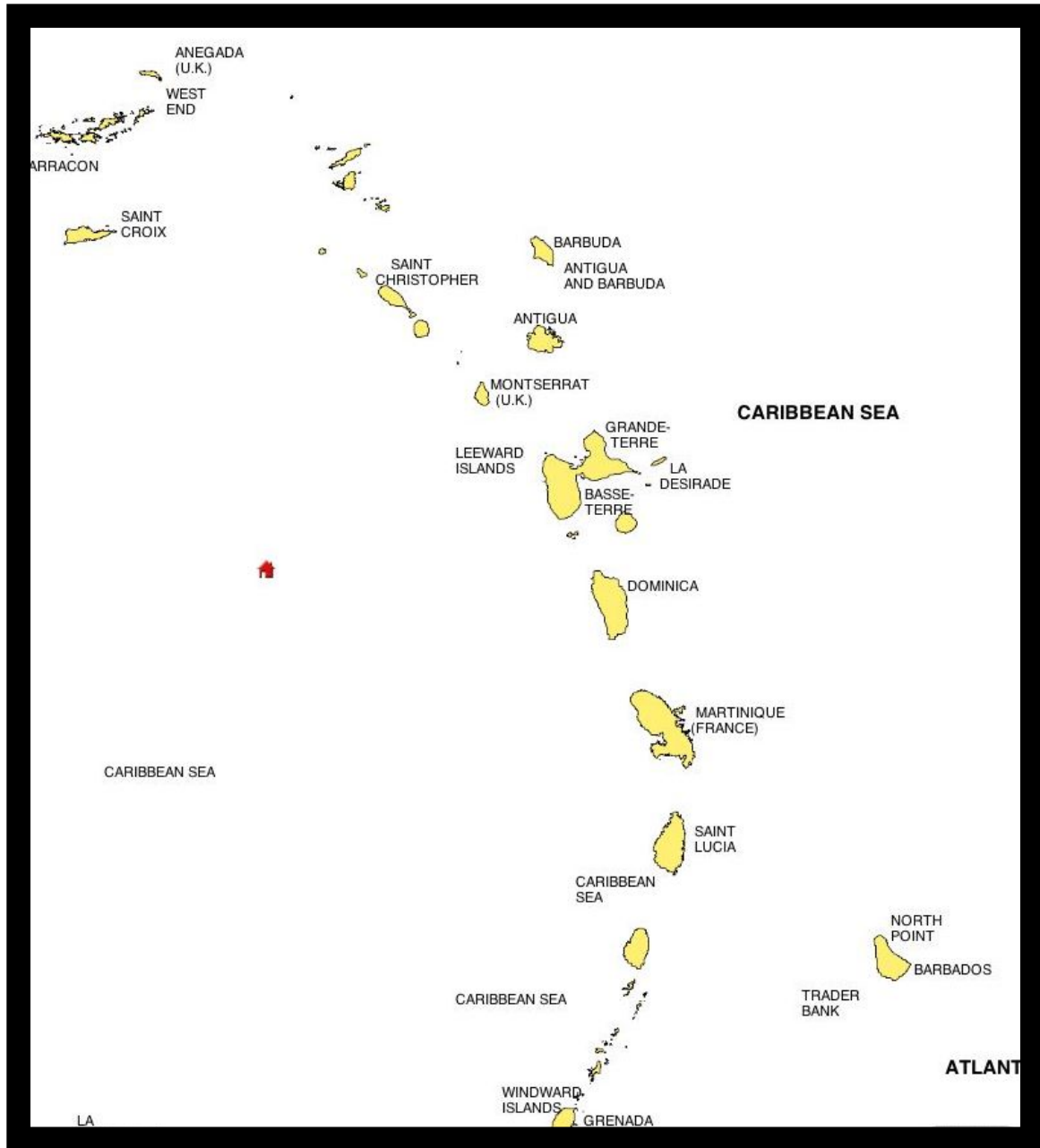


Figure 6. Virgin Islands to Grenada

BREAKDOWN OF THE LESSER ANTILLES

The Lesser Antilles is organized into the northern section or the Leeward Islands, and the southern section or the Windward Islands. What follows is an armchair tour of the Lesser Antilles and quick snapshots of all the islands, north to south, Leeward and Windward, featured in the three volumes of this guide.

LEEWARD ISLANDS OF THE LESSER ANTILLES

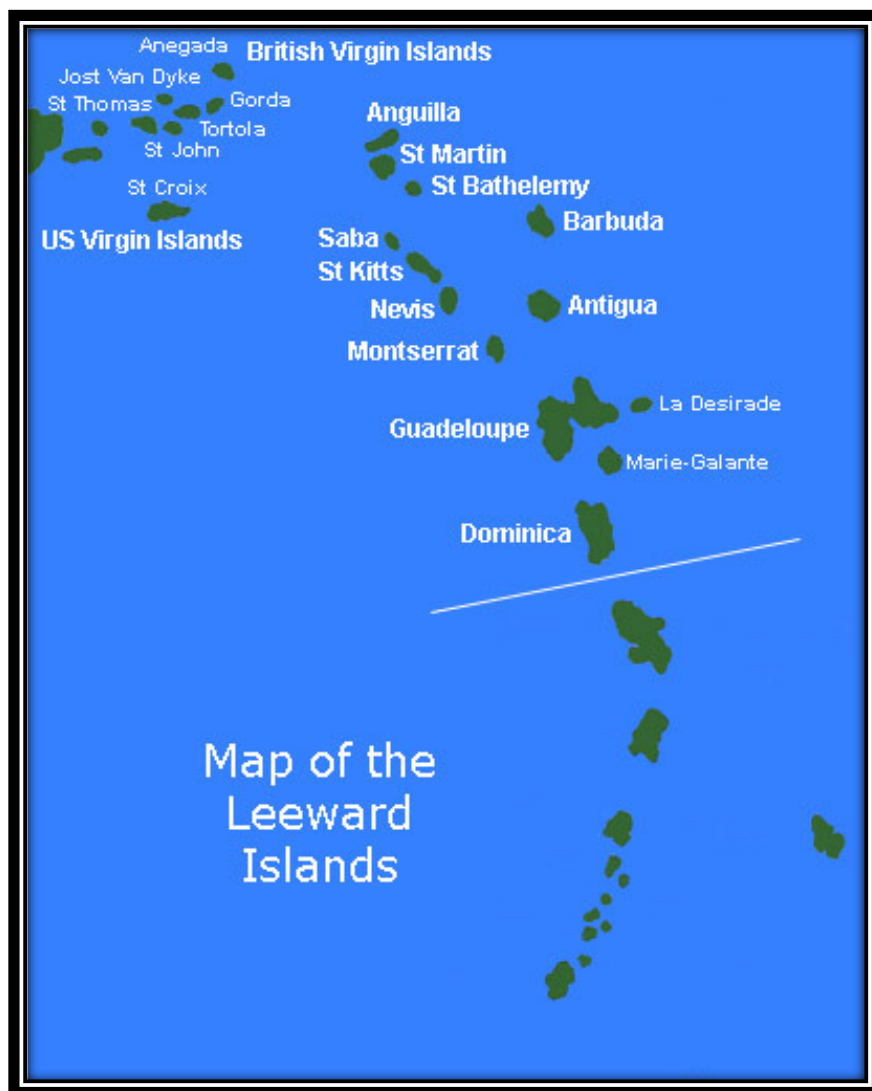


Figure 7. The Leewards

The Leeward Islands include:

The *Virgin Islands*, which are the northwestern part of the Leeward Islands. They are separated in two groups, one American and one British.

The Virgin Islands, in particular the BVI, can rightfully be called the Charter Boat Capital of the Caribbean.

US Virgin Islands



Figure 8. US Virgin Islands

St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix are the main, and most familiar, islands.

The Virgin Islands of the United States (commonly called the US Virgin Islands) are a group of islands in the Caribbean that are an *insular* area of the United States. Geographically the islands are part of the Virgin Islands archipelago.

In addition to the main islands listed above there are many surrounding minor, even mini, islands? The total land area of the territory, however, is just 134 square miles.

Population is approximately 110,000. Tourism is by far the primary economic activity, although there is a small manufacturing sector anchored by petrochemical storage and refining.

What became the US Virgin Islands were sold to the United States by Denmark in the Treaty of the Danish West Indies of 1916. They are classified by the UN as a Non-Self-Governing Territory, and are currently an organized, unincorporated United States territory.

Cruising boats that carry non USA citizens aboard may not land unless the non USA citizens have a valid USA visa in their passport.

British Virgin Islands

These include the principal islands of Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada, and Jost Van Dyke as well as some fifty additional smaller islands and cays.



Figure 9. British Virgin Islands

The BVI is a British overseas territory and therefore an overseas territory of the European Union. The islands make up part of the Virgin Islands archipelago, the remaining islands constituting the U.S. Virgin Islands. Approximately 15 of the islands are inhabited. The capital, Road Town, is situated on Tortola, the largest island at approximately 12 miles long and 3 miles wide. The islands have a total population of 22,000, of whom approximately 18,000 live on Tortola. Truly the BVI is the capital of the bareboat charter boat industry.

Anguilla(UK)

A British overseas territory; and therefore also a European Union territory, in the Caribbean.

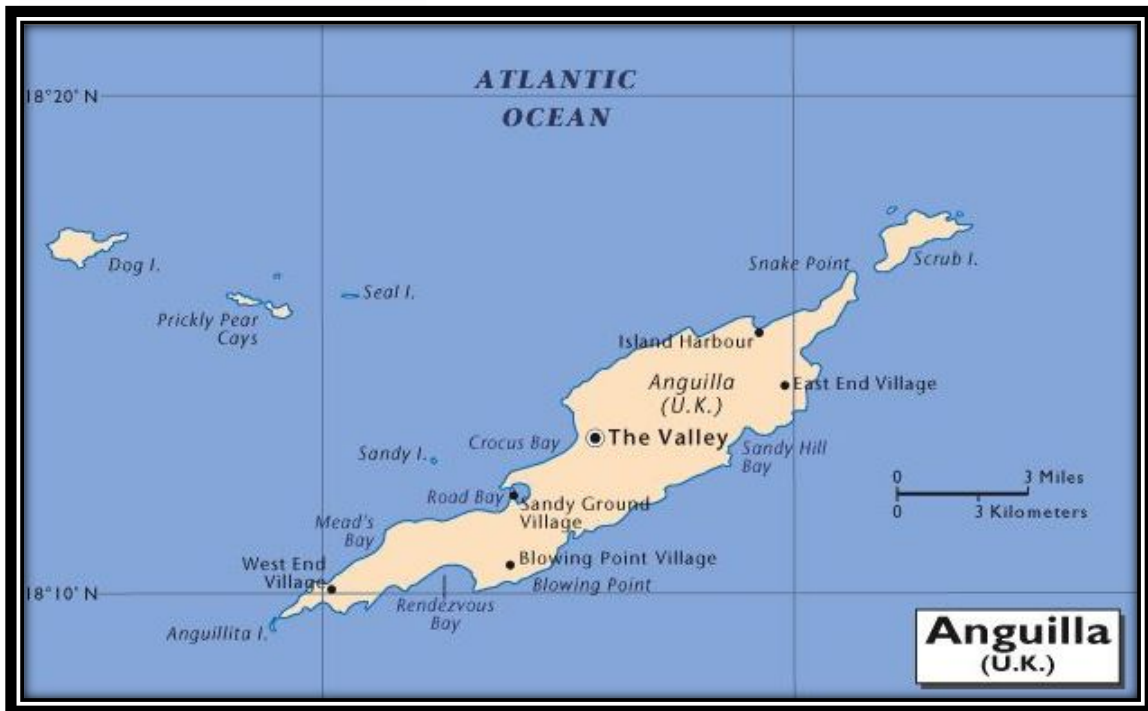


Figure 10. Anguilla

Anguilla is one of the most northerly of the Leeward Islands in the Lesser Antilles. It consists of the main island of Anguilla itself, approximately 16 miles long by 3.1 miles wide at its widest point, together with a number of much smaller islands and cays that have no permanent population. It is located east of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and directly north of Saint Martin.

Saint Martin/Sint Maarten

(Netherlands/France) (French: *Saint-Martin*; Dutch: *Sint Maarten*), an island in the northeast Caribbean, approximately 186 miles east of Puerto Rico.

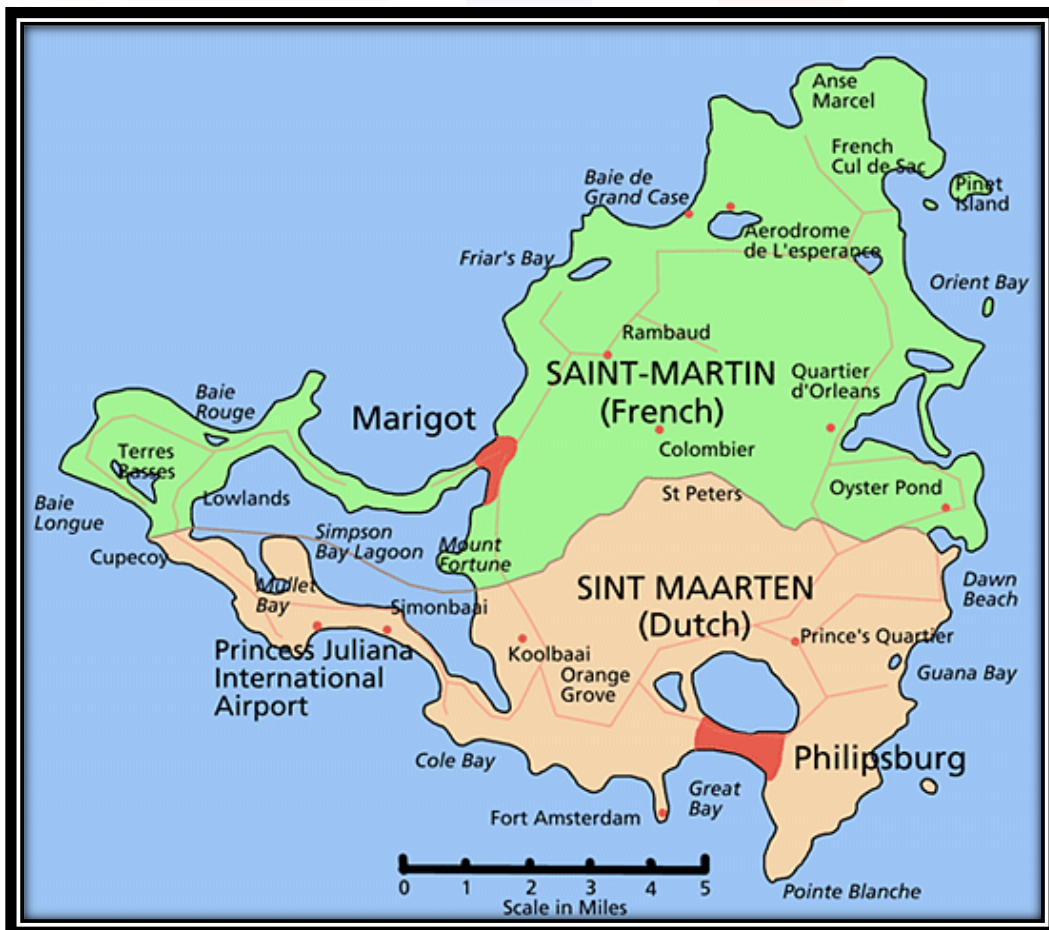
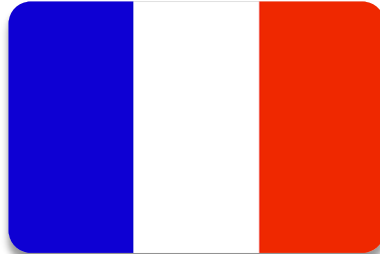
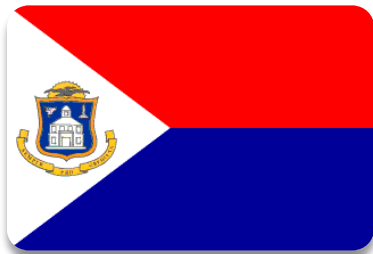


Figure 11. Saint-Martin/Sint Maarten

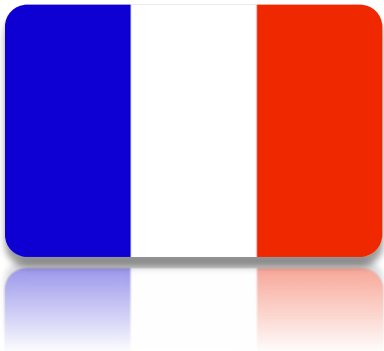
The island is divided roughly 60/40 between France and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The southern or Dutch part comprises *Sint Maarten* and is one of the countries that form the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The northern or French part comprises the *Collectivité de Saint-Martin* (Collectivity of St. Martin) and is an overseas territory of France.

The population of the entire island is approximately 80,000 with more than half living on the smaller Dutch side.



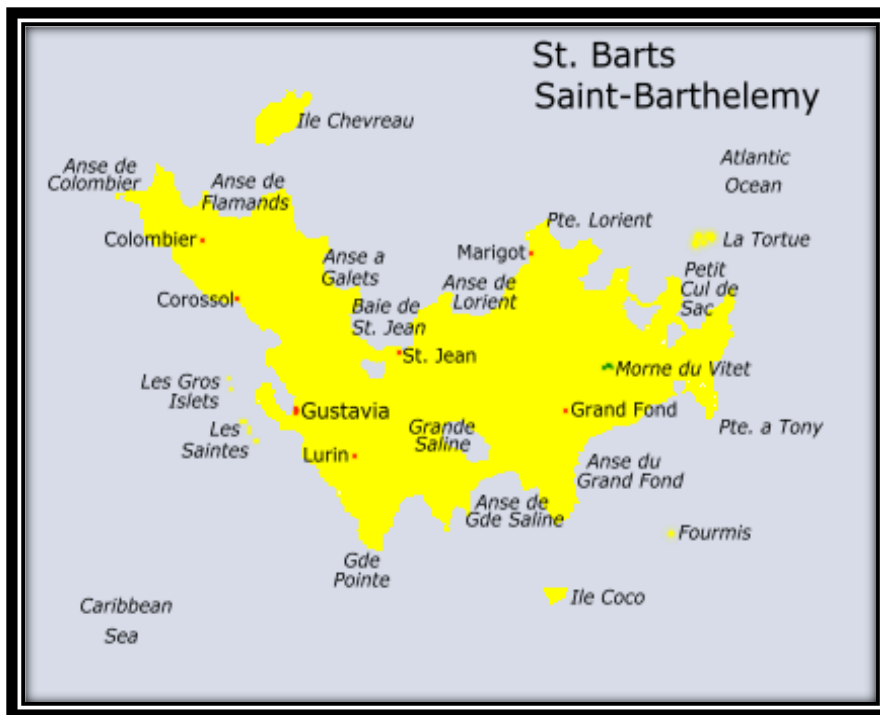
Saint Barthelemy (France)

St. Barts (French: *Saint-Barthélemy*), an overseas collectivity of France.



The name is often abbreviated to *Saint-Barth* in French, or **St. Barts** in English. The island is one of four territories among the Leeward Islands in the northeastern Caribbean that comprise the French West Indies, the others being Guadeloupe, Martinique and Saint Martin. St. Barts lies approximately 20 miles southeast of Sint Maarten/Saint Martin, and north of St Kitts.

St. Barts is a volcanic island encircled by shallow reefs. The main harbor for the island is at the capital of Gustavia. It is the only Caribbean island which



was a Swedish colony for any significant length of time. The Three Crowns of Sweden still appear in the island's coat of arms. The language, cuisine and culture nonetheless are French.

Figure 12. St Barts

Saba (Netherlands)

The smallest special municipality of the Netherlands.



Figure 13. Saba

Saba, only 5 square miles, consists largely of the potentially active, 2800' volcano, Mount Scenery.

Saba became a special municipality within the country of the Netherlands after the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles on 10 October 2010.

Its permanent population is less than 1,500 residents. At the 2001 Netherlands Antilles census, the population was just 1. Its current major towns and settlements include The Bottom, Windwardside, Hell's Gate and St. Johns. While Dutch is the official language, English is the principal language spoken on the island and has been used in its school system since the 19th century. As of January 1, 2011, the U.S. dollar has replaced the Netherlands Antillian Guilder as official currency.

Sint Eustatius (Statia)

Figure 14. Statia

Sint Eustatius is also called locally Statia. It also is a special municipality of the Netherlands. It lies southeast of the Virgin Islands and immediately to the northwest of Saint Kitts and Nevis. The capital is Oranjestad.

The island is small, only 8.1 square miles, with a population of about 2,500. The official language is Dutch; however, English is also recognized officially. Formerly part of the Netherlands Antilles, Sint Eustatius became a special municipality within the Netherlands on 10 October 2010.

Saint Christopher (St. Kitts)

-- Saint Kitts aka Saint Christopher Island (*Saint-Christophe* in French).



Figure 15. St Kitts & Nevis

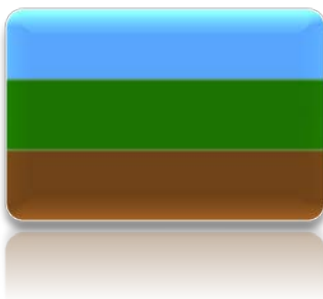
Saint Kitts and the neighboring island of Nevis constitute one country: The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The 65 square miles of St. Kitts is populated by about 35,000 people, the majority of whom are mainly of African descent. The primary language is English. Residents call themselves Kittitians .

Nevis

The island of **Nevis** is situated near the northern end of the Lesser Antilles archipelago, whose capital is Charlestown. Nevis, together with Saint Kitts, forms the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis. The two islands are separated by a shallow two-mile channel, known as "The Narrows."

The island was named *Oualie* ("Land of Beautiful Waters") by the Caribs and *Dulcina* ("Sweet Island") by the early British settlers. The name, *Nevis*, is derived from the Spanish, *Nuestra Señora de las Nieves* (Our Lady of the Snows). Nevis holds particular historical significance to Americans because it was the birthplace of Alexander Hamilton. For the British, Nevis was a duty station for the young sea captain, Horatio Nelson. The population of approximately 12,000 is primarily of African descent like its sister island St. Kitts. The literacy rates in St. Kitts and Nevis are amongst the highest in the Western Hemisphere, approaching near 100%.

Redonda

Redonda is a very small islet, part of Antigua and Barbuda. However it boasts its own flag (different from Antigua and Barbuda) because at one time it was a free standing Kingdom with its own King. I have never seen it flown anywhere. I do not think you will need it for your courtesy flag kit!

Redonda lies 35 miles southwest of Antigua, in the waters between the islands of Nevis and Montserrat. Redonda is essentially one very large rock.

Montserrat

Figure 16. Montserrat

Montserrat is a British overseas territory and thus part of the EU. This island measures about 10 miles long by 7 miles wide. Montserrat is nicknamed *the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean*, both for its resemblance to coastal Ireland and for the Irish ancestry of its inhabitants.

The capital city, Plymouth, was destroyed and two-thirds of the island's population forced to flee abroad when long dormant Soufriere Hills volcano began erupting on July 18, 1995. The eruption continues today if much reduced, with damage confined to areas around Plymouth, including docking facilities and W.H. Bramble Airport. Flows from the still active volcano covered what was left of the airport on February 11, 2010. An "exclusion zone" was imposed from the island's south coast north to parts of Belham Valley. Visitors are not permitted entry. If you sail too close to the leeward side of the island, the wind will carry volcanic ash over your deck.

Barbuda

Figure 17. Barbuda

The island of Barbuda is part of the State of Antigua and Barbuda. Most of its population of about 1,500 lives in the town of Codrington. Barbuda lies north of Antigua. To the south are Montserrat and Guadeloupe, and to the south and west are Nevis, St. Kitts, St. Barts, and St. Martin. Barbuda is home to the Frigate Bird Sanctuary, located in Codrington. The Frigate Bird colony, said to be the largest in the world, roosts toward the north end of the lagoon in mangroves and can be visited. Darby's Cave and Indian Cave, with its ancient Amerindian petroglyphs, are also interesting visits.

Antigua

Figure 18. Antigua

Antigua is the main island of the country of Antigua and Barbuda. The island's circumference is approximately 54 miles. The capital city of St. John's is situated in the north-west and has a harbor sufficiently deep to accommodate large cruise ships.

English Harbor on the south-eastern coast is famed for its protected shelter during violent storms. It is the site of a restored British colonial naval station called "Nelson's Dockyard." English Harbor and the neighboring village of Falmouth are internationally famous as a yachting and sailing destination and provisioning center. Antigua Sailing Week takes place at the end of April and beginning of May. This annual world-class regatta brings many sailing vessels and sailors to the island.

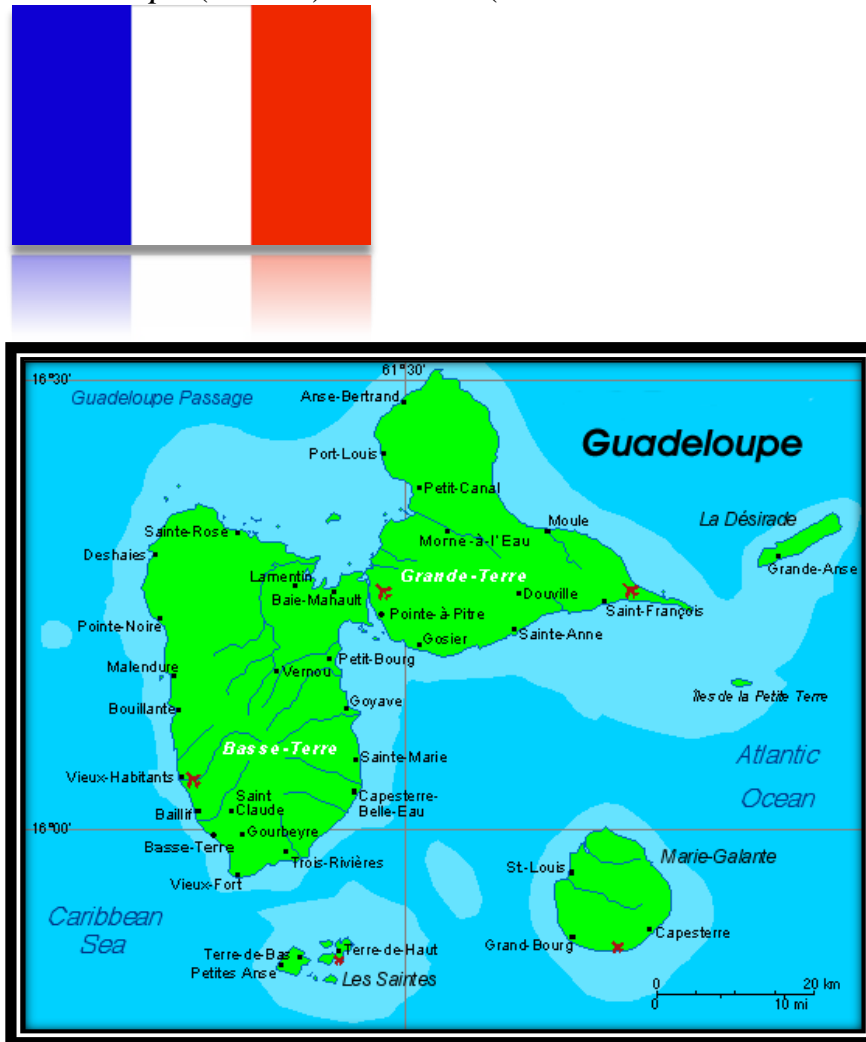
Guadeloupe (French) & islands (Marie Galante & Iles des Saintes)

Figure 19. Guadeloupe with Marie-Galante and Les Saintes

It is an overseas region of France. As with the other overseas departments, Guadeloupe is also one of the 27 regions of France and an integral part of the Republic. As part of France, Guadeloupe is part of the European Union and its currency is the euro. The capital of Guadeloupe is Basse-Terre. To the east and south of Guadeloupe are the islands of Marie Galante and Iles des Saintes. These islands are part of Guadeloupe and come under its jurisdiction.

Dominica

The Commonwealth of Dominica lies between Guadeloupe to the north-northwest and Martinique to the southeast. The highest point in this 290 square mile island is Morne Diablotins, which has an elevation of 4,747 ft. The population is approximately 72,500 and the capital is Rousseau.

Figure 20. Dominica

Dominica has been nicknamed the "**Nature Isle of the Caribbean**" for its unspoiled natural beauty. It is the youngest island in the Lesser Antilles, still being formed by volcanic activity, as evidenced by the **world's second-largest boiling lake**. The island has rain forests which are home to a multitude of bird and plant species. Dominica's economy is heavily dependent on tourism like many of the islands in the Lesser Antilles. However it also has a strong agricultural industry due to good soil and plenty of fresh water.

THE WINDWARD ISLANDS OF THE LESSER ANTILLES



Figure 21. The Windwards

The Windward Islands include the following:

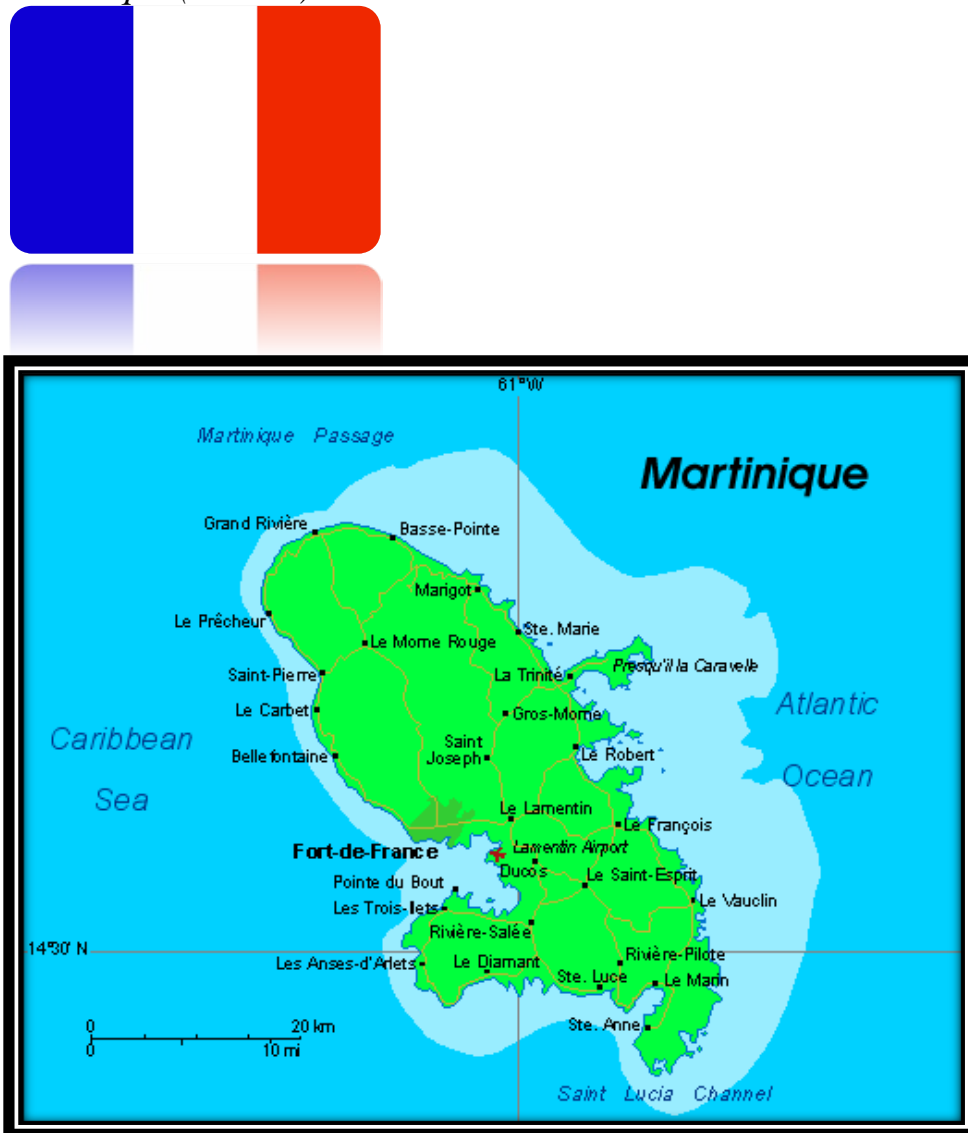
Martinique (French)

Figure 22. Martinique

Martinique's 436 square miles make it one of the larger islands in the Lesser Antilles. Like Guadeloupe, it is an overseas region of France. To the northwest lies Dominica, to the south, St Lucia, and to the southeast, Barbados. Martinique is one of the twenty-seven regions of France and an integral part of the Republic.

As part of France, Martinique is part of the European Union, and its currency is the Euro. Its official language is French, although many of its inhabitants also speak Antillean Creole.

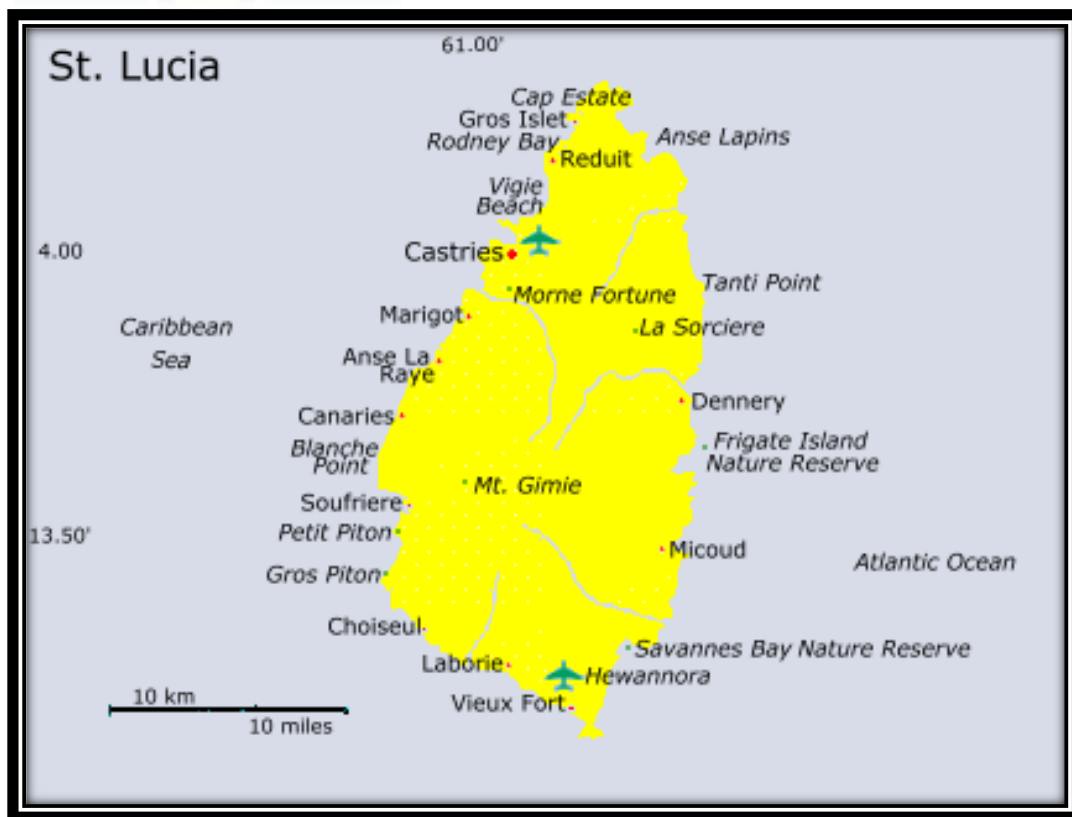
Saint Lucia

Figure 23. St Lucia

Saint Lucia is located north/northeast of the island of Saint Vincent, northwest of Barbados and south of Martinique. Castries is the capital of this 238 square mile island nation. Saint Lucia has an estimated population of 175,000 residents and been the home of two Nobel laureates, Arthur Lewis and Derek Walcott .

Saint Vincent

Figure 24. St Vincent...

Saint Vincent is a volcanic island and the largest island in the chain called Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. It is located between Saint Lucia and Grenada. St Vincent and the Grenadines sounds like a rock band. La Soufrière is still an active volcano, so they may rock.

Approximately 120,000 people live on this island whose capitol is Kingstown.

Grenadines

Figure 25. ... and the Grenadines

The **Grenadines** are a chain of over 600 islands in the Windward Islands with a population of only 16,000. Although neither Saint Vincent nor Grenada is a Grenadine island, the Grenadines are divided between the island nations of St. Vincent and Grenada .

The islands north of the Martinique Channel belong to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; the islands south of the channel belong to Grenada. The Tobago Cays are part of the St. Vincent Grenadines and are considered by most cruising sailors to be an exceptional anchorage.



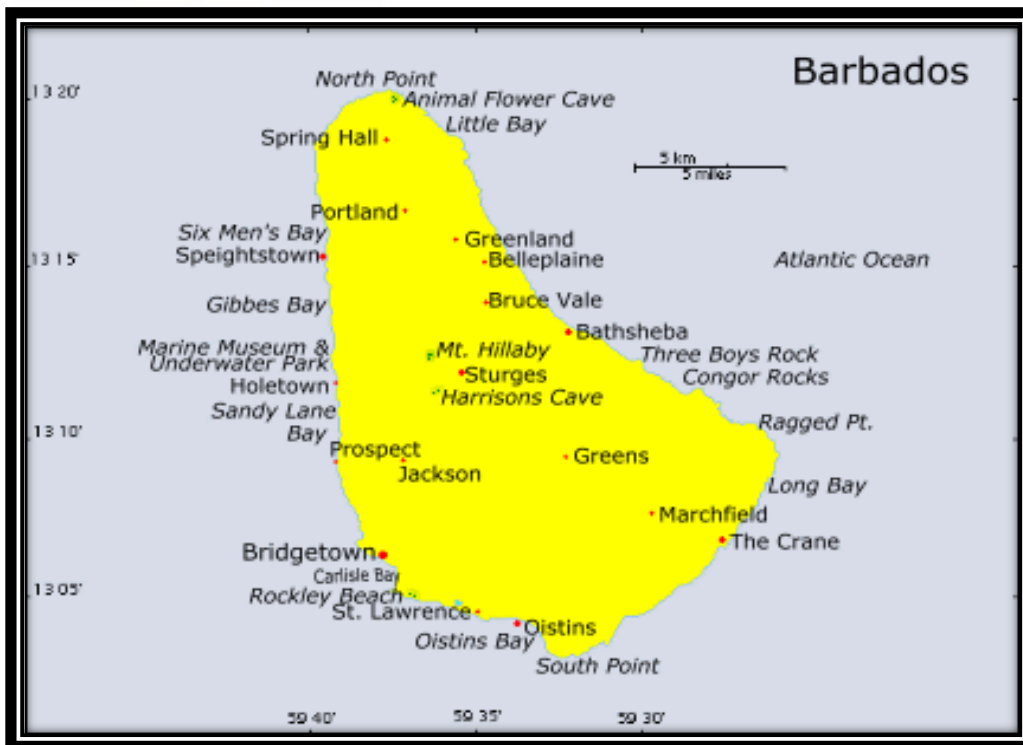
Barbados

Figure 26. Barbados

The island is 24 miles long and as much as 14 miles wide. It is approximately 60 miles east of the rest of the Windward Islands of the Lesser Antilles.

The island has a population estimated at 285,000. Bridgetown is the capitol. In 1966, Barbados became an independent state and Commonwealth realm, retaining Queen Elizabeth II as Head of State. Barbados is one of the Caribbean's leading tourist destinations and is the most developed island in the region.

It is not often visited by cruising boats heading up or down the Lesser Antilles because it is a beat to windward to make landfall. It is used by European cruising boats as a first stop after a transatlantic passage. The windward side of the island faces the Atlantic Ocean and is not the place to be in anything but the most tranquil weather; at least for a cruising boat.

Note: The map of the Lesser Antilles shows Trinidad and Tobago as part of the Windward Islands and they can easily and rightfully be included. However, Trinidad is not specifically part of the Lesser Antilles *chain of islands*. Additionally I have covered Trinidad in a separate guide, *The Yachtman's Guide to Trinidad*, which can be found as a free download at: www.freecruisingguide.com

The 7 Commandments for happy Caribbean cruising: REMEMBER --

- *always be sociable*
- *never rush*
- *never pressure people about time*
- *never be rude or dismissive*
- *never jump to conclusions*
- *never criticize people*
- *never criticize procedures*

PART II. CRUISING ~ ISLAND TO ISLAND, PORT TO PORT

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



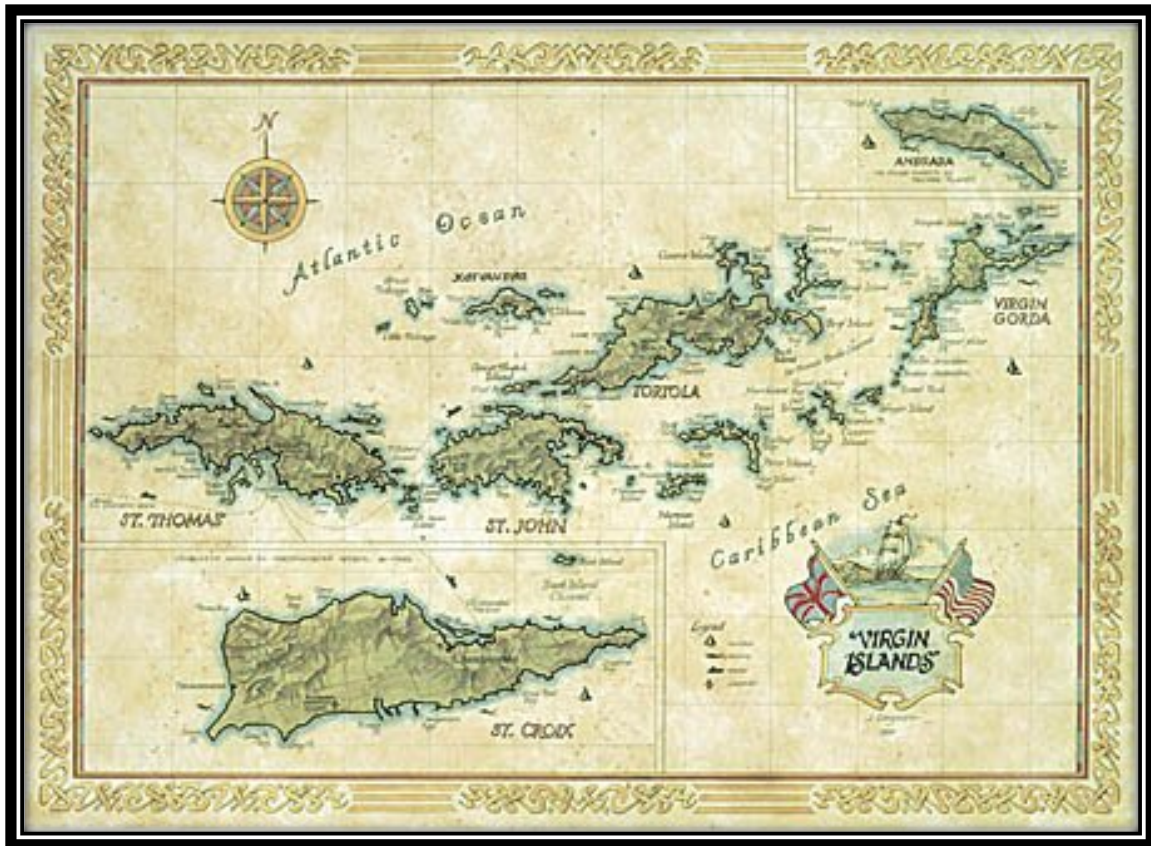


Figure 27. The Virgin Islands

The Virgin Islands are the western island group of the Leeward Islands, which are the northern part of the Lesser Antilles. They form the boundary between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The north-eastern islands form the British Virgin Islands and the south-western ones, the United States Virgin Islands.

The British Virgin Islands is an overseas territory of the United Kingdom comprising Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Jost Van Dyke, over fifty smaller islands, and Anegada to the north.

The United States Virgin Islands is an unincorporated territory of the United States comprising St. Croix to the south, with St. John, St. Thomas, and smaller islands. The Virgin Passage separates the U.S. Virgin Islands from the Passage Islands, Vieques and Culebra (sometimes called the “Spanish Virgin Islands”), which are the easternmost islands of Puerto Rico.

CRUISING THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



Figure 28. Eyeball navigation works well in the Virgin Islands as the islands are so close together.

The Virgin Islands are an extraordinary group of islands. They are breathtakingly beautiful and the cruising possibilities are exceptional as to the number of islands, harbors, coves and anchorages. However, the Islands are on the “beaten track.” As a result how much you will be attracted to them depends to a great extent on your definition of cruising.

If you like remote coves with ample anchoring room and are the type of person who likes to be on their own, this is not the place for you. If you like to be with many other people who are cruising, both private boats as well as charter boats, this is your cup of tea. Cruising here is largely mooring to

mooring and restaurant to restaurant. The majority of anchorages can be crowded and finding a solitary area to anchor in is a challenge; albeit that it is still possible.



Virgin Gorda “The Baths” at Sunset

Diving, swimming and just plain enjoying is well organized and very easy. Due to the popularity of the islands, to get a good diving site for snorkeling or SCUBA requires planning and early arrival. You have to be patient to get what you want. North Sound, located at Virgin Gorda, is the mecca of the Virgin Islands. It is a large and beautiful sound. There is plenty of space to anchor notwithstanding that you may very well share it with mega yachts and many bareboat charter boats. The bareboat charter boat business is well established in the Virgin Islands and has been so for many years. Charter boats outnumber private cruising boats by a very significant number and you will definitely compete with them for everything from anchoring room and moorings to dinner reservations.

US VIRGIN ISLANDS



Figure 29. US Virgins

The US Virgin Islands are the first of the Virgin Islands one encounters approaching from the west. The islands are well developed and highly touristic, visited in particular by North Americans. You will find the prices in the US Virgins generally higher than many of the other islands in the Lesser Antilles.

St. Thomas is the most developed as to tourist traffic, and very large cruise ships call frequently at Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas. St. Thomas has an extensive area dedicated to “cruise ship shoppers” and there you can find anything from jewelry to lace tablecloths and silverware at duty free prices. If you like plenty of activity, St. Thomas is the place to be.



St. John’s on the other hand is three-quarters national park and one quarter high end resort and private homes. While close to St. Thomas, it was developed very differently following the establishment of the national park to protect its natural beauty. The developable area is contained and the atmosphere is more restrained.

St. Croix is about 35 nm from St. Thomas Harbor. St. Croix also has cruise ship traffic but somehow its atmosphere is a little gentler than St. Thomas—not so much hustle and bustle. Many cruising sailors do not stop at St. Croix as it is somewhat out of the way on the usual route through the islands. This is unfortunate, as St. Croix is a very pretty stop notwithstanding that it does not have an abundance of anchorages.



Flag of the US Virgin Islands

The administration of the US Virgins by the US government over the years has often been criticized by both islanders and mainlanders for its middling results. This is probably due to the fact that the principal purpose of acquiring the US Virgin Islands for the USA was

strategic, to protect the Panama Canal amongst other national security concerns.

My sense is that if one took a census, there are more local boats in the US Virgins than there are cruising boats in transit. Little effort has been expended over the years in the US Virgins to attract cruising boats and in addition, due to onerous visa requirements, many non USA cruising boats simply skip the stop.

MOORINGS

The Reef Ecology Foundation has placed moorings to help protect the coral reefs in St. Thomas and St. John. (My experience is that many times the moorings cannot be used due to the need for repair).

Guidelines for Mooring Use

- Moorings are for public use on a first-come basis.
- Moorings are for day use only with a three hour limit.
- Use of the moorings is limited to vessels 60 feet or less.
- No fees will be charged for use of the moorings.
- **Mooring use is at your own risk.**
- Inspect the mooring buoy to which your boat is tied, as a mooring may work itself loose or break for various reasons, over which the Reef Ecology Foundation unfortunately has no control. Check that the mooring buoy holds the vessel as intended and inspect the buoy for functional integrity. It is your responsibility for the safety of your own vessel.
- After picking up the mooring line, please run your bow line through the loop on the mooring line to tie off.
- Not for overnight or storm use.
- Moorings are maintained by the Reef Ecology Foundation for the preservation of the coral reefs

*Remember...what took nature hundreds of years to create can be carelessly
destroyed by man in only a matter of minutes...
...unless YOU help!*

[www.reef ecologyfoundation.org](http://www.reefecologyfoundation.org)

MOORING SITES FOR ST. THOMAS AREA

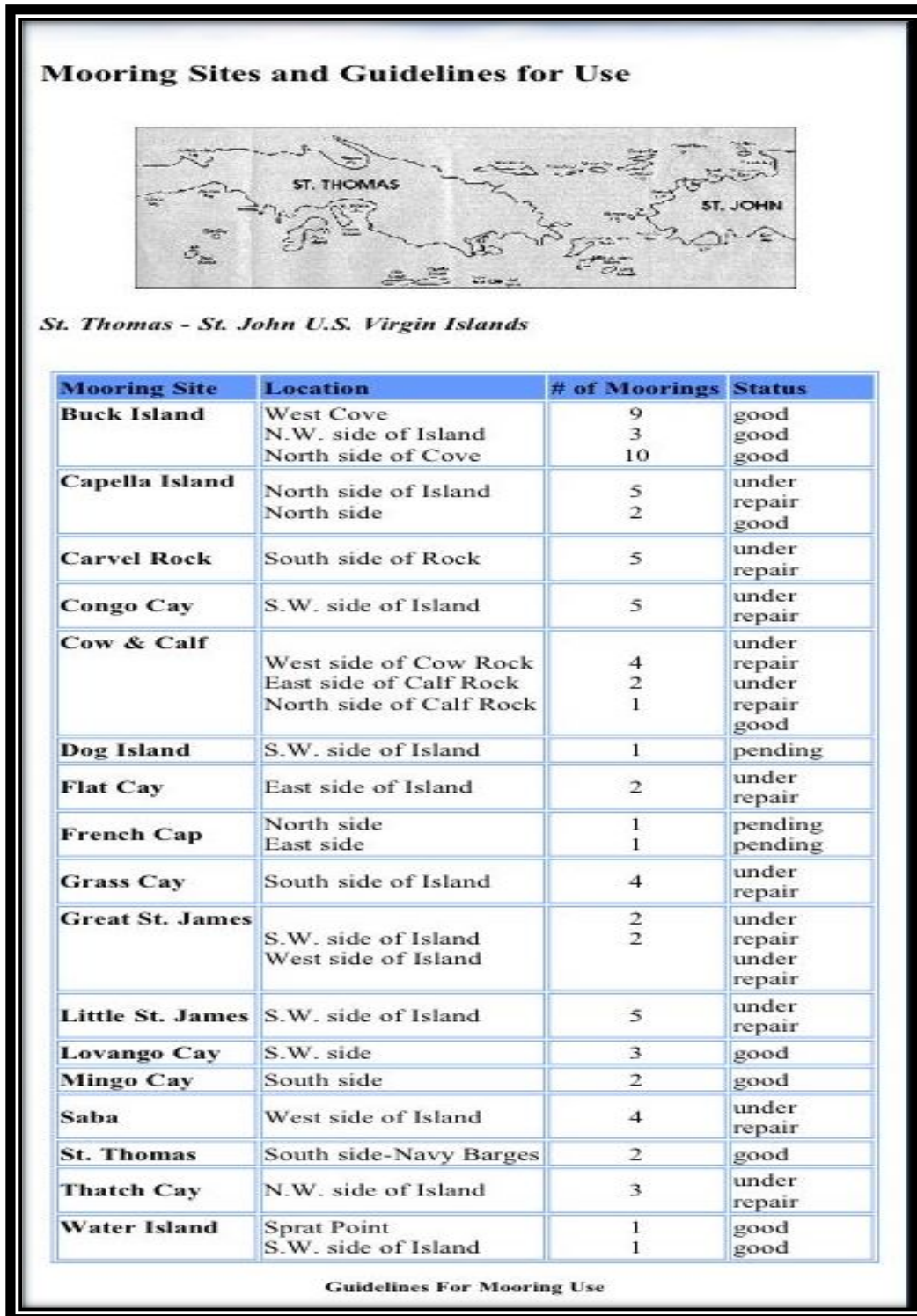


Figure 30. Guidelines for Mooring Use

CLEARANCE (Immigration & Customs)

The office is on the wharf at the ferry dock at the west end of the harbor and the hours are 8AM to 4:30 PM seven days a week. This is the only customs clearance facility on St. Thomas.

All aboard must accompany the captain of the boat to the clearance center.

ST. THOMAS



Figure 31. Saint Thomas

ST. THOMAS HARBOR

18° 19.23N

64° 55.97W at Red Nun #2 south of harbor

The approach to the main channel is a straight shot in. Be careful of the reef at the SW side of the entrance. It is buoyed.

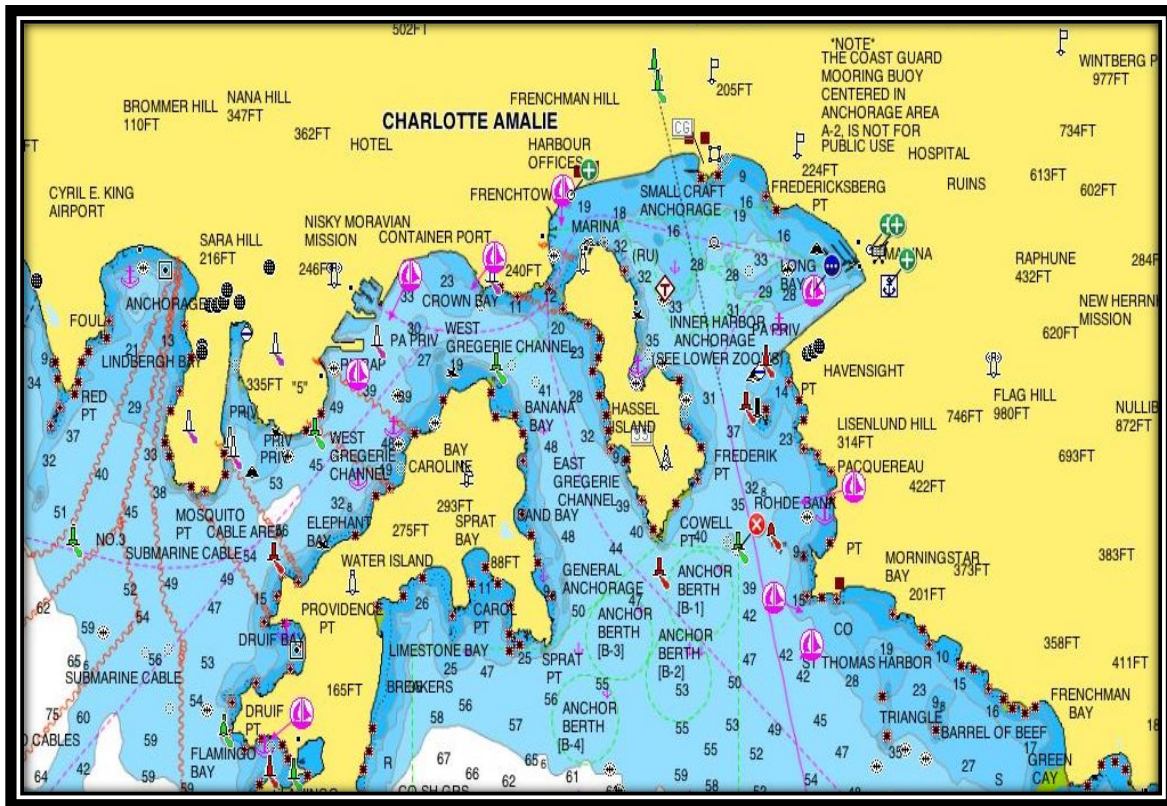


Figure 32. Charlotte Amalie and St Thomas Harbor

East Gregerie Channel lies between Hassel and Water Islands. It has no obstructions whatsoever and carries plenty of depth.

West Gregerie Channel is between Water Island and the mainland and it is also free of obstruction and of sufficient draft. However, there are patches of coral heads at the NW corner of Water Island. They are marked by the Sandy Point Red Buoy but they are underwater and hard to see. Pass well west of Sandy Point heading NE.

NOTE: Wherever you choose to anchor in St. Thomas Harbor, take note that the height of the mountains will cause the wind to frequently gust down or backwind you. Be careful how you anchor, and of the other boats anchored close to you.



BOATS AT ANCHOR~ST. THOMAS HARBOR

*Be careful HOW
and WHERE you
anchor!!!*

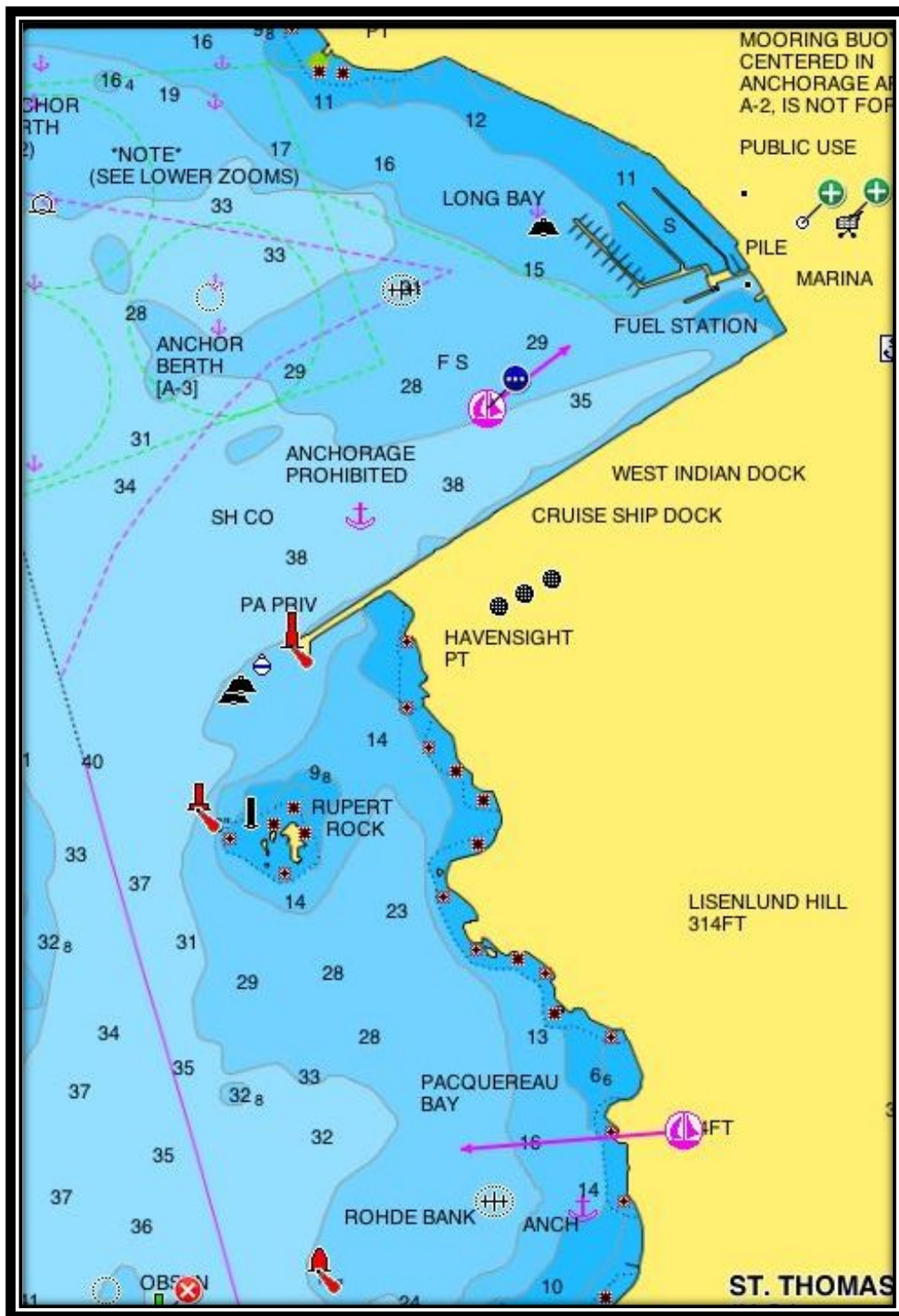


Figure 33. East side, St Thomas Harbor



Charlotte Amalie

It has areas that are pretty but can be very crowded, especially if a cruise ship is in town. The town is set up for tourist traffic and you can find just about anything you want. Be careful with your personal belongings when you are walking and be sure if you leave your dinghy anywhere that you have it very well secured.

PAQUEREAU BAY

18° 19.33 N

64° 55.53 W at Red Nun #4 WSW of bay

On the east side of St. Thomas Harbor as you head into the harbor you have a choice of two anchorages. Paquereau Bay is a reasonably well protected anchorage. Because you are further out of the main harbor you will find it less noisy and cleaner. It is not the main anchorage and is a bit out of the way.

LONG BAY

This is an extremely popular anchorage and it is always crowded. There is a marina here, the Grand Haven Marina, with 300 slips including space for mega yachts. The Marina complex has everything you can think of and more, including a pool and tennis courts. Do not anchor southwest of the buoys as they mark the area in which cruise ships move and turn.

HASSEL ISLAND

The cove on the east side of Hassel Island, Careening Cove, is a quiet anchorage *if* you want to get away from the crowd and *if* you can find space as it is normally quite crowded. An oxymoron to be sure.

CAUTION: If you choose to enter St. Thomas Harbor using Haulover Cut to the north west of Hassel Island, know that the west side can silt in and shoal to less than the charted depth. It is not marked; favor your starboard side going in.

WATER ISLAND

Druif Bay can be entered by observing the reefs at Providence Point and staying well south and west of them on entering; give them a wide berth. A very nice spot with a pretty beach; it is known to get crowded and if the wind comes up from the SE, a swell will enter.

CROWN BAY

18° 20.04 N

64° 56.86W just south of entrance to bay

Give the reef that extends north from Water Island some thought and you will find the Bay easy to enter. The area is known as Sub Base. The marina, Crown Bay Marina, is entered north of the northernmost cruise ship dock; look for the Texaco sign. This is a very large marina with all the facilities that one could want or need. On the western side of the Bay is the Sub Base Dry Docks Shipyard which has complete repair facilities including haul out.

LINDBERG BAY**18° 19.69N****64° 58.10W just SW of entrance to bay**

This anchorage is on the east side of the airport. The holding is good. You will not find this anchorage crowded but it can be rolyly due to swell.

BREWER'S BAY**18° 20.43N****64° 59.15W just west of entrance to bay**

This anchorage west of the airport is protected by the nature of the way the airport was built. It is secure and never crowded, but big jets will fly over you and you cannot help but hear them. If a little noise does not bother you and you like privacy, this is your spot. Stay clear of the end of the runway!

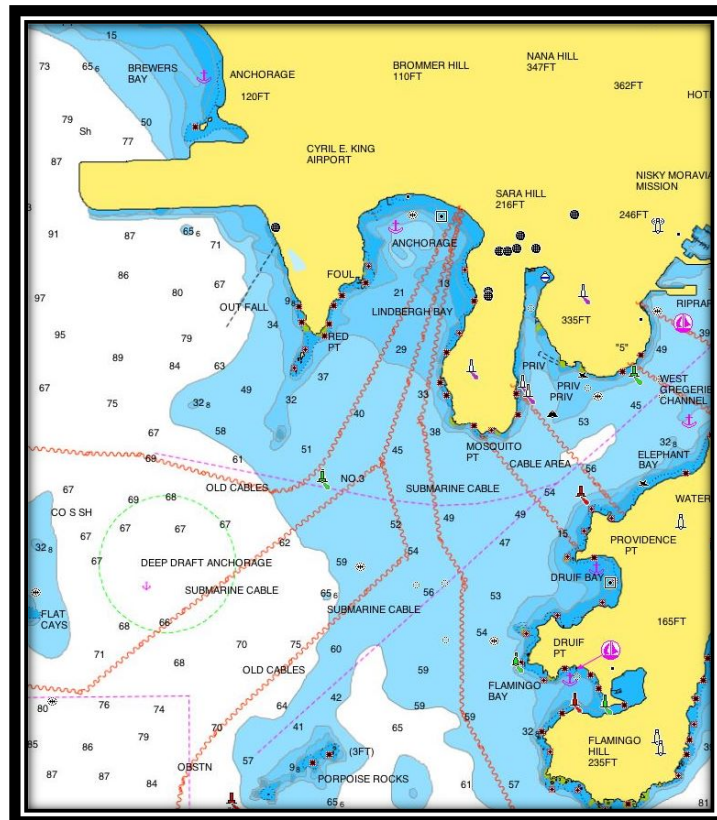


Figure 34. West Side of St. Thomas Harbor

ISLANDS ~ SOUTH SIDE ST. THOMAS

BUCK ISLAND

18° 16.55 N

64° 53.88W just west of entrance

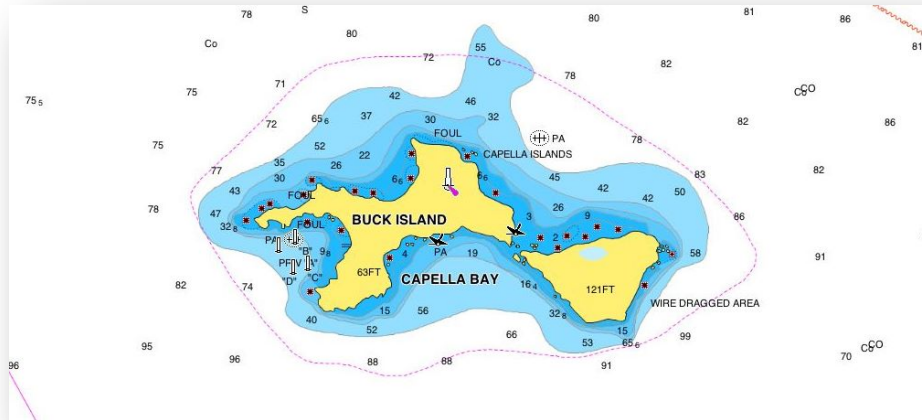


Figure 35. Approx. 3.5 nm SE of the main entrance to St. Thomas Harbor

Many charts will show Buck Island as part of the *Capella Islands*.

The value of Buck Island is that if you are arriving in the dark there is a light on the island that you can reference. Anchoring is not allowed but there are a few moorings in the anchorage area at the west end of the island.



Beach at Buck Island

SABA ISLAND**18° 18.41 N****65° 00.17 W anchorage area**

Saba Island is located on the southwest side of St. Thomas. I have anchored on the lee side in good weather and it is ideal if you want to take a break from the hustle and bustle of St. Thomas. The beach is quite nice. Navigate carefully as there are reefs on the approach.

Be careful of Dry Rock to the southwest as you approach.



Figure 36. Saba Island

BENNER BAY (LAGOON) ~SE SIDE OF ST. THOMAS
18° 18.83 N
64° 52.04 W at Red & Green buoys #1 and #2

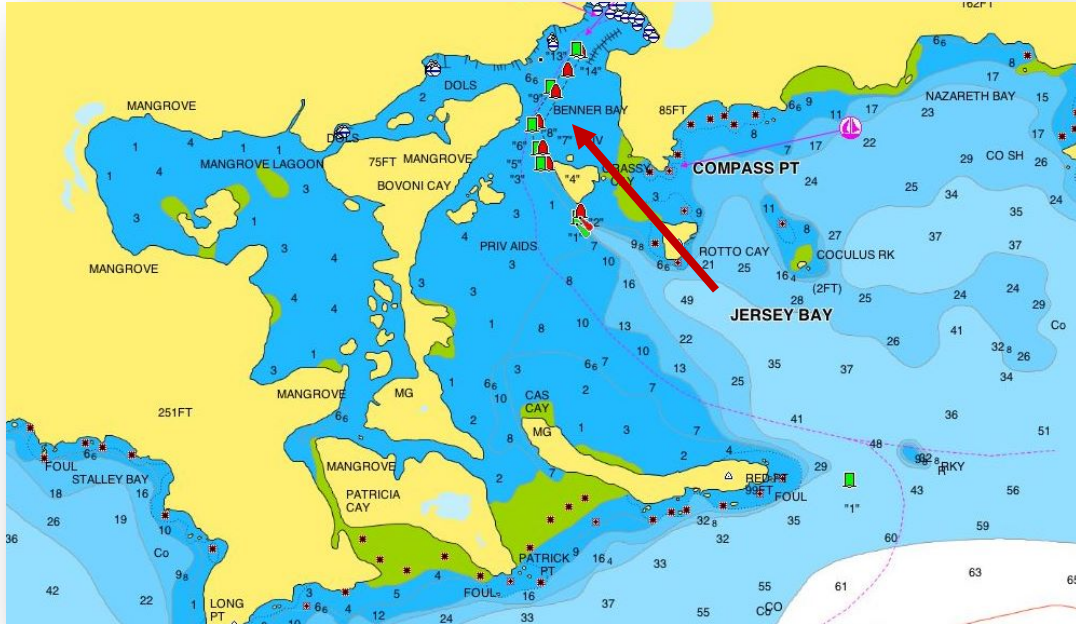


Figure 37. Jersey Bay into Benner Bay

I have fond memories of Benner Bay, not because it is a hurricane hole but because as a young man I would charter out of what was then CYC sailboat charters. I liked the company because I could get a direct flight to St. Thomas and by mid afternoon be anchored in Christmas Cove, St. James Island. As this most often happened in January or February, I would let the afternoon sun seep into my frozen body having come south from New York.

As far as the Bay's qualification as a hurricane hole, it is one of the best in the Lesser Antilles. However, draft is about 6' (2m) and if a hurricane is coming, you should not count on finding space. Your best strategy in hurricane season is to be not that far north in the Lesser Antilles.

As far as going into the bay with your boat, the marinas there are mostly full with local boats and charter boats. While the area is extremely protected, it is not a good anchorage for the lack of swing room, and more importantly, for the lack of sea breeze; it is just plain hot.

If you choose to enter Benner Bay, do not enter to the west of Cas Cay. There are submerged coral heads. You will see many boats anchored around the different cays. If you choose to anchor, watch your draft carefully and avoid coral heads. Leave Cas Cay to port and Rotto Cay and Grassy Cay to starboard as you enter.

Nazareth Bay ($18^{\circ} 18.96$ N, $64^{\circ} 51.38$ W entrance) can be seen in the upper right hand corner of the chart above; just NE of Jersey Bay. You can anchor in Nazareth Bay; it is rarely crowded. There are reefs along the shoreline ~ be aware of them and do not go too close; leave enough swing room. If it is late in the season and the Trade Winds are from the SE, this anchorage will be roly.

COWPET BAY & ST. JAMES BAY

$18^{\circ} 18.85$ N

$64^{\circ} 50.44$ W entrance

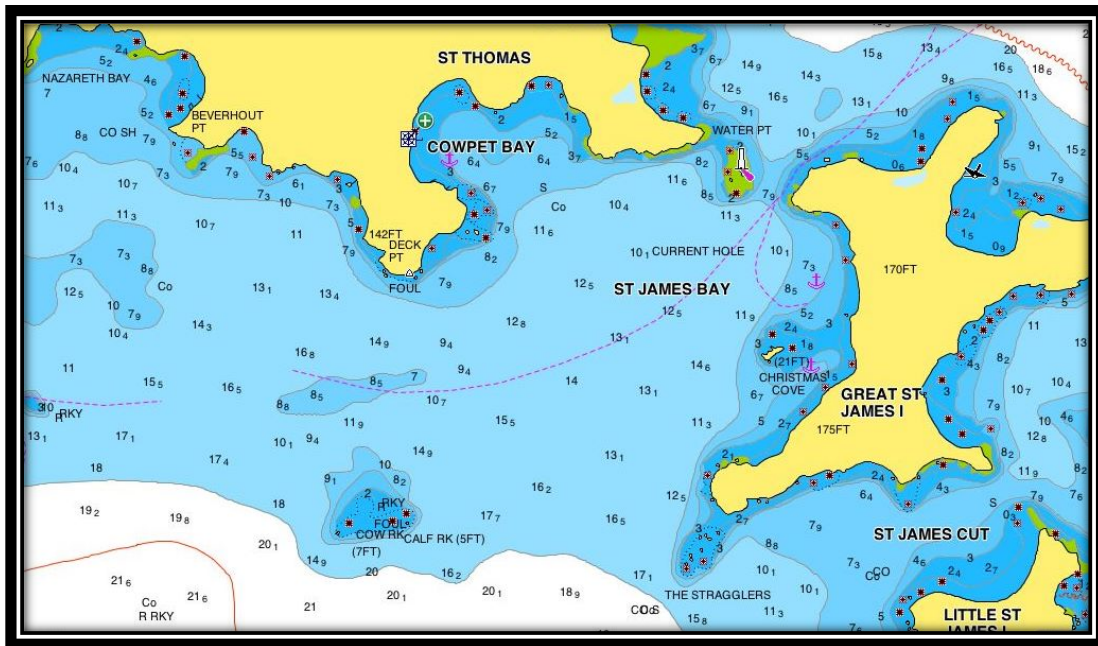


Figure 38. Cowpet Bay & St James Bay

Cowpet Bay is opposite Great St. James Island. It is the home of the St. Thomas Yacht Club and there are many moorings for members. Most boats anchor across at Great St. James Island (Christmas Cove). There is a little

cay in the Christmas Cove anchorage called Fish Cay. There are two anchorages here; one to the north of Fish Cay and one to the south. They are excellent anchorages although they can be crowded. I do not recommend passing behind Fish Cay on the east side as it has some unmarked reef areas.

Between the east side of St. Thomas and the St. James Islands the current can run very strong (up to 4+ knots). You normally will see a rip unless the current is slack. I always like to leave Current Rock to the west although you can pass it on either side.

WEST COAST ISLANDS

Unless you desire to anchor in difficult places, the islands off the west coast, Savana Island and Salt and West Cay, should be avoided. In addition, if you are heading north or south at the west end of St. Thomas, depending on your location and route, you will encounter strong currents. There is a pass between the west end of St. Thomas and West Cay which should be avoided even if your boat is shoal draft unless you have local knowledge.

NORTH COAST

On the north coast of St. Thomas from west to east you will encounter Santa Maria Bay, Magens Bay and an anchorage between Little Hans Lollick and Hans Lollick Island (north end). All of these anchorages are doable, but early in the trade wind season when the wind is out of the NE, these anchorages are disturbed by swell. The best of them is all the way up in Magens Bay at the NE corner of the bay. There is a shoal spot in the SE corner; avoid it. Use this anchorage *only* in settled weather or late in the Trade Wind season when the wind goes SE. The beach is terrific but can be very crowded.

NOTE: If you are coming from the west side of St. Thomas and choose to pass between Outer Brass and Inner Brass Island, just west of Picara Point (point at east arm of Magens Bay), there is a shoal called Ornen Rock with less than 6' of water over it. IT IS NOT MARKED!!!!

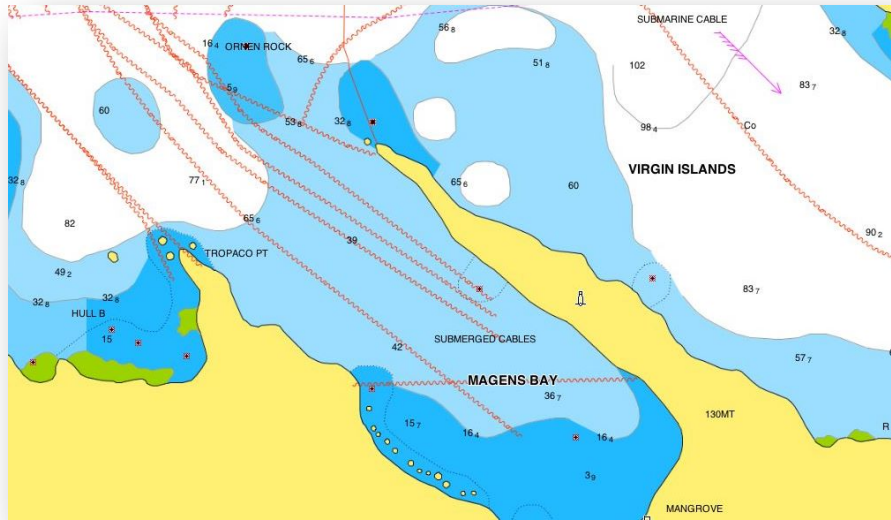


Figure 39. MAGENS BAY

EAST SIDE ST. THOMAS

RED HOOK BAY

18° 19.68 N

64° 50.55W entrance

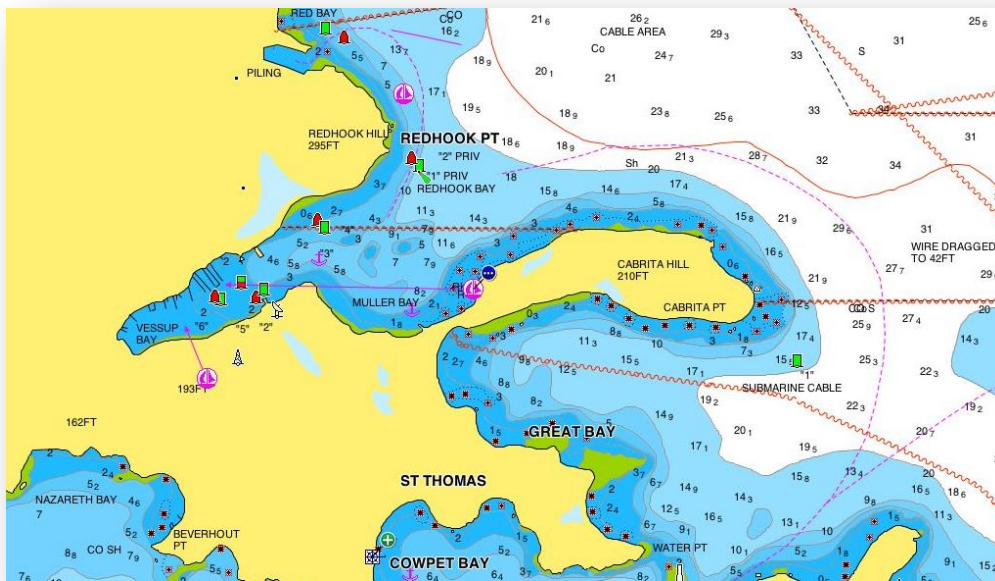


Figure 40. Red Hook Bay

Just to the west of Pillsbury Sound is Red Hook Bay. As you navigate through Pillsbury Sound intending to enter Red Hook Bay, keep in mind that underwater rocks extend from Cabrita Point. The rocks are just barely covered and hard to see. Leave a good margin. Red Hook Bay is crowded.



Figure 41. Red Hook Bay Looking Easterly

There are a number of marinas plus ferry docks here and a great deal of traffic. There are also a considerable number of private moorings. Be sure not to use any of these as it is just plain impolite. If you do anchor, be careful not to foul your anchor with any of the moorings. On the south side of the entrance of Red Hook is Muller Bay (upper right foreground). It is easier for cruising boats to anchor here although it can be quite crowded.

Just to the north of Red Hook Bay is the Sapphire Beach Marina. (See Figure XX) It is part of a mixed use development of hotel and condos. Most of the berths are taken by local residents.

NOTE: Due to their popularity, throughout the Virgin Islands it is a good idea to reach the best anchorages early in the day to get a “spot”.

ST. JOHN USVI



Figure 42. Marine areas under National Park Service supervision, St John, USVI

St. John is probably the most beautiful of the United States Virgin Islands. Real estate development over the years has been carefully monitored and so little, if anything has disturbed St. John over the years. The National Park covers almost 75% of the island. The island is patrolled by the United States National Park Service and regulations are enforced.

St. John is exceptional in every way but I have usually avoided it because it is crowded and because it can be tedious in some ways.

Some harbors have moorings which *must* be used, *and* paid for. Others, such as Caneel Bay, have a very upscale hotel that does not want to see your laundry draped on your lifelines. I can only imagine that the guests of the hotel have never seen or do not want to see laundry! Other areas have GPS coordinates outlining where you must anchor.

The above photo outlines the areas under the supervision of the National Park – most of the north coast and a good portion of the south coast. It is

easy to understand and sympathize with the necessity for all the regulations governing one's visit to St. John. There is a strong desire to protect the island and its reef and eco systems. However, once a location becomes this crowded and this regulated, I generally prefer to skip it and move on to less frequented pastures.

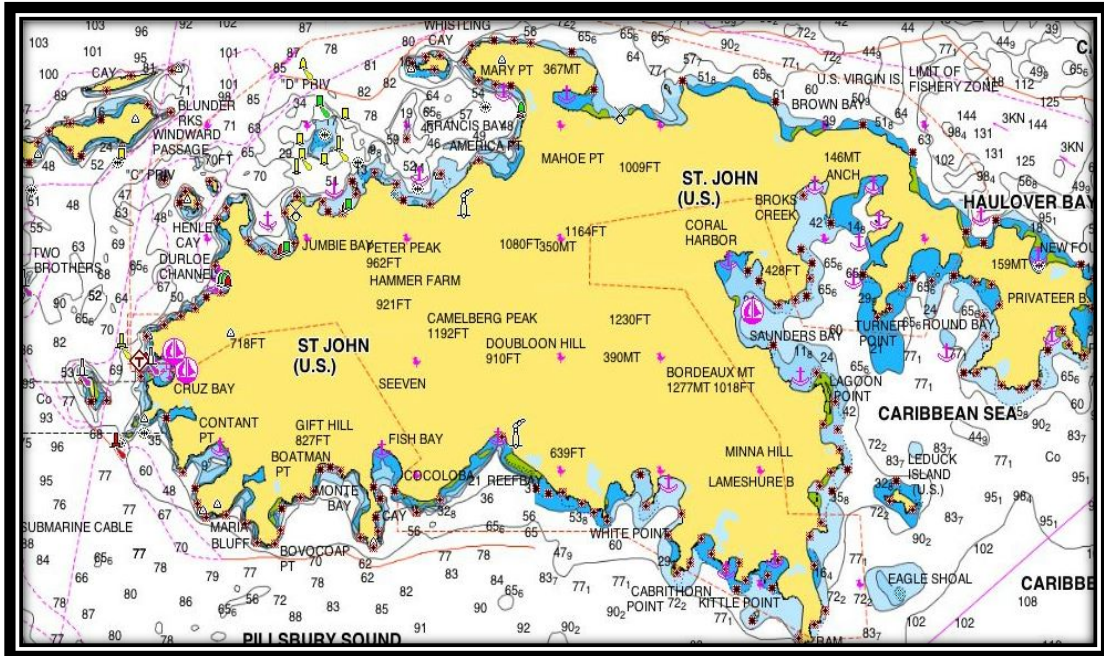


Figure 43. St John, USVI

CRUZ BAY

18° 20.02 N

64° 47.95 W at entrance buoys

Cruz Bay is a port of entry. It is a very busy bay and anchoring room is scarce. Even in the unlikely event that you find an anchoring spot, it is not a good place to spend the night. If you approach Cruz Bay from the south or from the west, be careful with the Two Brothers and Stevens Cay. Both have reef areas around them that extend out further than you may anticipate.

It is best to approach Cruz Bay leaving Two Brothers to port and Stevens Cay to starboard. It is possible to go between Stevens Cay and St. Johns but if you get disoriented you may hit a coral head, especially off of May Point at the SE corner of the cay.

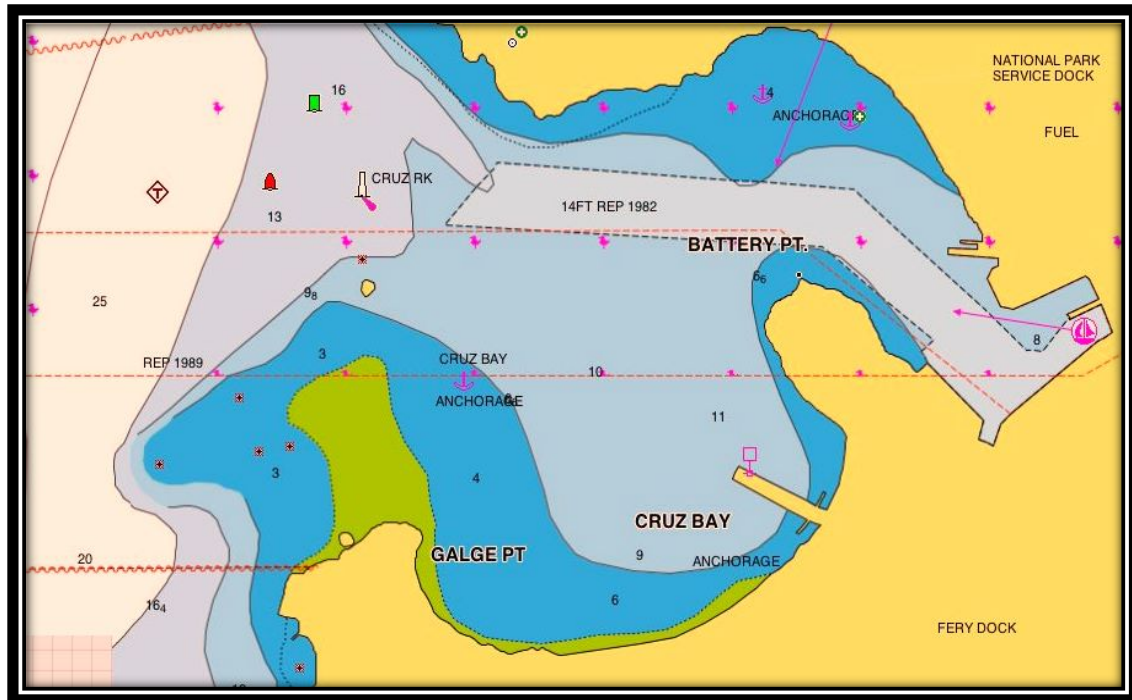


Figure 44. CRUZ BAY

Do NOT use the moorings in Cruz Bay as they are private and you will run afoul of the law.

You can tie up at the dock if there is space, or anchor out and dinghy in, to clear customs and immigration. As you enter the harbor, keep in mind that there are considerable reefs off of Galge Point to the south. Stay clear and keep to the north side of the entrance. Once in you will find two buoyed channels.

During the height of the season, the harbor will be so crowded that you probably will have to anchor outside the bay just to the north of Lind Point. Because that area is part of the protected park area, you are permitted to anchor *only* within certain GPS coordinates prescribed by the Virgin Islands National Park as follows:

NW limit:	18° 20.34 N	64° 48.08 W
SW limit:	18° 20.23 N	64° 48.08 W
NE limit:	18° 20.34 N	64° 47.48 W
SE limit:	18° 20.23 N	64° 47.48 W

The “rectangle” so outlined is an authorized area in which you may anchor in order to dinghy into Cruz Bay. It is about a 1/3 nm from anchorage to bay.

Immigration is on the north shore of Battery Point and I have never see the dock free of boats with space to tie up. If you are hungry, you will not have any trouble finding a place to eat; there are restaurants everywhere.

CANEEL BAY

18° 20.58 N

64° 47.35 W entrance

This harbor is about 1 mile north of Lind point; just north of Cruz Bay. There is a restaurant in a nice setting if you like to anchor in front of upscale hotels.

NORTH COAST



Figure 45. FRANCIS BAY ~ upper right corner

HAWKNEST BAY**18° 21.20 N****64° 46.87 W entrance**

Not a good harbor in which to anchor, and in particular early in the Trade Wind season when the wind tends NE; in which case your boat will roll. There are also places where you cannot anchor as they are off limits.

TRUNK BAY**18° 21.24 N****64° 46.27 W entrance**

Just east of Hawknest Bay. There is an “Underwater Trail” for snorkeling but you will most often find it crowded with tourists. If the wind is out of the NE, this is not a good place to anchor.

Caution

Just to the north of Trunk Bay there is a large reef called Johnson Reef. It is well marked but it seems like someone goes aground here every season.

CINNAMON BAY**18° 21.34 N****64° 45.55 W entrance**

Another nice bay that is open to NE swells. Not bad for a day stop, but move on unless the wind is SE.

MAHO BAY**18° 21.54 N****64° 44.84 W entrance**

This is one of the more protected anchorages on the north shore of St. John. Nice beach, but part of it is private and therefore off limits.

FRANCIS BAY**18° 21.87 N****64° 44.96 W entrance****Francis Bay**

If you are going to anchor on the north coast of St. John, this is the place to do it. It offers more protection even in the early part of the Trade Wind season when the wind can be fresh and out of the northeast. You might get lucky and pick up a park mooring.

One of the drawbacks of this bay is that large yachts over 100' are permitted to anchor here. They are not troublesome; it is just that I always get the feeling of being a mouse amongst elephants!

If you have it in your head that you can take a mooring and set up home; think again. There is a limit to how long the local hospitality holds out; 14 days. I am never quite sure how they know but I suspect that someone from the US government has the job of counting boats and days. I remember as a

kid that sometimes in certain neighborhoods there was a time limit for parking your car, and the police officer would chalk your car tire. The car owners would give the kids tips to rinse off the chalk marks.

Everything about Francis Bay is great. The National Park Service maintains a trail if you are inclined to enjoy a really pleasant walk. There are garbage facilities ashore; please be sure to use them. Do NOT leave your garbage on the beach.

There is also a very welcoming picnic area for those so inclined. If the wind is light, do not anchor too close to the beach as it can be buggy.

The passage between Whistling Cay and the northwest point of Francis Bay is called Fungi Passage. It is quite navigable but it is not a good idea to try to sail through it unless the wind is southerly.

LEINSTER BAY/WATERMELON BAY**18° 22.13 N****64° 43.68 W entrance**

Leinster/Watermelon Bays

The best anchorage is in Watermelon Bay. There is also an anchorage (Mary Creek) in the western part of the bay but the bar at the mouth makes it untenable for boats with 6' or more draft.



The ruins of the Annaberg Sugar Mill are close by and easily reachable from Watermelon Bay; the mill is also walkable by trail from Francis Bay.

Follow the trail at the southwest part of Leinster Bay.

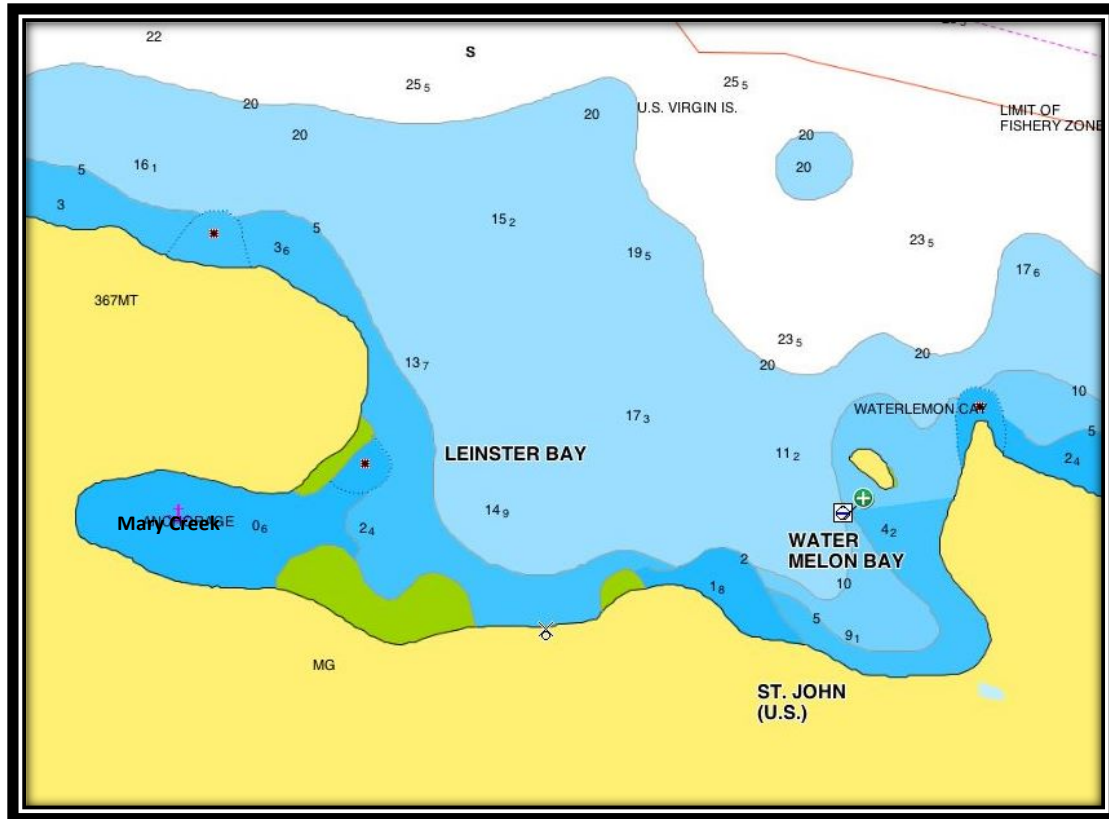


Figure 46. LEINSTER AND WATERMELON BAY

This is a pretty bay and a pleasant anchorage. You will usually find an overnight mooring available, but if you do not, anchor in sand behind the mooring field. Do not attempt to pass between Watermelon Cay and the east shore of St. John. You will see white buoys which mark a snorkeling channel and it is very shallow as well.

NOTE: If you are coming from the west and navigate the Narrows between Great Thatch Island and Mary Point, St. John, heading east, you can encounter a strong adverse current (2 to 4 knots). Add easterly headwinds and you will think that the 3 miles from Francis Bay to Leinster Bay is more like 30 miles.

You can circumvent the Narrows if you are coming east and want to make for Leinster Bay by heading north around Great Thatch Island and then coming south through the Thatch Island Cut into Leinster Bay – a much longer route but in prevailing conditions you will get to do some good sailing and take a look at the scenery as well. When you sail in the islands and especially heading east, rhumb line sailing rarely makes sense.

HAULOVER BAY

18° 21.04 N

64° 40.62 W entrance

There are sufficient options in the area as to make this bay not worthy of your consideration. Early in the Trade Wind season this bay takes northerly swells; it is also quite constricted.

CORAL BAY

18° 20.15 N

64° 41.12 W entrance

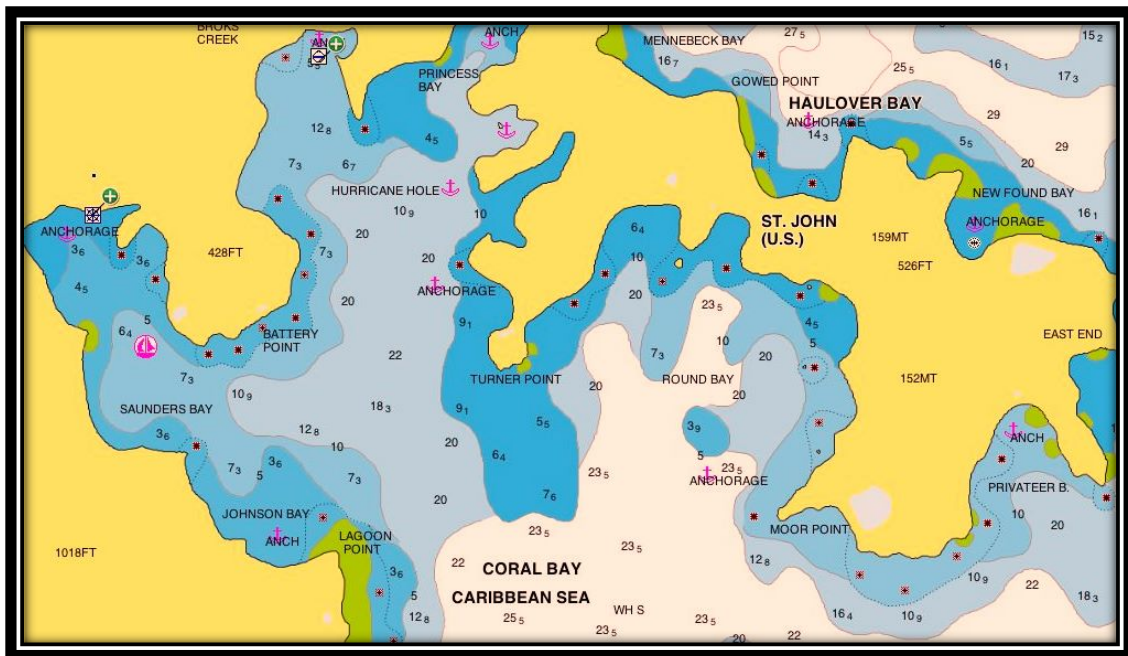


Figure 47. Coral Bay, St John

Coral Bay is the largest bay on Saint John. It is composed essentially of 3 sections. The eastern part of the Bay is Round Bay. This is a well protected bay under most conditions. The west side of Round Bay has a significant reef and you should avoid that side of the anchorage. The east side of Round Bay offers the best anchoring opportunities.

If a ground swell comes up and you are not comfortable, you can move to Hurricane Hole. During hurricane season you will have a great number of neighbors if you choose to anchor here. There are a number of areas in which to anchor: Borck Bay, Princess Bay and Otter and Water Creeks.

Round Bay, Hansen Bay & Long Bay

18° 20.47 N

64° 40.63 W entrance

Hurricane Hole, Princess Bay, Otter Creek & Borck Bay

18° 20.61 N

64° 41.87 W entrance

Coral Harbor

18° 20.36 N

64° 42.57 W entrance

Of these, Borck's Creek is the least protected as it is open to the south. Princess Bay and Otter Creek offer excellent protection in rough weather, but in good weather they do not have enough "air" circulating to make for a pleasant anchorage. Water Creek IS a hurricane hole in every sense and you will get the feeling that you are landlocked. If you choose to anchor here during rainy season, be sure your boat has screens!

My favorite in this area is Nathaniel Bay. Anchor off the small beach. In normal weather conditions this anchorage affords nice views and a good breeze that will keep the bugs away.

The western part of Coral Bay is called Coral Harbor. When the wind is out of the NE, and especially early in the Trade Wind season, this harbor can get choppy. There are quite a few local boats as well as many private moorings. Do NOT use any of the private moorings, and when you anchor be conscious of your distance to other moored boats.

If you like going ashore and exploring, Coral Harbor has a yesteryear kind of charm to it; a place left behind in time. With the local yacht club bar and a number of small restaurants, you will not go hungry or thirsty. Some of the establishments have live music. There are places of historical interest

including the sugar mill of Carolina Estate and the Emmaus Moravian Church which was built in the 18th century. If you recall the play “Annie”, she sang “I think I am going to like it here”. Given Coral Harbor’s charms and lack of charter boats, I believe you will sing or at least hum that tune.



Figure 48. Coral Harbor

NOTE:

On the extreme south end of Coral Bay there is a shoal called Eagle Shoal. It is less than one (1) nm off of Ram Head point. It is not a small shoal, measuring approximately ½ mile by ¼ mile. If you are not mindful of it you will find yourself hard aground!

Stay at least 100 yards off Red Point if you are coming from the north. The rocks are just under the water and sometimes do not break. If you rush to get into Coral Bay and cut the corner too close you may have a rock named after you if you hole your boat and sink. This happened in 1984 to the yacht *Sandavore* and that is why that particular rock is now called Sandavore Rock. Take your time; give Red Point a wide berth.

ST. JOHN ~ South Shore WEST

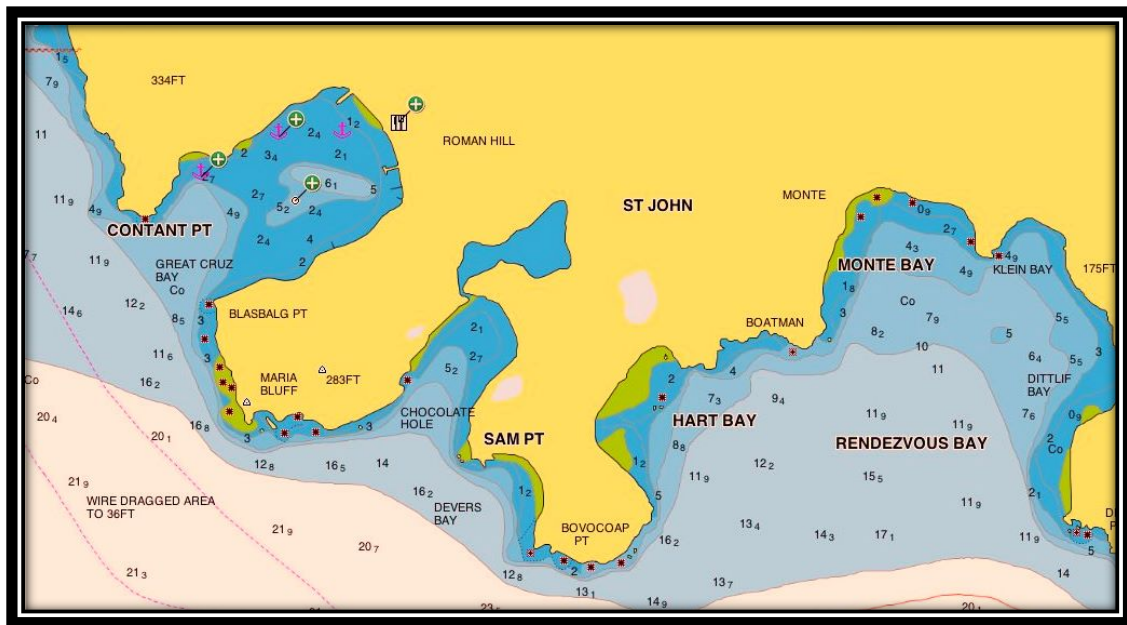


Figure 49. Rendezvous Bay

WATCH IT ~ as you proceed south from Cruz Bay to Great Cruz Bay, you **MUST** leave Stevens Cay to **PORT**. That is, be sure you are **WEST** of Stevens Cay heading **SOUTH**. The line of reefs SW from Moravian Point runs for nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile.

GREAT CRUZ BAY
18° 19.11 N
64° 47.60 W entrance



This bay is a very popular anchorage and you will always find a great number of boats anchored here. This is not a particularly pretty harbor but it does have good holding and good protection.

CHOCOLATE HOLE**18° 18.80 N****64° 47.19 W entrance**

This is a good anchorage unless the wind is out of the SE. However, it is crowded with local boats and anchoring room is hard to come by.

Hart Bay, Rendezvous Bay, Fish Bay and Reef Bay are not safe anchorages when the wind is out of the southeast and especially out of the east. Much too exposed. Additionally, anchoring is prohibited in Reef Bay. Fish Bay is shoal. If it is blowing like stink out of the NE and you really like being alone, you can poke around these bays and find a spot that you like.

LAMESHUR BAYS**18° 18.81 N****64° 43.57 W entrance**

There are two bays; Little Lameshur and Great Lameshur. There is no anchoring in either bay but there are park moorings. If the wind has a southerly component either bay can be uncomfortable. On the west shore of Great Lameshur Bay there is a small dock which belongs to the National Park Service. Between the two bays there is a point with a very large shoal; give it a wide berth.

Additionally, if you are east bound, be very careful off of Cabrithorn Point on your way to Salt Pond Bay as it has a large fringing reef. Stand off the point and do not get too close.

SALT POND BAY**18° 18.31 N****64° 42.49 W entrance**

Booby Rock is well marked on the chart and you can pass either side of it as you head northeast into the bay. I have always liked Salt Pond Bay for it has a certain remote beauty to it. Be careful of Kittle Point as it has an extensive reef.

There is an entrance into the bay leaving that reef to port but then be conscious of the reef in the middle of the bay. There is no anchoring and you must use a mooring buoy. In the northeast corner there is a nice beach with picnic area and that is also the best mooring spot.

You can follow the Salt Pond Bay Trail to the salt pond where you can simply “listen to the solitude.” If you are really adventurous you can pick up the network of trails and make it all the way to Ram Head assuming you have a very strong pair of legs. The views are definitely worth the effort.



SALT POND BAY

Entering Salt Pond Bay, chart below, is easier on the west side staying midway between Kittle Point and the reef, visible in the middle of the harbor. The depth shallows out to about 8' before becoming deeper at the north side of the bay.

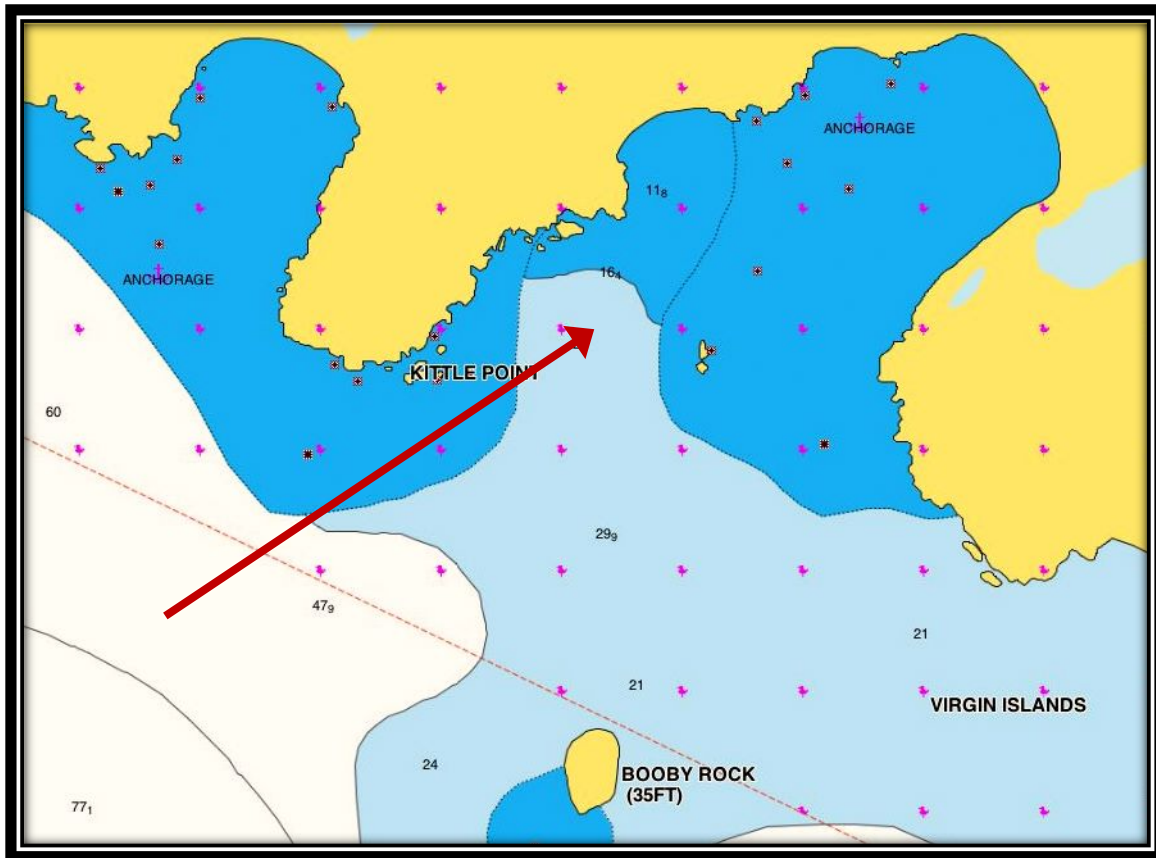


Figure 50. SALT POND BAY

ST. CROIX

Simply put, St. Croix is not often visited by cruising boats because it is 30+ miles off the “track” that most cruising boats take. Were it noteworthy beyond the norm – and there are beautiful places -- it would be worth the effort. St. Croix has numerous shoals and you should not consider making landfall at night.

I recall staying east of the shoal off the east end of the island many a night going north at the end of hurricane season. To see the lights of St. Croix at the east end, heading north in a good breeze, is to come to attention and check to make sure you have given Lang Bank at the eastern end enough distance to be sure to leave it well to port. There is certainly enough depth as it ranges from 50’ to 70’ or so. However, coming off 3000 to 4000 feet,

when the wind is up, you get the kind of feeling that raises the hair on the back of a sailor's neck. Eerie!

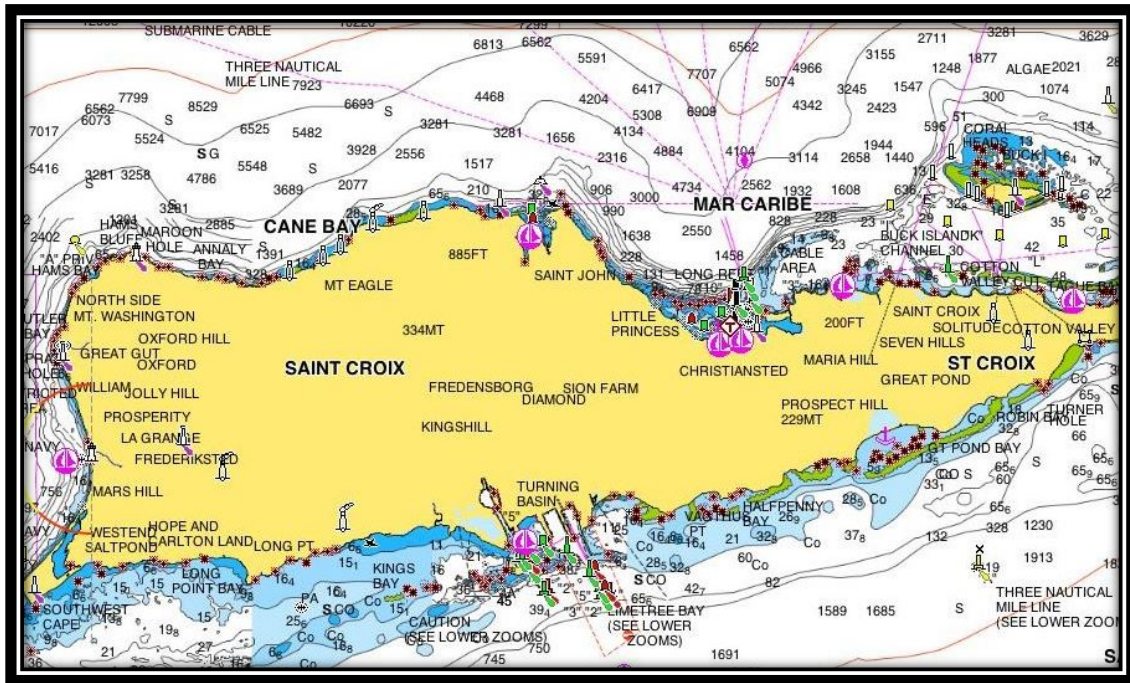


Figure 51. ST. CROIX

NORTH COAST

Christiansted Harbor looks tougher than it is because of all the shoal area you must transit on entry. However, it is very well marked and all you need to do is stay conscious of the buoyage. You can pass Round Reef on either side and follow the channel into Protestant Cay.

CHRISTIANSTED HARBOR

17° 45.79 N

64° 41.81 W just north of green can #1

Early in the trade wind season, when the wind comes from the northeast and sometimes strong, the harbor can feel less than protected. Christiansted is the only real harbor in Saint Croix; the reef to its north is what makes it so.

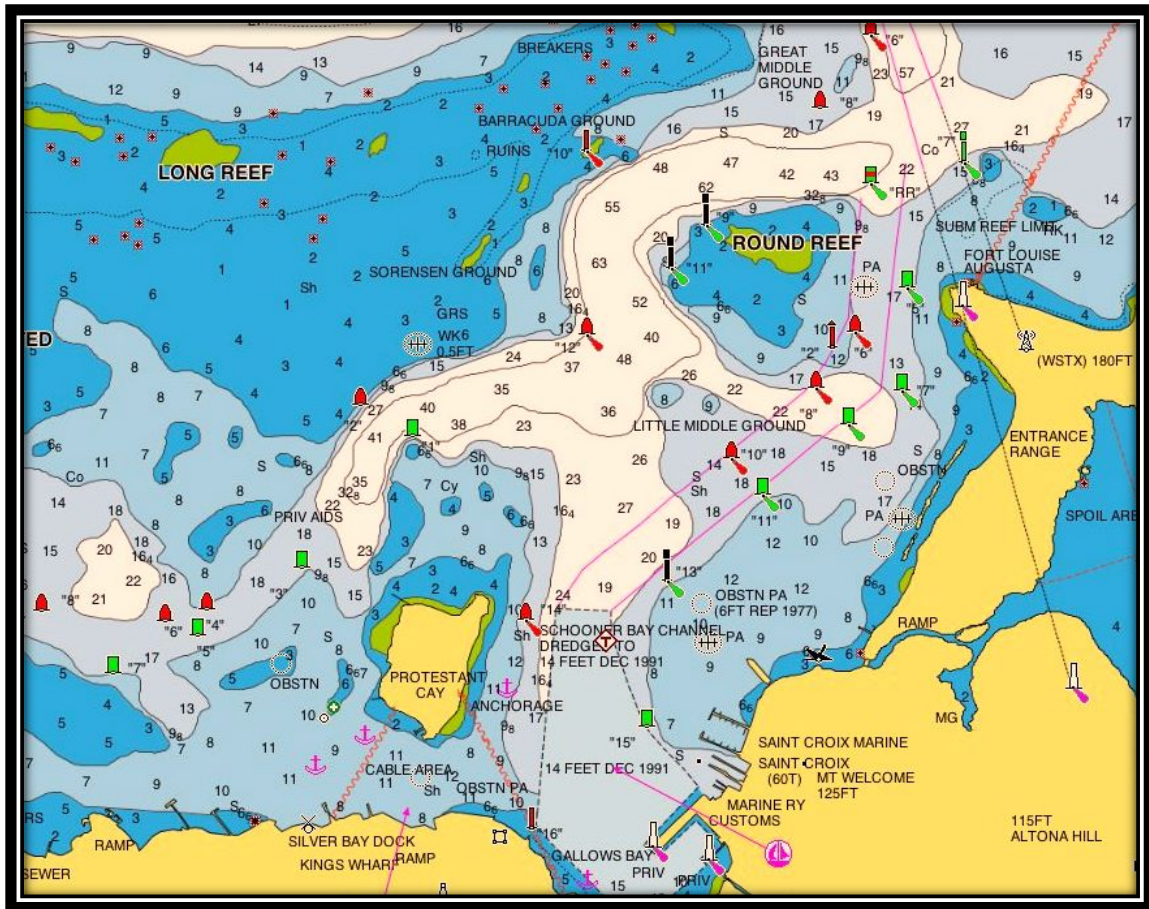


Figure 52. CHRISTIANSTED HARBOR

The anchorage off Protestant Cay is usually crowded and there are numerous private moorings. Under no conditions should you pick up one of these. If the anchorage is too crowded you can go further into Gallows Bay and look for a spot. The holding in both anchorages is quite good but because of crowding you need be careful of scope and swing room.

If you need to clear in, you will find customs and immigration at the Gallows Bay Harbor Dock. If you are a US boat and everyone on board has a US passport, you can clear in by phone (340 773 0216).

There are ample marine facilities about offering dockage, haulage and repairs.

BUCK ISLAND**17° 47.11 N****64° 37.87 W just south of anchorage**

About 4 miles northeast of Christiansted Harbor is Buck Island. It is properly called the Buck Island Reef National Monument. It is THE attraction of St. Croix, notwithstanding that St. Croix has a number of areas that are very beautiful.

Buck Island is about a mile long by ½ mile wide. It has been a nature reserve for more than half a century. The U. S. National Park Service administers it and it is very well maintained.

As you can see from the photo below the reef practically encircles the island.



Figure 53. BUCK ISLAND, ENCIRCLED BY REEF

THE ANCHORING AREA IS OFF THE WEST CORNER WHERE THE BEACH IS VISIBLE.

There is a well marked underwater trail in the east end marine park, and on the west side a walking trail. The walking trail allows for an agreeable walk from the west side (near the anchoring area) to the east side of the island with an opportunity to enjoy great views at the north side reef overlook.

The underwater trail is a highlight event for snorkelers. There are many such places in the Caribbean as good, but none better.



Anchoring is permitted off West Beach in the designated area in 10' to 15' of water. An anchor permit can be obtained from the National Park Service office near the wharf in Christiansted.

Because Buck Island is a nesting site for a number of species of sea turtles you are not allowed ashore from June to December between sunset and sunrise.

YOU MUST REMEMBER TO GIVE THE TURTLES THEIR “ALONE TIME” during nesting season. No nighttime beach visits and no bright lights shined at them.

There is absolutely *no anchoring* inside the reef. The park service moorings are for day use only.



GREEN CAY MARINA

17° 45.69 N

64° 40.07 W just east of entrance

Just east of Christiansted and south of Green Cay is the Green Cay Marina. It is a nice facility but somewhat out of the way and filled largely with local boats.

TEAGUE BAY

17° 46.03 N

64° 38.53 just NW of cut

Teague Bay is home to the St. Croix Yacht club. The bay is behind a long barrier reef. If you decide to visit, entrance to the channel is not easy and is made worse by the fact that you are headed east with the sun in your eyes; at least before 1pm. Leave the flashing green entrance marker to port and the sandy cay to starboard. Line up and stay in the middle of the channel where you will have 7'-10' of water with a sandy bottom in most places. The Teague Bay anchorage is more than ample. Your sense will be of anchoring in a very pretty place. Cruising boats rarely come to this anchorage.

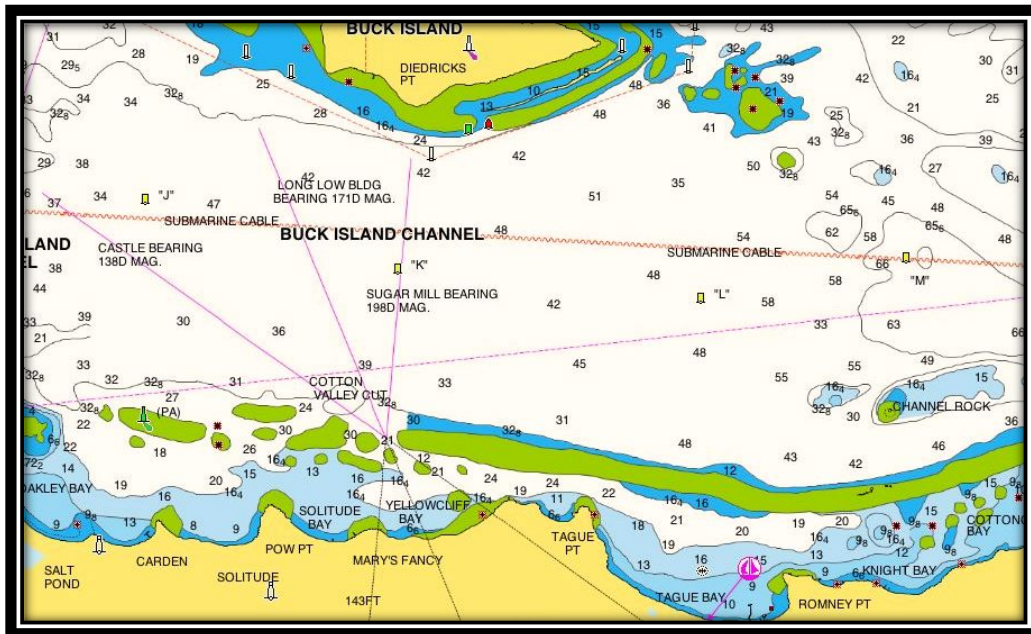


Figure 54. Buck Island Channel

I like anchoring in Teague Bay for its natural beauty. You will find the Yacht Club welcoming if you choose to visit. Check in with them; they have a dinghy dock as well as showers. Do not pick up a mooring; they are private.

Also, do not navigate east of the anchorage area as it is strewn with reef.



Figure 55. Anchoring field in front of yacht club ~ Teague Bay

SALT RIVER BAY

17° 46.94 N

64° 45.44 W just north of entrance

This bay is for shoal keel boats because the entrance is limited by a bar that requires 6' of draft or less. Entry is not simple. If you decide to enter you should look for the water breaking on White Horse Reef as you enter. Leave the green can to starboard and look for the red marker to starboard at Columbus point. It is a quiet place with a small marina at the south west corner of the basin.

WEST COAST

FREDERIKSTED HARBOR

17° 42.77 N

64° 53.47 W just west of anchoring area

The west side of the island in prevailing conditions is a lee. There is a large cruise ship dock with the anchorage just south of it. Except in an emergency I can think of no reason to anchor here except that Frederiksted is a lively town to visit, especially when a cruise ship docks and there is a street party with all the trimmings. The town also has a Christmas Festival which is a joyous and colorful celebration with music and an astounding selection of St. Croix traditional foods. And, not to forget, there is also the annual St. Croix Blues and Heritage Festival. In short, Frederiksted “rocks.” However, it is best to leave your boat up at Christiansted or the yacht club and take local transportation to the “other town”.



SOUTH COAST

KARAUSE LAGOON

Private yachts are not permitted to enter. The area is reserved for commercial vessels only.

GREAT POND BAY (SOUTHEAST, ST. CROIX)

17° 42.45 N

64° 39.93 W just west of cut

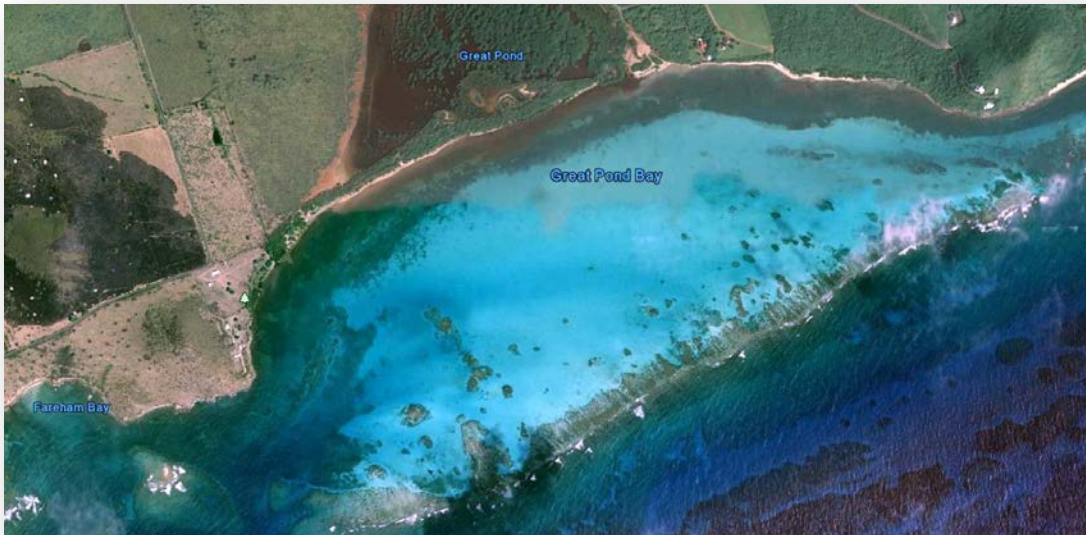


Figure 56. GREAT POND BAY

If you find yourself on St. Croix and would like to do something special and different, sail to the southeast side of the island and look for the entry to Great Pond Bay. The anchorage is protected by a coral reef. Getting in is a bit of a challenge but once in you will find depths of 15' or so. Since the reef runs along the south side of the anchorage, it is best to favor the north entering and anchoring.

I did not have an opportunity to visit with my boat but I drove down to see the area which has a charm and solitude that is elusive in the northeastern Caribbean today.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS



Figure 57. British Virgin Islands

The British Virgin Islands are as close to perfection as any island group can be. They are beautiful islands with eyeshot. Cooled by the tradewinds. Not overly populated. Well administered. Filled with natural beauty. The kind of sailing every sailor prays for through Sir Francis Drake Channel which provides for calms seas and good winds. Day after

day of sailing, anchoring, swimming, usually concluded at a small island bar/restaurant with local music or aboard ship with a stern rail barbeque.

More than 40 years ago I chartered my first bareboat charter and swore thereafter that I would never return to the cold climate of the northeast.

At that time cruising was pretty much defined as finding a good anchorage and living the simple life. Today the British Virgins are still beautiful but now part of the “beaten track.” They have become the charter capital of the Virgin Islands and you will have to compete with charter boats for space. Additionally, places like North Sound, the Mecca of cruising boats, have now been discovered by mega yachts that venture out from their mega slips in St. Maarten.

Even more frustrating, the most populated anchorages now have moorings, expensive moorings, and little or no anchoring room. You have to search far and wide to find an anchorage with no moorings. And it seems that bareback charter cruising no longer includes much cooking aboard. Charter groups seem to move from mooring to mooring, restaurant to restaurant.

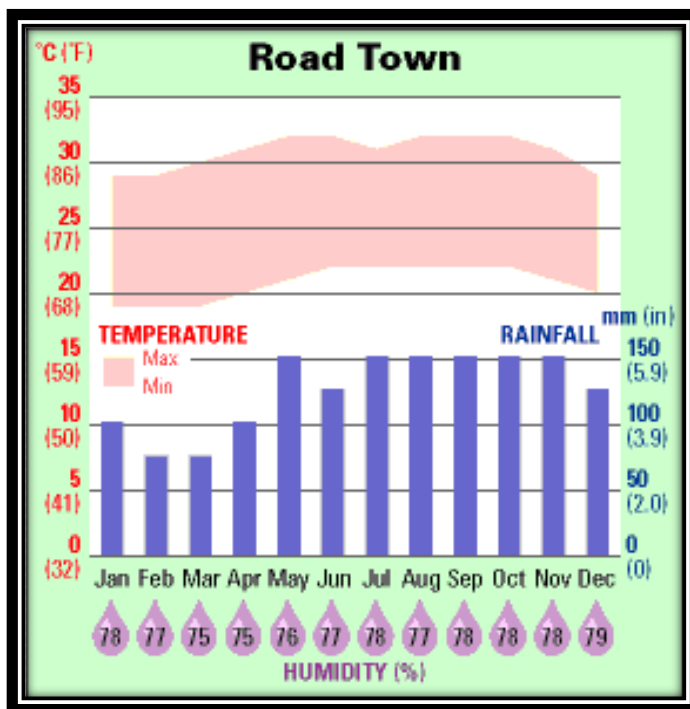


Figure 58. Typical BVI weather

The above changes are the price one pays for popularity. I am not suggesting that you skip the British Virgins for in life nothing stays the same and looking back is nostalgia at best and the lamentations of a senior citizen at worst.

The weather in the British Virgins is something like baby bear’s porridge that Goldilocks ate; neither too warm nor too cold~just right!

TORTOLA

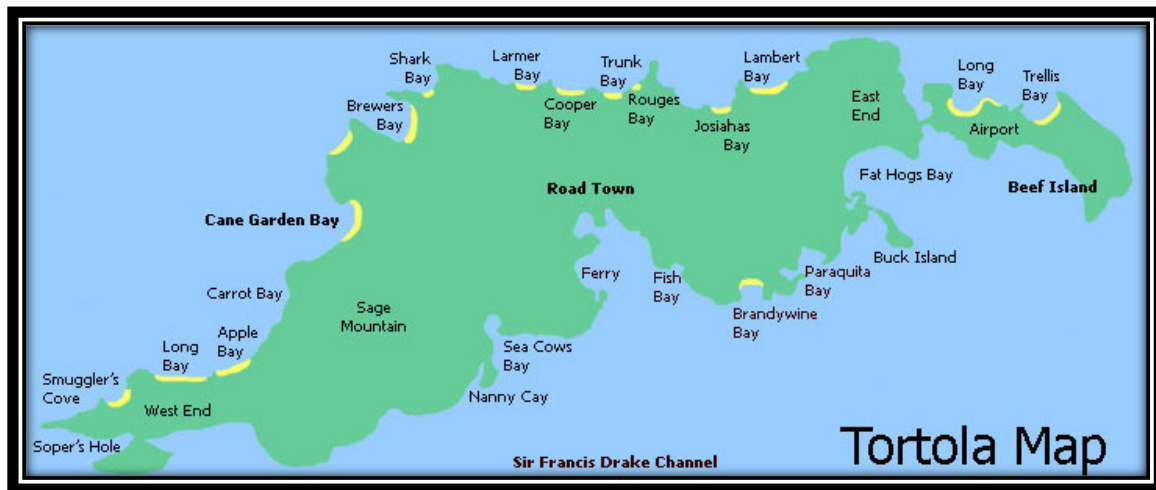


Figure 59. TORTOLA

Of the British Virgin Islands, Tortola is the largest. The capitol of Tortola is Road Town, part of its large bay on the south shore of the island. Road Town is a port of entry and although many guide books suggest you do not clear here, I normally do and find the authorities pleasant and quick. You can also clear at the west end at Soper's Hole. But I do not suggest you try to clear in at Road Town when a large cruise ship has just docked as that is when the process can become tiresome.

The very first marina on your port side is part of a hotel and is subscribed by local motorboats. Do not enter, as it is both difficult and unproductive; perhaps even dangerous given the surge through the opening.

Just north of Burt Point is the Fort Burt Marina. It is a complete facility including a fuel dock although it gives one the sense of being a bit run down. Road Reef marina is further into the channel south of the Fort Burt Marina. It rarely has space and is filled mainly by charter boats. There is an anchoring area just north of the Fort Burt Marina where you will see a few boats anchored along with some private moorings.

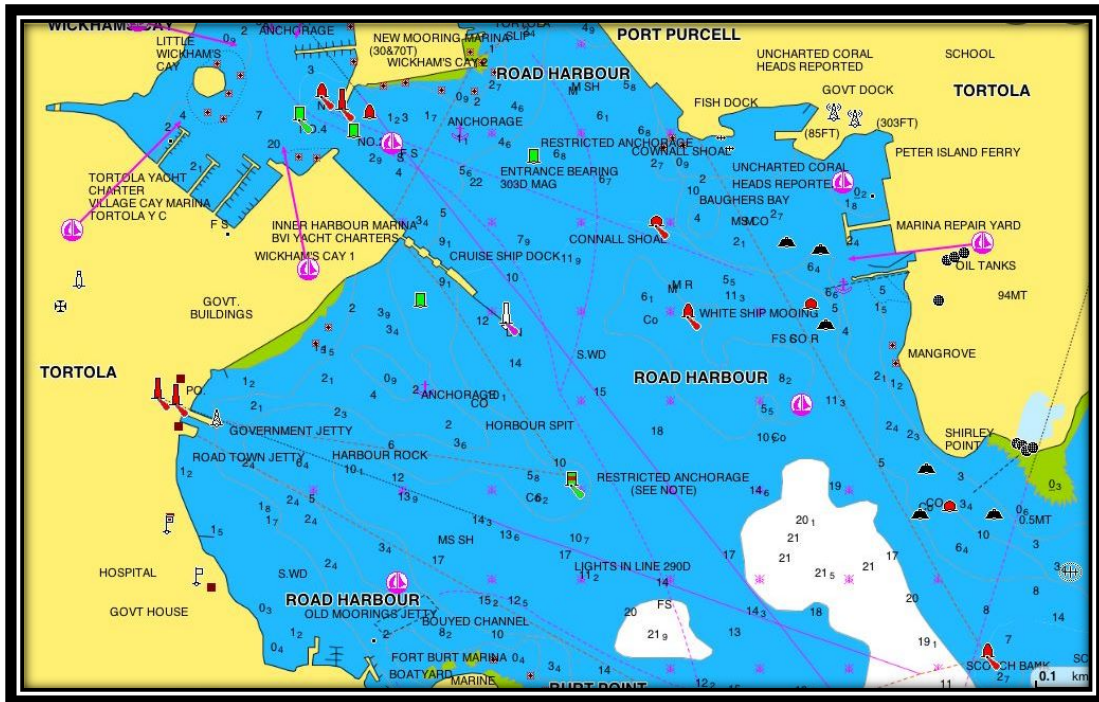


Figure 60. ROAD TOWN HARBOR



Fort Burt Marina and anchoring area (arrow); main cruise ship dock is at center with lagoon in foreground.

ROAD TOWN HARBOR**18° 24.71 N****64° 36.22 W just south of ships' channel**

In front of the anchorage area and south of the ferry dock is a small marina called Penn's Marina. It is a nice place but I have always found their few slips to be filled and no vacancies. This is probably due to the fact that their location is excellent and their prices very reasonable.

There is an anchorage off of the ferry dock but it is somewhat exposed and suffers from the wash of passing boat traffic. Even if you want to clear immigration which is nearby, it is best to anchor further south and come up by dinghy.

Further in to Road Town and past the large cruise ship dock is the entrance to the inner lagoon, Wickhams Cay. There are two marinas in the lagoon; actually three. To port is the Village Cay Marina. The marina is not a cheap date, but it is fairly well run and well situated if you want a slip.

The last time I stopped in, the dock manager's office required that they take a copy of my credit card to keep on file. With so many different marina personnel coming and going and the file cabinet apparently unlocked I felt quite uncomfortable doing so given that the office is a shed on the dock. The next day I went to the main office in the hotel to see the manager and ask why this policy was in force but he was not in. I left my name and slip number but he never got in touch with me.

On the east side of the lagoon are two marinas; the Moorings and Treasure Island. I have always found them to be full of charter boats which, after all, is their main purpose.

Anchoring in the lagoon is difficult as there is very little space to do so; very much like looking for a parking space in a cosmopolitan city. Be very careful with the wind in the afternoon when you are trying to turn at the northwest corner in front of the marina. It is very easy to go aground as the water shoals out rapidly.



However, as you exit the lagoon, and opposite the large ship dock at the breakwater, you may find a number of boats anchored. Check your anchor carefully as I have found it difficult to set. Do not anchor in the middle of the channel as there is a great deal of traffic coming and going. Get up as close to the breakwater as possible.

Do not enter the Port Purcell area. It is reserved for commercial vessels.

On the east side of Road Harbor is Baugher's Bay just north of Shirley Point. There are no facilities here for transient boats. However, there is anchoring room out front and just south of the dock, and ashore there is a very nice restaurant. The anchorage is not particularly comfortable with the wash of traffic going by.

IN TOWN

Aside from the clearance facilities near the ferry dock, you will find Road Town to be a sailor's town. It has that certain *je ne sais quoi* that makes you feel like you are on shore leave. Perhaps it is the Pusser's Restaurant with all of its activity and sense of an English Pub.



PUSSERS STORE~ROAD TOWN, TORTOLA



Or maybe it is the street behind Pusser's which is filled with small stores and wonderful cafes.



Whatever it is, I do not think a stop at Road Town will disappoint you. Make sure you visit the Pusser's store behind the restaurant. They sell their Pusser's Rum very inexpensively and will give you a bottle free if you purchase a case of 4. And of course you must buy a Pusser's metal mug; no sailor should be without one!

There are many markets for shopping, but the one I have always liked best is Rite Way. There are a number on the island and the one in Road Town is easily accessible. The supermarket is clean and extremely well stocked and I find the service consistently excellent.



Rite Way produce displays

SOUTH SHORE TORTOLA~West of Road Town

SEA COW MARINA

18° 24.17 N

64° 37.86 W just south of entrance channel

This facility is just a little over a mile southwest of Burt Point, at the northern end of a long channel which has been dredged. The channel is narrow and shallow with 6' or less. Somewhat run down.

NANNY CAY MARINA (HANNAH BAY) / HANNAH CAY MARINA.

18° 23.72 N

64° 38.16 W just south of entrance buoys

These two facilities are approximately 2 miles west of Burt Point. There is a good boat yard at Nanny Cay Marina with facilities to haul out your boat as well as all the mechanical services that one would expect.

There is a narrow, marked channel that you follow to enter. Once you get in, be careful to the west as the area shoals rapidly. The fairway along the marina to your starboard on entering is narrow, and with any type of wind turning around a sailboat with a single engine is something of a feat. There are no clearance facilities at Nanny Cay and the tenants are largely permanent. If you do not need service on your boat, I cannot think of reason to enter here.

The Hannah Cay Marina is in the same inlet as Nanny Cay but on the west shore further in. The slips are part of the condo project.

WEST END

SOPER'S HOLE

18° 23.09 N

64° 42.53 W entrance to harbor

There is something, at least for me, that is wonderfully celebratory upon entering Soper's hole. I know I am in the British Virgin Islands; the harbor

There are restaurants here, a terrific supermarket that will have you saying, “Why doesn’t my supermarket carry this and that”? Name it; they have it. Wines, cheeses, imported foods of all types, pastas, all types of beer, etc. There is Wi-Fi. You can sit on the deck outside Pusser’s and just take it all in.

The marina also has fuel and water as well as berths. They monitor channel 16 VHF.

NOTE: When you are entering Soper’s Hole and think you have found the perfect anchoring spot that is wide open, think again! You are probably in the channel and you will make the ferry boat captains very angry. Be sure not to anchor in the channel.



DECK AT PUSSER’S AND SOPER’S HOLE WHARF

FRENCHMAN'S CAY MARINA & SHIPYARD

To your immediate starboard on entering Soper's Hole you will see this facility. They monitor channel 16 VHF. They have a railway slip and a marine hoist that can haul most boats. They also have a full selection of repair services.

NORTH COAST

CANE GARDEN BAY

18° 25.66 N

64° 39.91 W just west of entrance buoys

This is a terrific anchorage that has a delightful beach. It does draw a great number of tourists. It is easy to get into, well marked and has a good sized anchorage area. It also has really fine views of Jost Van Dyke Island.

The bay is surrounded by hills and the wind comes funneling through at times. There are also moorings here that you can rent. You will also find beach restaurants that sometimes, depending on the night, have live entertainment.

If I have any gripe about this harbor, it is that I have always found it shady due to the hills. With the wind funneling through it has always made me feel cold coming out of the water. Many of my friends who have anchored there tell me it is one of their favorite harbors and that I suffer from an over active imagination; perhaps they are right!

BREWERS BAY

18° 26.83 N

64° 39.43 W entrance to bay

This bay is harder to get into. Stay in the middle as there are coral heads that extend out from the shores. Early in the trade wind season when the wind prevails from the NE, I do not recommend this bay as an overnight anchorage as it lacks sufficient protection.

It is a nicer looking place, at least to me, than Cane Garden Bay as it does not have Cane Bay's honky-tonk atmosphere. If you are a purist, you will fall in love with it. There is good snorkeling in this bay. Watch out for the submarine cables, marked on the chart, that run along the center of the bay.

EAST COAST

GUANA ISLAND

This island is just north of the northeast corner of Tortola. You can anchor in White Bay (**18° 28.35 N, 64° 34.61 W** entrance to anchorage) which is reasonably sheltered and has a nice beach. Watch the north corner which has a great deal of coral.

The chart will show anchorage at Monkey Point at the southwest end of the island but it is exposed to the swell and not a good place to drop the hook for overnight.

GREAT CAMANOE

Great Camanoe is an island off the northeastern most corner of Tortola. The anchorage is at Lee Bay (**18° 28.15 N, 64° 32.35 W** entrance to bay) which is reasonably well protected. It does not have a nice beach but on a hot night it is an airy spot with good wind that comes in through the pass between the hills.

There is a pass just south of Lee Bay that cuts between Little Camanoe and Great Camanoe. I can think of no good reason to transit it. My friends who have done so tell me the wind funnels through here and you can hit 9 knots and more with a monohull. If you look at the chart, that is not all that you can hit, as there is a sizeable reef off the northeast point of Little Camanoe.

LONG BAY**18° 27.00 N****64° 32.71 W** entrance to bay

I have anchored here to drop guests off at the airport when I have found Trellis Bay either too full or the wind and sea too strong to come across by dinghy from Marina Cay.

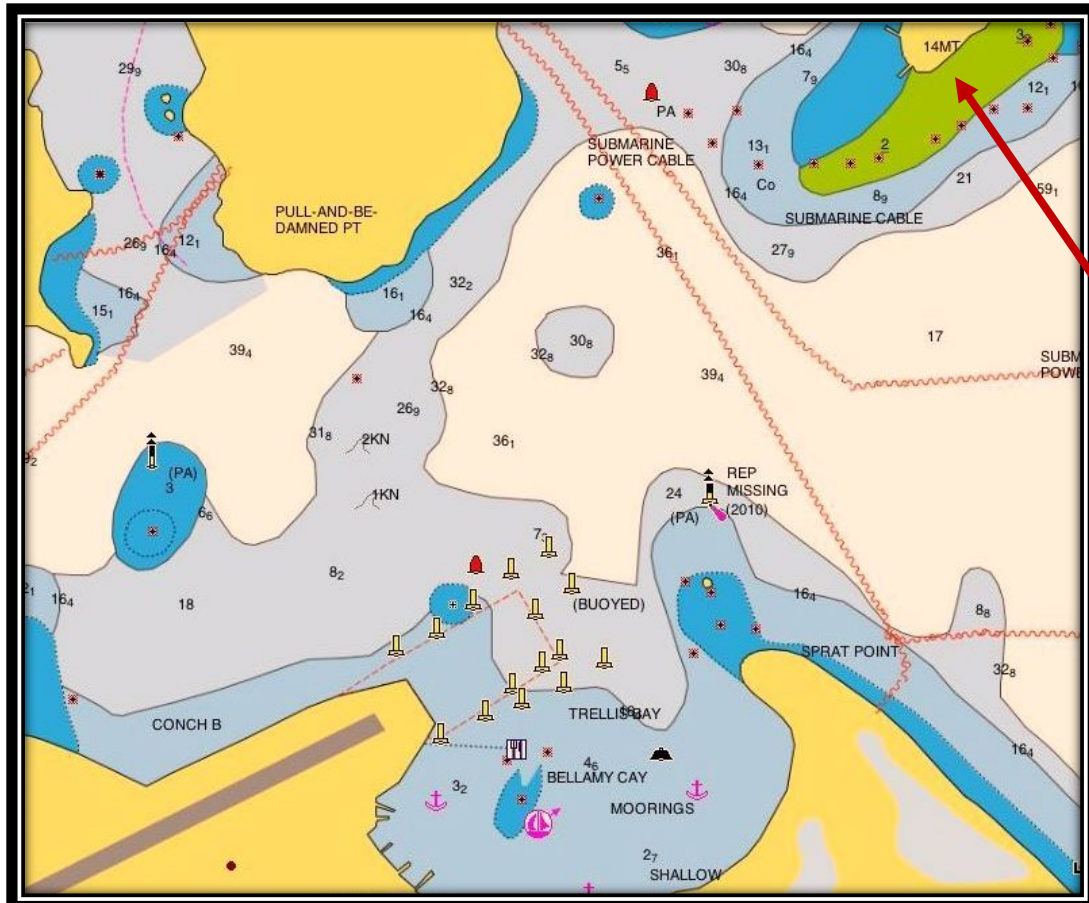
TRELLIS BAY**18° 27.10 N****64° 31.87 W** entrance to bay

Figure 62. TRELLIS BAY WITH MARINA CAY (upper right)

I do not want to wax nostalgic but I must. When I was a young man and chartered in the Virgin Islands, we would rush to get up to this bay to go to

the Last Resort Restaurant operated by Tony Snell. The food, the ambiance, his dry English sense of humor (actually after a few drinks everything was comical), the donkey that would stick his head through the portal and so much more would leave you feeling that special feeling that comes from being happy and content. Sometime in the early hours of the morning you would somehow make it back to your boat and find your way to your bunk. Today the restaurant is operated by Tony's daughter who continues the tradition and it is a worthwhile stop.

Trellis Bay is crowded and finding a spot, actually a mooring, is not a simple feat. For the few that are available, get there early.

Coming into the bay stay towards the middle and give Sprat Point to your port side a wide berth. You will see Bellamy Cay directly in front of you. You can pass either side of it and if the gods favor you, you might even find an elusive anchoring spot. Watch your scope carefully as there is very little room. Most times it is simply better to take a mooring.

NOTE: If your mast is 30' or higher, and you enter Trellis Bay leaving Bellamy Cay to your port with the airport runway to your starboard, you must FIRST call on channel 10 VHF to the Beef Island Tower and state the name of your vessel and the height to the top of the mast, and what your intended movement will be. At the southeast end of the runway you will see yellow buoys; no vessel over 8' may make transit between the buoys.

This procedure safeguards planes taking off and landing; it ensures no obstructions in their glide path on final approach. It also allows for the safety of the top of your mast. Since you don't necessarily know who is taking off or landing when, be sure to comply and report.

MARINA CAY

18° 27.59 N

64° 31.83 W at red nun

NOTE: DO NOT CUT RED NUN SHORT; LEAVE TO STARBOARD ENTERING.

On the chart below you will see the reef upper right that runs from northeast to southwest along Marina Cay. It is a beautiful spot dominated by the Pusser's shop and restaurant.



MARINA CAY

There are pluses and minuses to this spot. Amongst the pluses are that it is beautiful. There are ample moorings, if not a few too many. Yet if you work at it, there is space to anchor as well (anchorage to the west side at the north end). The Pusser's store and restaurant are colorful and worth the visit.

The minuses are that if the wind is strong and northeast, as it can be early in the trade wind season, the boats do roll and not just a little. And if the "norther" is strong and takes a few days to pass through, you will come to the conclusion that you want to leave. "I have had enough of this"!

If the weather is calm and Trellis Bay is full, I use this spot to pick up and drop off family and guests from the airport, as it is just a short dingy ride away.

The snorkeling over the reef to the east side is nice but you must be VERY CAREFUL that you do not get run over. Dinghies and even local boats speed through the edge of the reef and if they do not see you, you are an accident waiting to happen. The dock has fuel and water.

Robb White, the American writer of screenplays and novels, purchased the island in 1937 with his wife and lived there for a number of years. The remains of the original home serve as a bar and can be visited by a short climb to the highest point.

NOTE: If Marina Cay gets too roly and Trellis Bay is full, and you need to find a quiet spot to anchor in peace, remember to go around the south point of Little Camanoe and up to Lee Bay. It usually has plenty of space and will get you out of the weather.



*The Virgin Islands
signature: Trade winds
without sea conditions!*

SOUTHEAST COAST

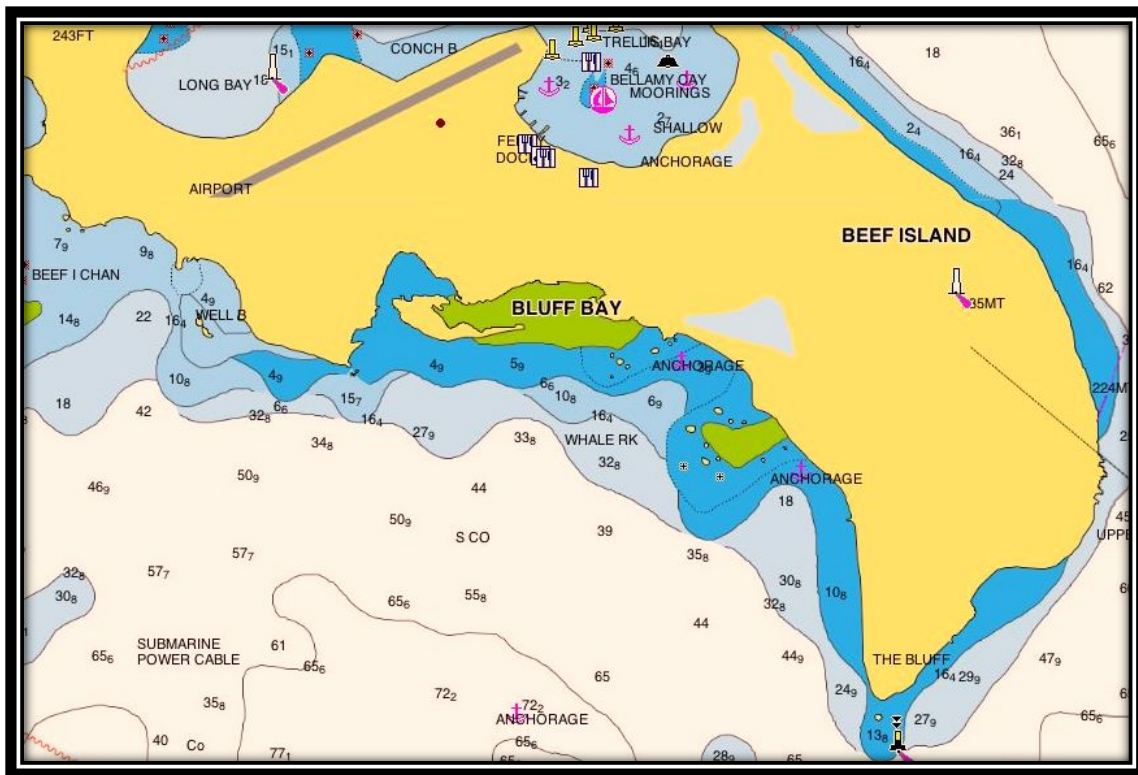
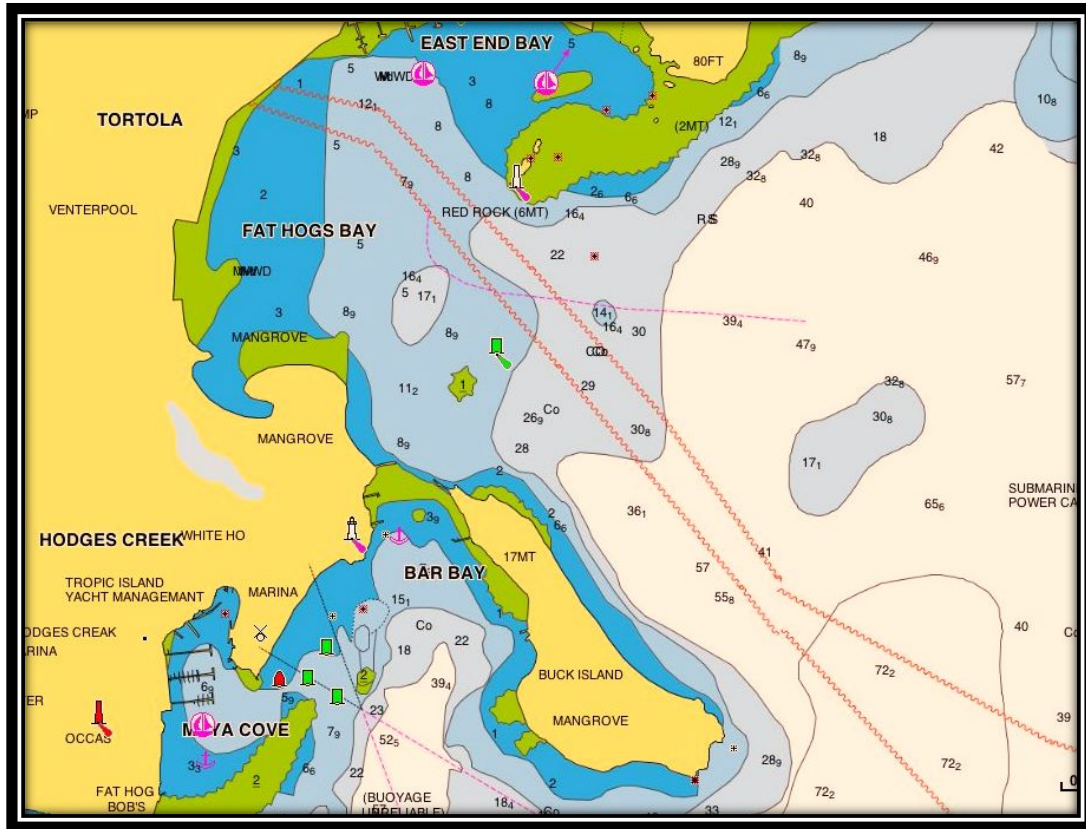


Figure 63. Anchorages at “Bluff Bay” Beef Island

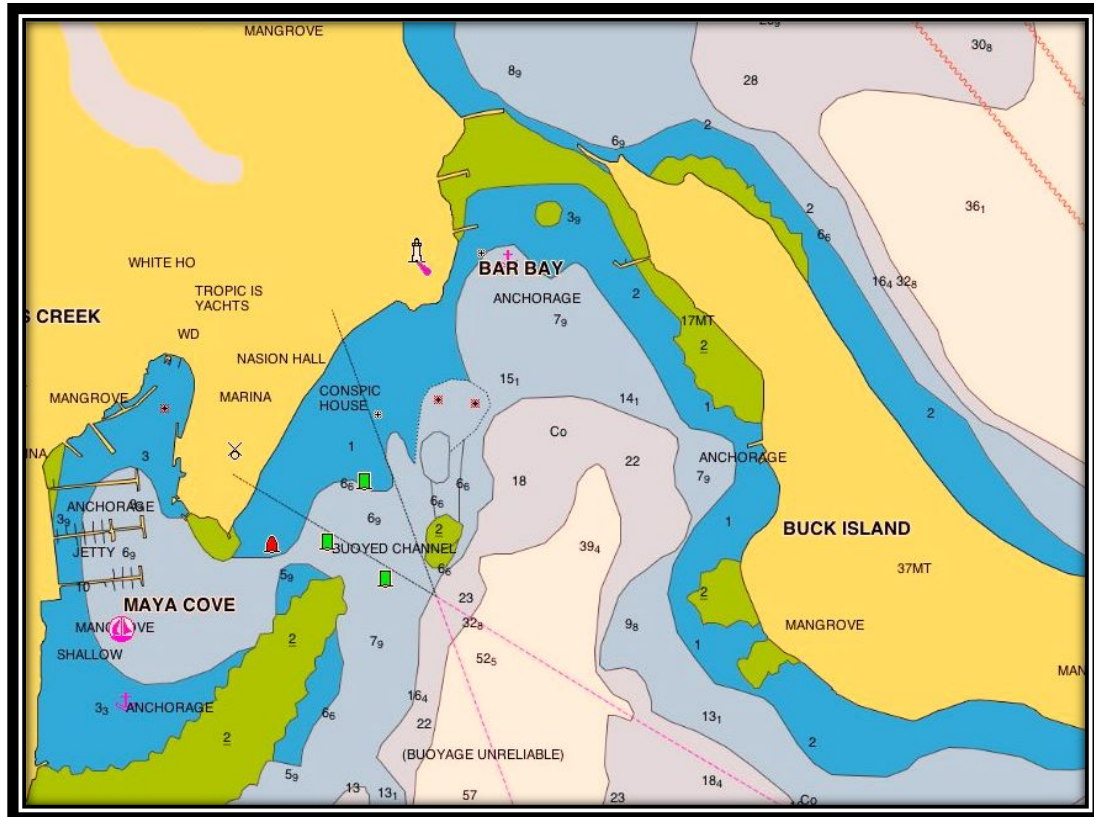
An anchorage that I have used many times over the years is the west side of Beef Island. ($18^{\circ} 25.95$ N, $64^{\circ} 31.72$ W entrance to bay) No one seems to mention it and actually there are a few anchorages. They are safe and protected, and anchoring is easy. There are no moorings and just a little reef behind Whale Rock. The chart shows it as Bluff Bay but it is most often called the Beef Island anchorage. There is one above Whale Rock and one below it. That is the good news.

The bad news, if it is indeed bad, is that there are no restaurants, no bars, no supermarkets, in fact no anything. Even the beach is pebbly. However, it will get you out of the wind or a squall and if the sun is setting it is easy to access and you do not have to poke around in a crowded harbor.

FAT HOG'S BAY AND EAST END BAY**18° 25.95 N****64° 33.56 W just NE of Green Cay****Figure 64. FAT HOG'S AND EAST END BAYS**

These bays have a number of marinas and a full complement of shore side support in the form of restaurants and supermarkets. The south edge of the reef that is clearly shown on the chart is marked and you must give it a wide berth. There is also a small reef to port on entering that is marked by a can. Fat Hog's Bay is open to the southeast and if it is late in the trade wind season you will not be well protected. There is a narrow channel that leads to rental moorings and slips at the marinas. Water depth gets thin, about 7' as you get deeper in. It becomes quite hard to navigate and turn due to the crowding.

Unless you need to provision, I can think of no other compelling reason to visit this bay.

BUCK ISLAND, MAYA COVE AND BAR BAY**18° 25.33 N****64° 33.73 W entrances to Bar Bay****Figure 65. BAR BAY, BUCK ISLAND ANCHORAGE**

As you continue west on the southeast shore of Tortola, you come to the entrance of Bar Bay. This is another of my favorite places. Many opt to anchor in Maya Cove which can get crowded or perhaps look for a slip in the cove, a somewhat ramshackle place.

However, if you look at the chart below you will see Bar Bay clearly marked. Virtually no one anchors there. It is a wonderful anchorage with a small beach. Its breeze comes across the low bar that separates it from Fat Hog's Bay. Stay clear of the west shore of Buck Island as it has lots of reef, but further out in the anchorage you will find 7' to 15' of water with a hard sand bottom.

When the wind blows hard from the northeast early in the trade wind season and you want a place that is secure but do not want to go into a marina or take a mooring, this is your place. It is a case of easy in and easy out. You will find it safe and quite pleasant.

Maya Cove itself is protected and entered through a narrow passage clearly marked by buoys. Many like to anchor here as it is secure and there is a dinghy dock. It is too crowded for my taste and what with the high concentration of boats, not a pleasant place to think of going for a swim.

PARAQUITA BAY

18° 25.13 N

64° 34.29 W just SE of entrance

Just south of Maya Bay is what amounts to a shallow bay surrounded by mangroves. The depths are less than 6' in most spots. Probably a good place for a shallow draft boat in a hurricane, but who really needs to be in this area during a hurricane?

BRANDYWINE BAY

18° 24.73 N

64° 35.04 W entrances to bay

This is the first bay you come to as you leave from Road Town Harbor and proceed eastward. It is well protected in the early part of the Trade Wind season when the winds tend toward the northeast, but open to swells late in the season when the wind tends southeasterly. Both shores have coral on entering, with the larger amount on the west shore. This is a nice, normally uncrowded anchorage that has a few nice restaurants and a dock that you can use to land your dinghy.



BRANDYWINE BAY, TORTOLA

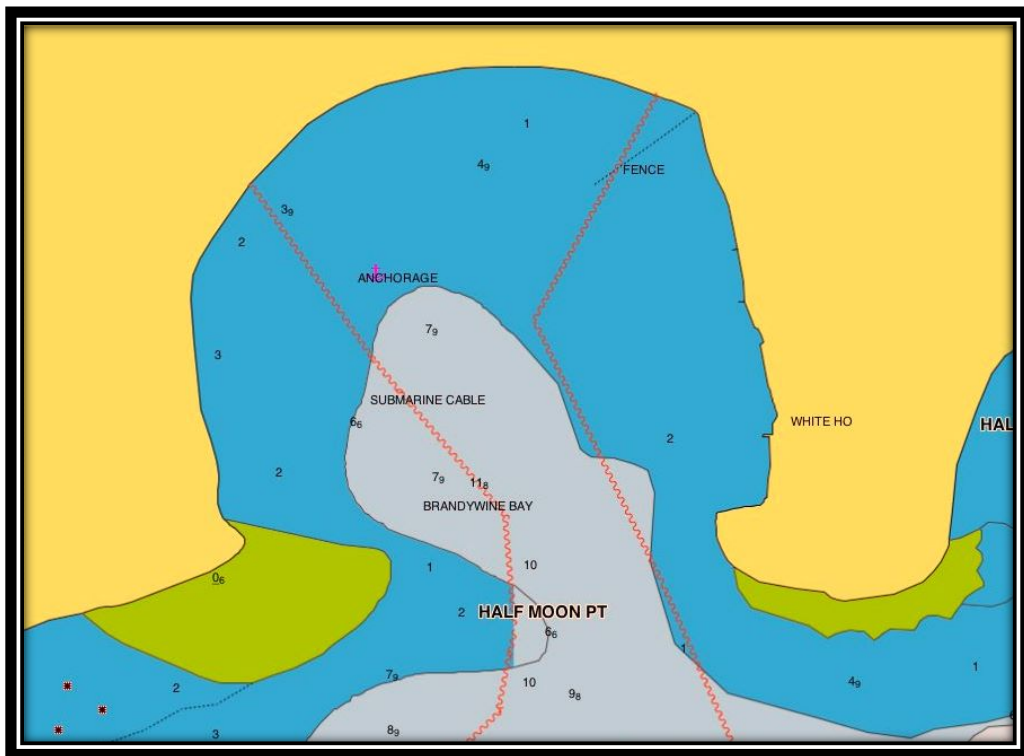


Figure 66. BRANDYWINE BAY

ISLANDS TO THE SOUTH OF TORTOLA

NORMAN ISLAND

Just to the north of Norman Island (chart below) you can snorkel to your heart's content at Pelican Island and the Indians (the tiny islands just to the west of Pelican Island -- **18° 19.80 N, 64° 37.66 W** just south of the Indians). However, space is at a premium and you must get there early to claim your spot.

Off the southwest corner of the island are the Caves (**18° 18.94 N, 64° 37.46 W** just west of mooring field). There is no anchoring here as it is part of the National Park. You must use a buoy; that is, if you can find one free. Visibility in the caves is best in the afternoon light.

Be careful if you snorkel in. There are two dangers: The first is dinghy traffic that might not see you in the water and the second is the fire coral in the shoals on either side of the cave; do not let it touch you. If you have never been to the Virgin Islands, the Caves are a must!

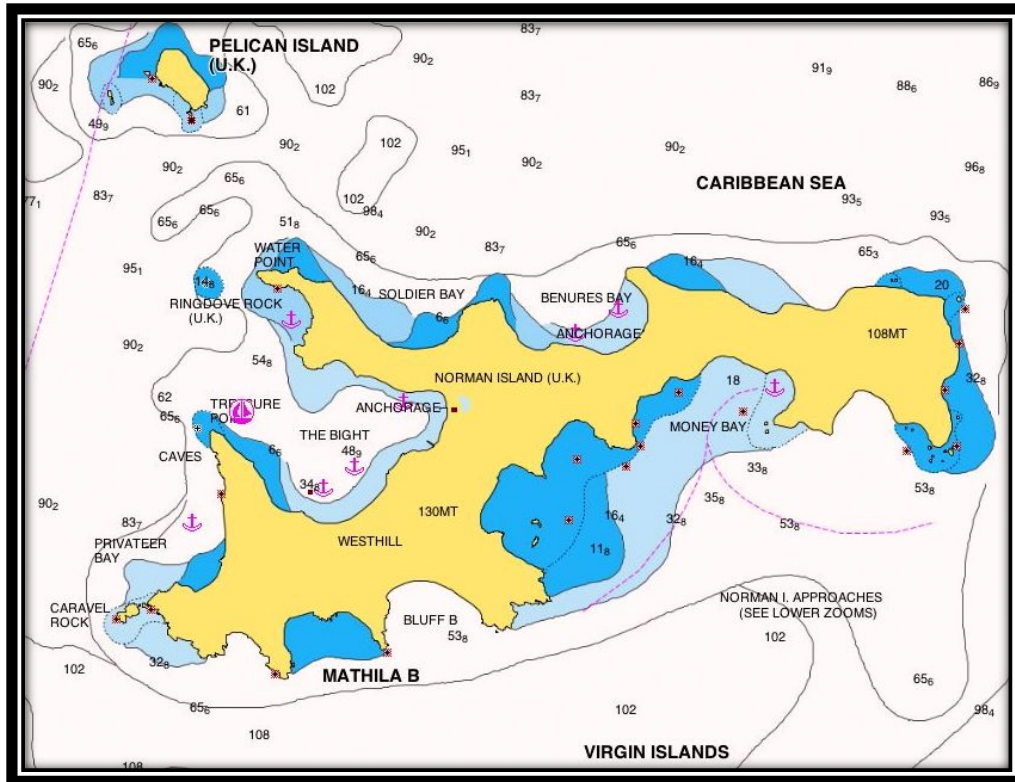


Figure 67. NORMAN ISLAND



THE CAVES

THE BIGHT**18° 19.20 N****64° 37.44 W entrance to harbor**

The Bight is THE anchorage at Norman Island. Most of it is filled with moorings that you must rent. The fellow will come around in the late afternoon to collect. Should you decide to hide below decks making believe no one is home, he will know and will probably stay hidden under your mooring line until you decide to show yourself. Because the moorings are not cheap, there is an entire club that actively discusses ways to “beat the mooring man,” but so far as I know, no one has come up with anything that really works. The club usually hangs out on the Willy T, the floating old topsail schooner restaurant in the southwest part of the bay.

**WILLIAM THORNTON II – THE “WILLY T”**

BENURES BAY

18° 19.35 N

64° 36.46 W entrance to bay

This bay is not as well known as The Bight which is exactly why you might find anchorage space here. It is on the north side of Norman Island “just around the corner” from Water Point going east. Anchor in the northeast part of the bay for the best protection.

I have always loved Norman Island and think you should allow at least a few days there between the Caves, Pelican Island and the Bight.

PETER ISLAND

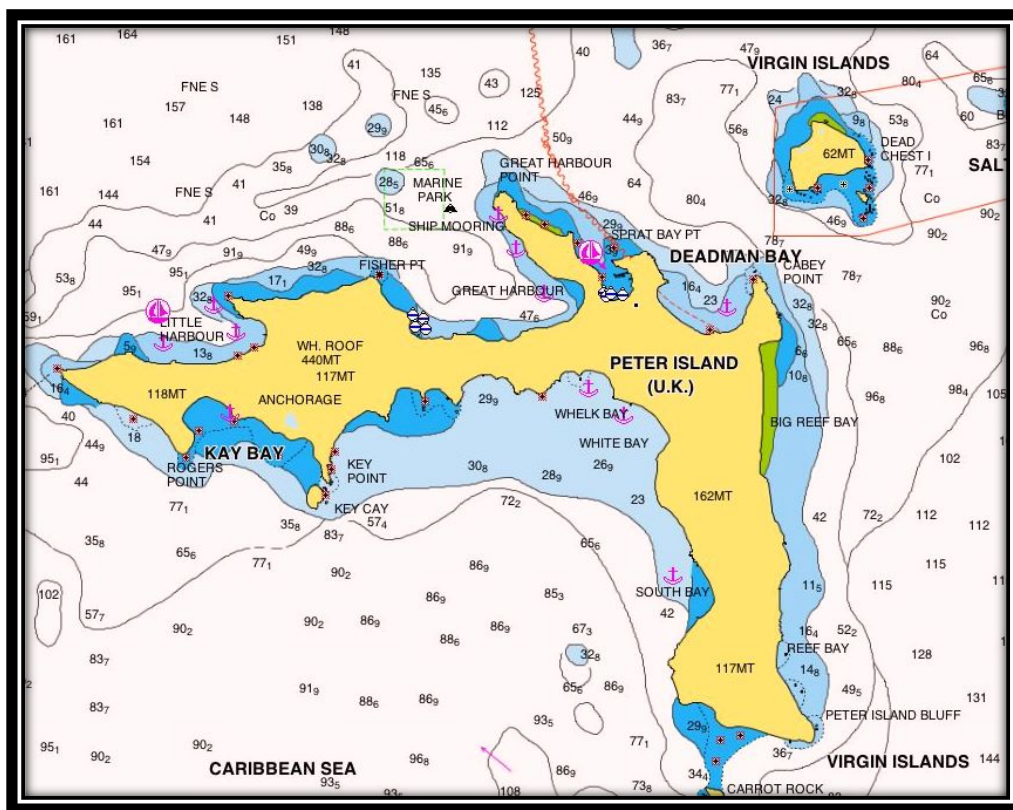


Figure 68. PETER ISLAND

Peter Island has a number of good anchorages and a marina.

LITTLE HARBOR**18° 21.37 N****64° 36.34 W entrance to harbor**

This is a really protected bay but it is small and does not hold many boats. Almost every one of the many times I have passed it, I have not stopped because I could see that it was full.

GREAT HARBOR**18° 21.58 N****64° 35.30 W entrance to harbor**

The protection in this harbor is quite good but the depth to anchor is often very deep, usually requiring over 150 feet of line. You cannot get close up to the beach where the chart shows anchorage as the fishermen use this area extensively.

SPRAT BAY**18° 21.56 N****64° 34.67 W entrance to harbor**

Sprat is the home of the Peter Island Resort and Yacht Harbor. Their presence, which is quite exclusive, limits room in the Bay. They have slips and moorings but these are most often reserved for the hotel's boats. You can work at finding an anchorage here at the head of the harbor if you really want to dress up and go out to a very upscale dinner. If that is not what you want to do, this is not the harbor for you.

DEADMAN BAY**18° 21.49 N****64° 34.24 W entrance to harbor**

In the early part of the Trade Wind season and especially when "northers" come through, this bay is uncomfortable due to swell entering, unless you really like being rocked to sleep.

Anchorage on the south side of Peter Island

There are no tenable anchorages on the south side of Peter Island notwithstanding the anchorages shown on the chart. Most nights they are just too rolly. However, in settled weather, I have anchored at White Bay (**18° 21.04 N, 64° 34.69 W** at anchorage area) with its very pretty beach and enjoyed it a great deal. Very few boats anchor there, both because of its lack of reputation as an anchorage as well as the fact that it is off the beaten track. I like the solitude of being there.



SIR FRANCIS DRAKE CHANNEL ~ SAILING ON A REACH

SALT ISLAND, COOPER ISLAND AND GINGER ISLAND

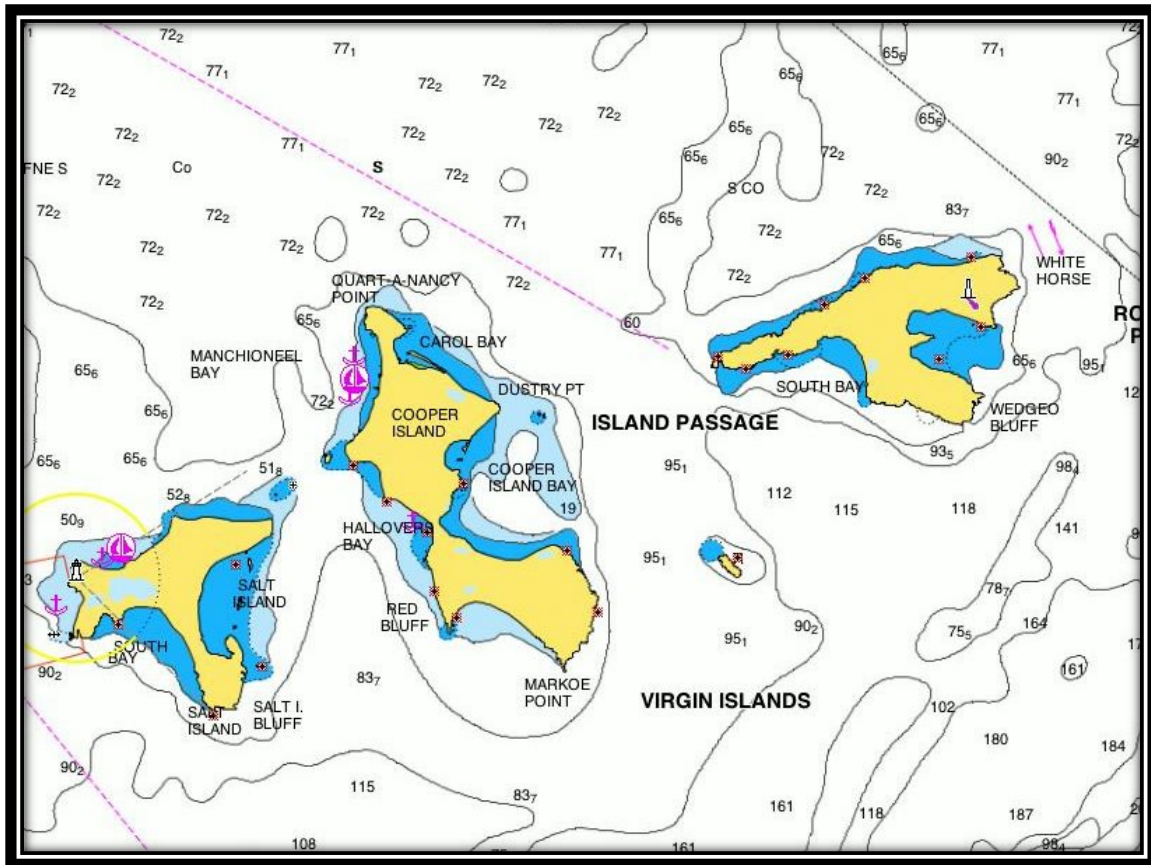


Figure 69. SALT ISLAND, COOPER ISLAND, GINGER ISLAND

SALT ISLAND

SALT ISLAND BAY

The anchorage here is open to the northeast and uncomfortable more often than not. A nice day stop if you want to walk around and perhaps buy a bag of natural salt.

LEE BAY

18° 22.22 N

64° 32.11 W entrance to mooring field

This bay is on the western shore of the island. You may not anchor here as it is part of the park, but you will find a few moorings that you can use. From the moorings, you can visit by dinghy the wreck of the *Rhone* which is a marine park, and if you are set up for it, make a dive on it. The vessel is in line with the southwest corner of the island.

CAUTION: Coming from the west, you must be careful to avoid Blonde Rock which is unmarked and very hazardous when the sea is up as it cannot be seen.

COOPER ISLAND

MANCHIONEEL BAY

18o 23.17 N

64° 30.90 W anchorage area

This anchorage is pleasant enough and has a very nice beach with an agreeable restaurant. There is good snorkeling in the area. However, if the weather is out of the north as it is during a norther, this anchorage becomes very uncomfortable. Check the weather if you are going to anchor here. They also have some moorings you can rent. **STAY AWAY FROM THE MANCHIONEEL TREES WHICH YOU WILL SEE ON THE SHORE. DO NOT EVEN GO UNDERNEATH THEM AND MOST CERTAINLY DO NOT EAT THE FRUIT.**

Also, if you venture around to the east side of Cooper Island, you will come upon a set of rocks called Dry Rocks. They are unmarked and if you do not take note of them, you will not be the first boat to hit them!

GINGER ISLAND

There is no protected place to anchor on this island.

NORTHWEST OF TORTOLA

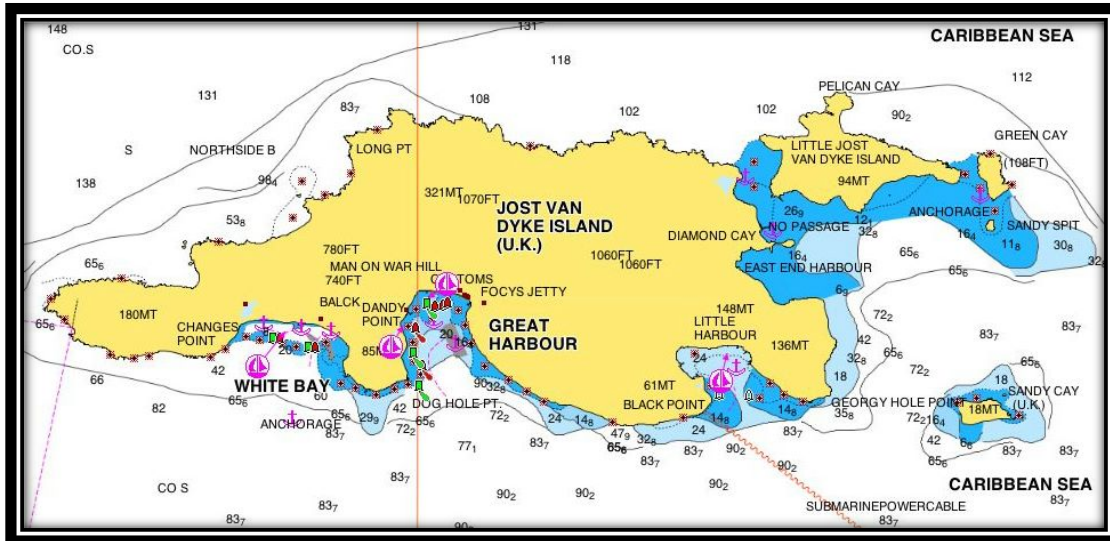
JOST VAN DYKE ISLAND

This is the home of the famous and now knighted, Sir Foxy. I remember Foxy as a young man (I was also young then), in the late 60s when you anchored at Great Harbor. It was easy then as it was not very crowded. Foxy worked so very hard to make you happy. He barbequed on the beach and made island music. It was truly exotic.



Foxy with James A. Michener, famous American author who wrote, amongst his many books, *CARIBBEAN*; a very worthwhile read!

Today Foxy's has become an institution and is known worldwide. Imagine an island with a year round population of about 200 people becoming that famous due to the hard work and vision of one man, not to mention his famous smile and huge personality. The name of the island should now rightfully be, for all the work and help Foxy has provided, Sir Foxy Island.

WHITE BAY**18° 26.42 N****64° 45.87 W just SW of red and green buoy for center channel****Figure 70. WHITE BAY**

This bay is at the southwest side of the island. There are three passes through which one can enter this coral fringed harbor, but the one in the center is the easiest as it is the best marked. The anchorage is small but if you like beaches, you are going to like this stop.

GREAT HARBOR**18° 26.28 N****64° 45.02 W just south of entrance**

This is an official port of entry for the Virgin Islands.

This anchorage can get crowded. It is important that you check not only your scope but also your set very carefully, as anchoring on this bottom can be difficult, especially if the wind is up. You also must be very conscious in the late afternoon when space is at a premium, that Mr. Latecomer does not anchor too close in front of you on top of your anchor line. Be polite but do stand on your front deck, shaking your head as in “No, please do not do

that!” There have been nights when the wind has come up and all hell has broken loose here, not to mention what was broken on the various boats.

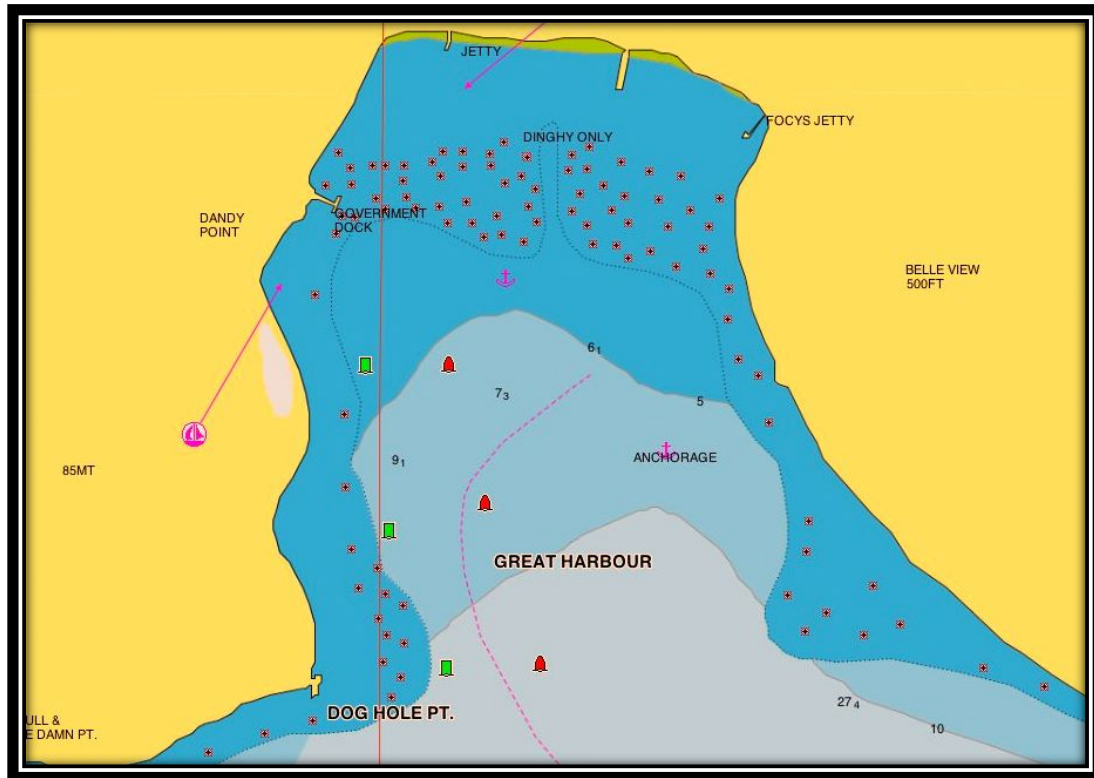


Figure 71. GREAT HARBOR ~ JOST VAN DYKE

Be careful, as there is coral to your port at Dog Hole Point on entering as well as to your starboard. There is also coral dead ahead of you, so that if you go deep into the harbor and swing wide, you may very well hit.

The Customs office is right in the middle of the harbor. There are a number of dinghy docks and also a number of restaurants with Foxy's being the most famous. There are parties and there is also the mother of all parties, The Foxy New Year's Party.

If you get to the island early enough and there is space, try to anchor towards the northeast corner; that affords the greatest protection.



FOXY'S RESTAURANT, BAR AND MUSIC SALOON

LITTLE HARBOR

18° 26.16 N

64° 43.69 W just south of entrance

Door to door, Little Harbor is about 1 mile east. It is always less crowded. On your chart you may see it as Garner Bay. Locally it is called Little Harbor. The harbor has water and fuel available and some really charming restaurants. At high season, both Great Harbor and Little Harbor are often full. The best anchorage is in the northeast corner. Entry is reasonably straightforward but there is a reef on either side of the harbor on entry. The reef is visible and marked, and your entry should be to the northwest once you line up.

LITTLE JOST VAN DYKE AND SANDY CAY

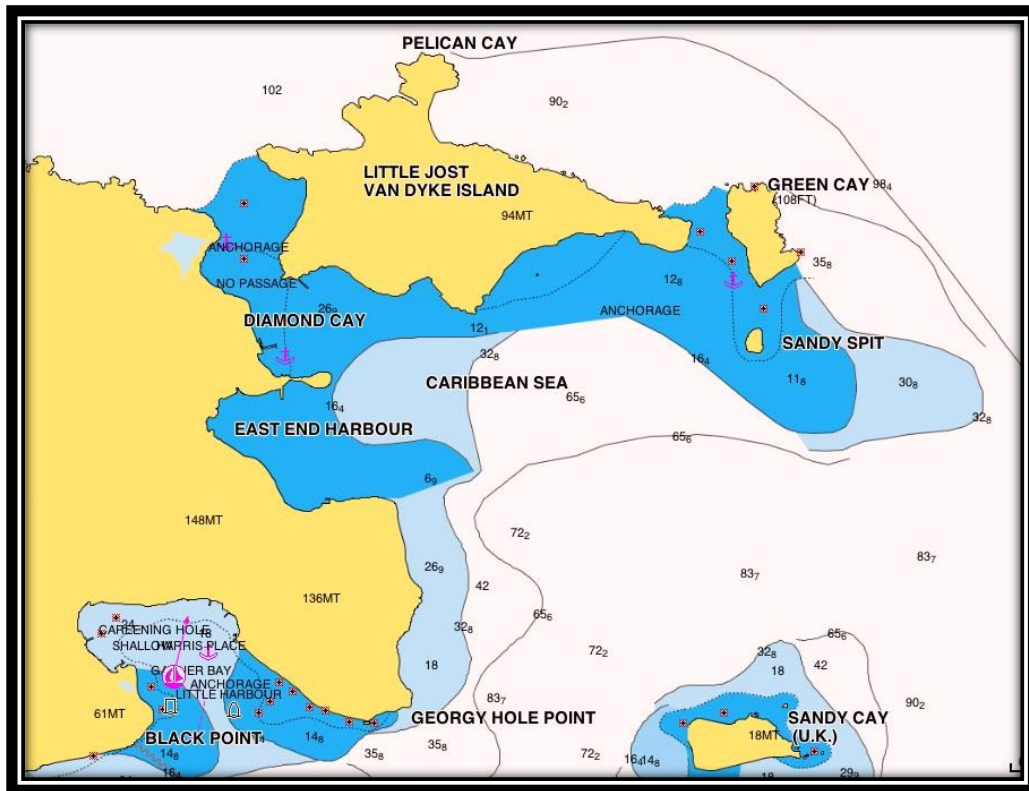


Figure 72. LITTLE JOST VAN DYKE AND SANDY CAY

At the east end of Jost Van Dyke to the north is Little Jost Van Dyke Island which provides for anchorage. There are two anchorages. The first is at the southwest corner of the island ($18^{\circ} 27.03\text{N}$, $64^{\circ} 43.42\text{ W}$ at the mooring field). This anchorage is in front of another Foxy restaurant and there are some moorings as well as water availability. If the weather is unsettled you can rock and roll in this anchorage but I like it as it is quite beautiful.

The other anchorage is at the east corner of the island behind Green Cay and Sandy Spit ($18^{\circ} 27.13\text{N}$, $64^{\circ} 42.54\text{ W}$ anchorage area). This is a really wonderful anchorage except late in the trade wind season when the wind is southeasterly. The beach at Sandy Spit is extremely beautiful and you can snorkel on the reefs when the sea is settled.

Sandy Cay is also quite beautiful but tends to be very crowded with day chartered catamarans. If you can find a spot it is worth it because this picture perfect cay is perfect for swimming, snorkeling and just “liming.”



Boats anchored off Sandy Spit

SANDY CAY

18° 26.16 N

64° 42.75 W just west of anchorage



VIRGIN GORDA and offlying small islands

South: Fallen Jerusalem & Broken Jerusalem

West: The Dogs and a Cockroach

North: Mosquito, Necker, Prickly Pear & Estatia

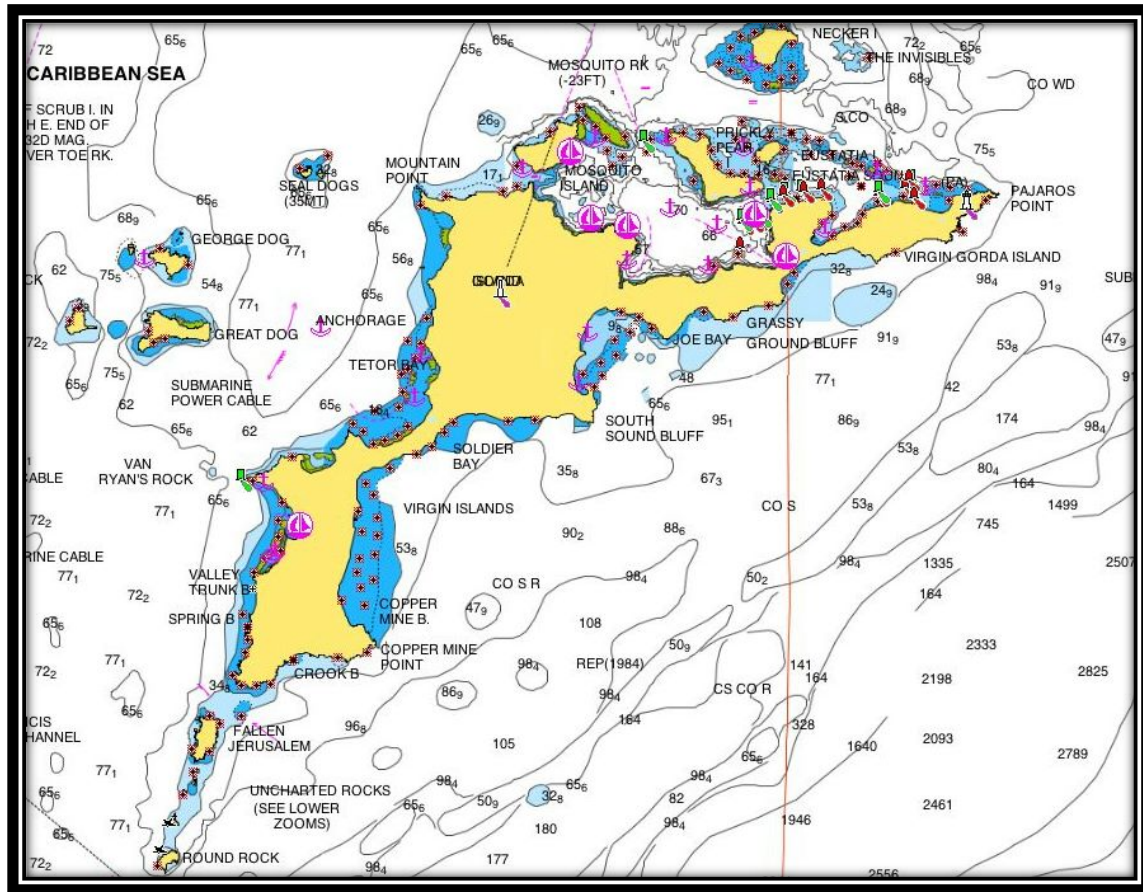


Figure 73. VIRGIN GORDA AND NEIGHBORING ISLANDS

Virgin Gorda is a relatively large island for the Virgin Islands; at least as far as length goes. Depending on who is measuring it and whether you measure the west or east coast, it will come to 6 to 8 nm as the crow flies. If you really want to know how long it is experientially, sail northeast on a windy day and try to make North Sound from, say, the area of The Baths.

One of the really great things about Virgin Gorda, which, by the way, is literally translated as FAT VIRGIN, is that the island has many different

aspects. It has it all. Even though I have sailed to it and from it for 40 plus years, I still get excited each time I see it. There are the Baths which are spectacular. Savanna Bay, whose beach is something really special if you can get up the courage to enter behind the reef. North Bay is a world unto itself. It has different places to anchor and a multitude of things to do.

Approaching Virgin Gorda, be careful to the south to avoid passing between Round Rock and Broken Jerusalem. This must be the original “rock and a hard place” as there are so many hazards between them that it is not safe. You can pass between the south end of Virgin Gorda and Fallen Jerusalem but then you must watch The Blinders, a group of rocks towards the east side of the passage. The current can run very swift here. You can anchor off of Fallen Jerusalem on the west side but only as a day anchorage to explore the area and perhaps snorkel if the weather is settled.

If you are coming from the north side of Virgin Gorda, particularly from east to west, perhaps from St. Maarten, and you have arrived later than you planned, be very careful as you pass between the south side of Necker Island and the north side of Virgin Gorda. Most of the electronic charts that I have used are off considerably and will show you farther south than you are.

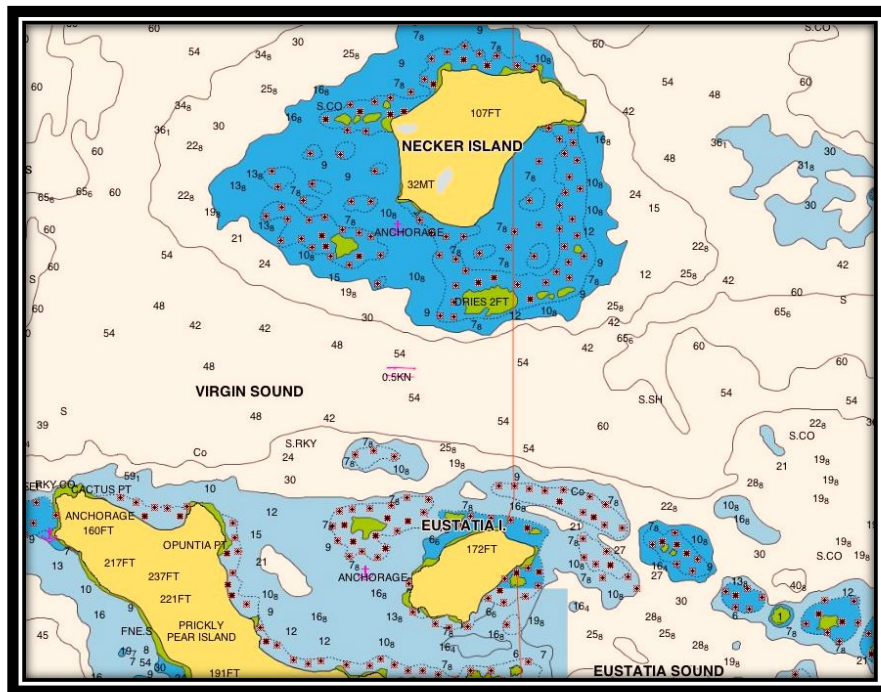


Figure 74. NECKER ISLAND

Necker Island has a substantial amount of reef and the southwest corner shoals quickly. If it is getting dark or is already dark, **DO NOT COUNT ON YOUR CHART PLOTTER. Go slowly and WATCH YOUR DEPTH SOUNDER.**

THE BATHS

18° 25.94 N

64° 26.80 W just off mooring field



THE BATHS, LOOKING AT BOATS MOORED AND ANCHORED

The Baths are located on the southwest coast. There are moorings that you can use to visit, but you must be there early to get one. You can also anchor in depths above 25'. If you do, watch that your scope does not swing you into a mooring. You **MAY NOT BRING YOUR DINGHY TO THE BEACH.** It is against regulations and there are simply too many swimmers in the water. You will see small blue buoys towards the outside of the entrance where you can leave it. From there you must swim to shore.



“INSIDE” THE BATHS AT MID DAY

As you enter the Baths from the north side, you walk/crawl through to get to the south side. It would truly be a shame if you missed this experience.

ST. THOMAS BAY

18° 27.16 N

64° 26.32 W at entrance markers of channel

This is the location of the Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbor Marina. You approach from the north, taking note of Colison Point whose name is close enough to Collision to give you an idea of the hazard. There is a well marked channel that you follow in. If you are clearing in or out of Virgin Gorda, you can access customs and immigration by a path from the marina. It is not far.

NOTE: If you come into North Sound for your first stop, you can go to Gun Creek and take a taxi. However, it MAY be problematic. The officer may ask where your boat is. I have never been refused but I have been reprimanded for not having the boat at the marina available for inspection.

Additionally, before you go to Gun Creek, the Virgin Island Coast Guard may pass by and ask you for your clearance papers. They always seem to know every boat in the bay and surely know the difference between a charter boat and a cruising sailboat. Note that the cab fare is not cheap.

On the other side of the coin, if you came in from the north or east, it is very convenient to go into North Sound and anchor. If you go to Gun Creek, there is a dock to which you can tie your dinghy and the office there can help to call a cab. On most days the cabs come quickly once they know it is a round trip with waiting time!

The marina is very pretty and there is a fuel dock as well as water. There is also a small market for food shopping as well as a bank. Call them on VHF 16 so they will be ready for you, especially in the afternoon when the wind is really up.

LITTLE DIX BAY

18° 27.77 N

64° 26.03 W just north of Break In Reef

This bay is very, very tight and hard to enter. It houses the Little Dix Bay Hotel which years ago was so exclusive that you had to almost be a Rockefeller to get in. Actually, the Rockefellers built it!

Best to avoid this bay.

SAVANNAH BAY TO TETOR BAY**18° 28.13 N****64° 25.53 W just W of Break In Reef**

These bays are formed by a long reef broken in various places by God so that cruising sailboats can gain entry. The entrance is from the south just above Blowing Point. The beach here is fantastic and that is the good news.

The bad news is that the anchorage is not secure if the wind comes up, particularly from the north through northeast. The entry requires great care and is neither for the faint of heart nor for the novice. Do not attempt this anchorage unless you are well versed in navigation through reefs, and then only if you are sure the weather is settled and will stay so.

LONG BAY**18° 29.93 N****64° 24.88 W just west of entrance to bay**

This bay is just before Mountain Point as you proceed north up the west coast of Virgin Gorda. If you tuck up to the northeast corner, this anchorage serves well. You can snorkel off of Mountain Point. Most times this anchorage is empty as everyone is in a rush to get to North Sound and they bypass it.

NORTH SOUND**ACCESS TO NORTH SOUND**

- 1. Mosquito Island/Anguilla Point**
18 30.38 N, 64 23.95 W just west of entrance
- 2. Mosquito Island/Colquhoun Reef**
18 30.88 N, 64 22.82 at red/green buoy entrance to channel

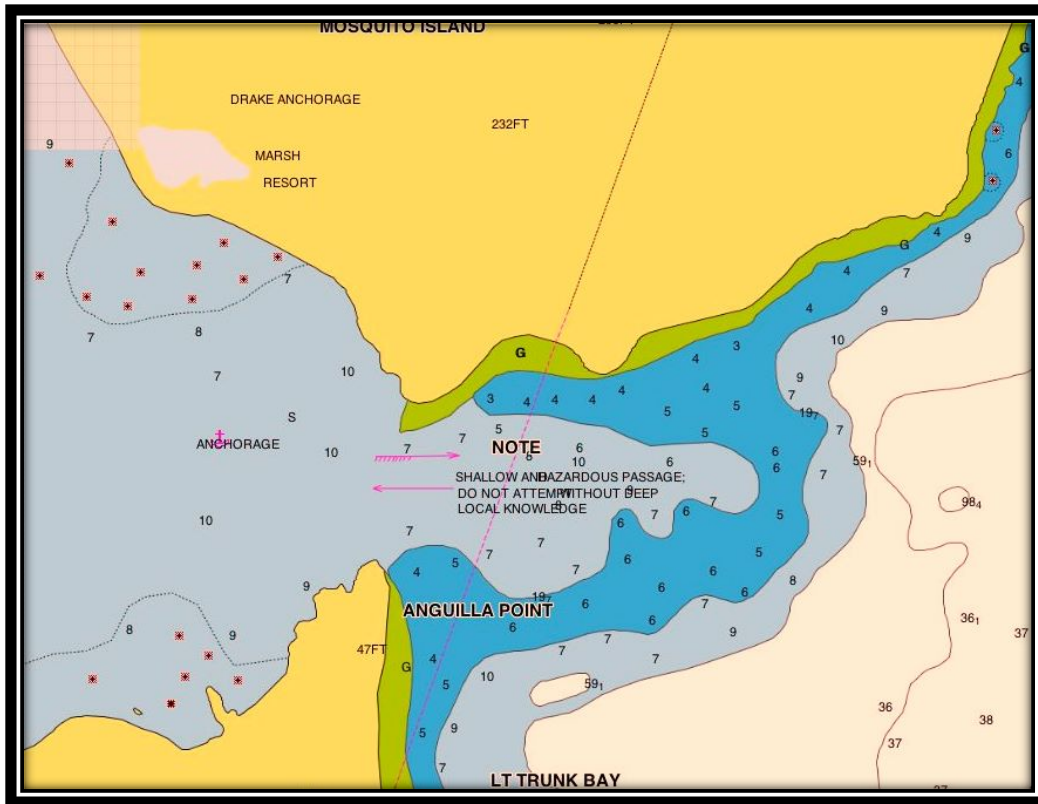


Figure 75. MOSQUITO ISLAND/ANGUILLA POINT ENTRANCE

This entrance gets down in spots to 5' although with some care you can hold 6'. It took me years to get up the nerve to enter through here. It is straightforward but definitely for shoal draft boats only and then only in settled weather. If you try it and get the shakes, you can anchor on the west side and you will find it a reasonable anchorage. No one will know that you changed your mind because everyone will think you chose to anchor there. Actually, that is how I did it my first time; I anchored and then went out in the dinghy with a handheld DF. That gave me the courage to go through. If you do it, stay in the center until you have passed the points and then favor your starboard side.

DO NOT DO THIS WITH YOUR SAILS UP!

If you get in to North Sound this way, it cuts a few miles off from having to go around to the north side; but when the wind is strong out of the east, those few miles are very long miles!



LOOKING TOWARD THE BITTER END AND SABA ROCK

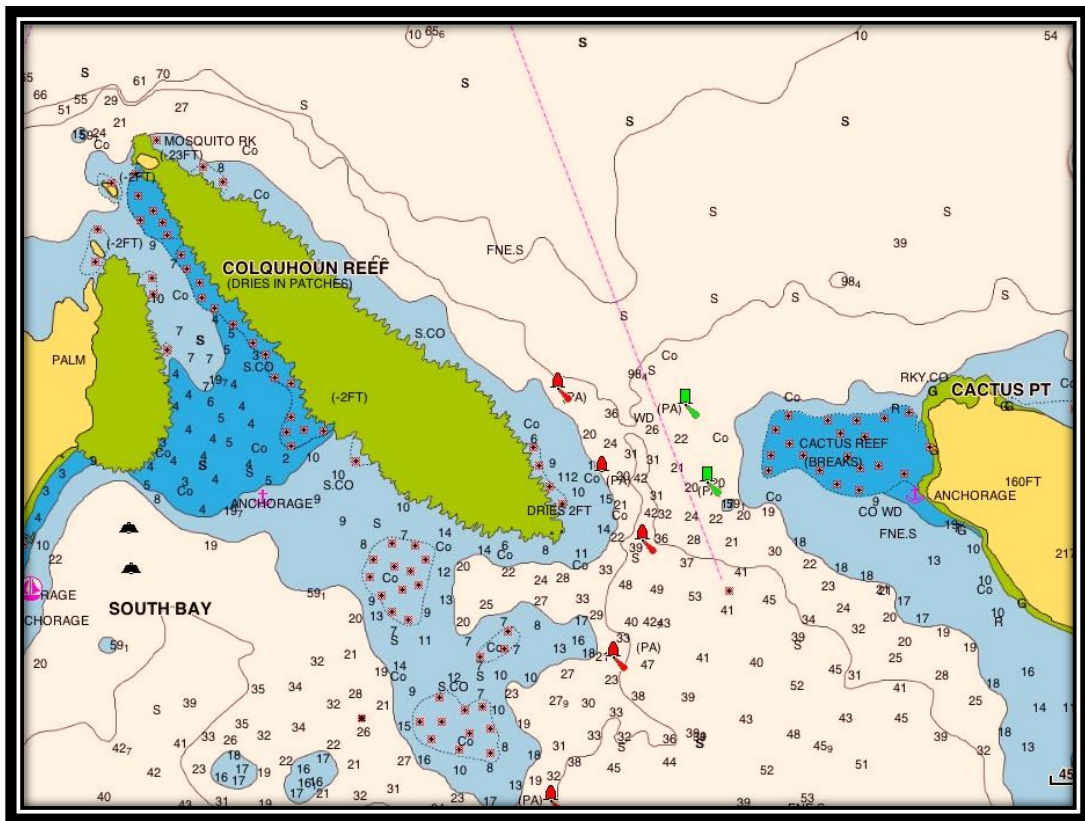


Figure 76. Mosquito Island/Colquhoun Reef Entrance

This entrance is more straightforward than it looks. It will raise the hair on your neck in a strong east wind the first time you do it, but if you follow the very well marked channel there is really nothing to it. While I normally do not recommend entering most harbors at night, those who leave St. Maarten for the Virgins almost always end up arriving as it is getting dark. If it is a quiet night, put someone on the foredeck with a flashlight and you can make it in. Once in, you have all of North Sound ahead of you with no obstructions.

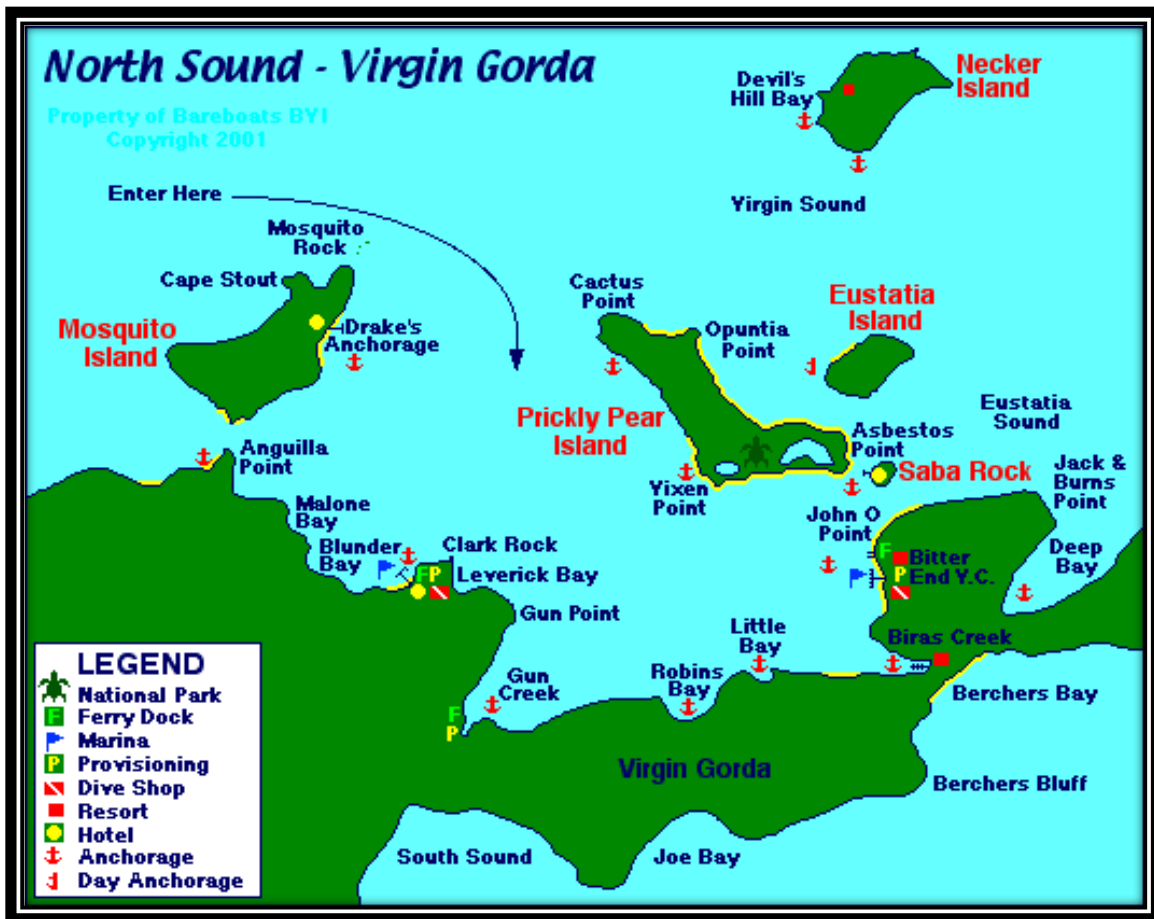


Figure 77. NORTH SOUND

DRAKE'S ANCHORAGE

18° 30.59 N

64° 23.42 W anchorage area

This anchorage is off Drake's Hotel. They have mooring buoys if you do not want to drop the hook. This anchorage is not well protected and not comfortable when the wind is strong with a southerly component. You can reach them on VHF 16.

Just up to the northeast from this anchorage is another anchorage behind Colquhoun Reef. It is protected if you get up behind the reef. On a hot night you will have good ventilation through your forward hatch. There are always a few boats here. The anchorage has a wild forlorn look that conveys a sense of being far from civilization while in fact right behind you in the sound there is a great deal going on.

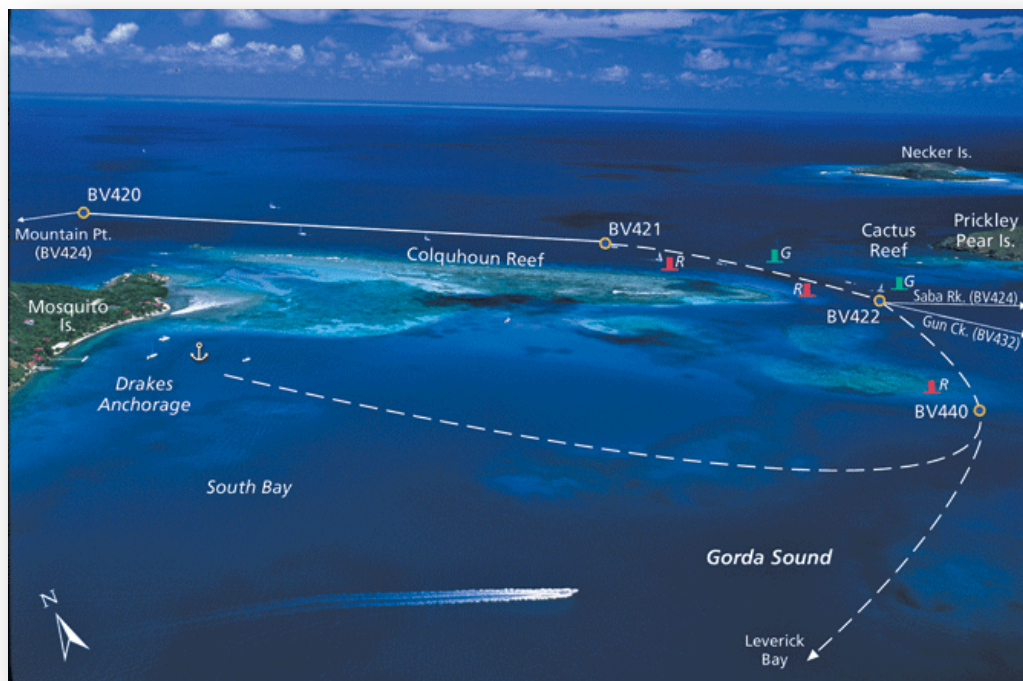


Figure 78. North section of North Sound/ Colquhoun Reef

LEVERICK BAY**18° 29.95 N****64° 23.15 W just off the docks**

Everywhere in the Virgin Islands there seems to be a Pusser's Store, and North Sound, Virgin Gorda is no exception. This is a nice facility with a small marina and available fuel and water. There are also some moorings available.



Leverick Bay looking towards Colquhoun Reef



If you walk up from the marina you will come to the small but well stocked minimarket if you need some provisions.

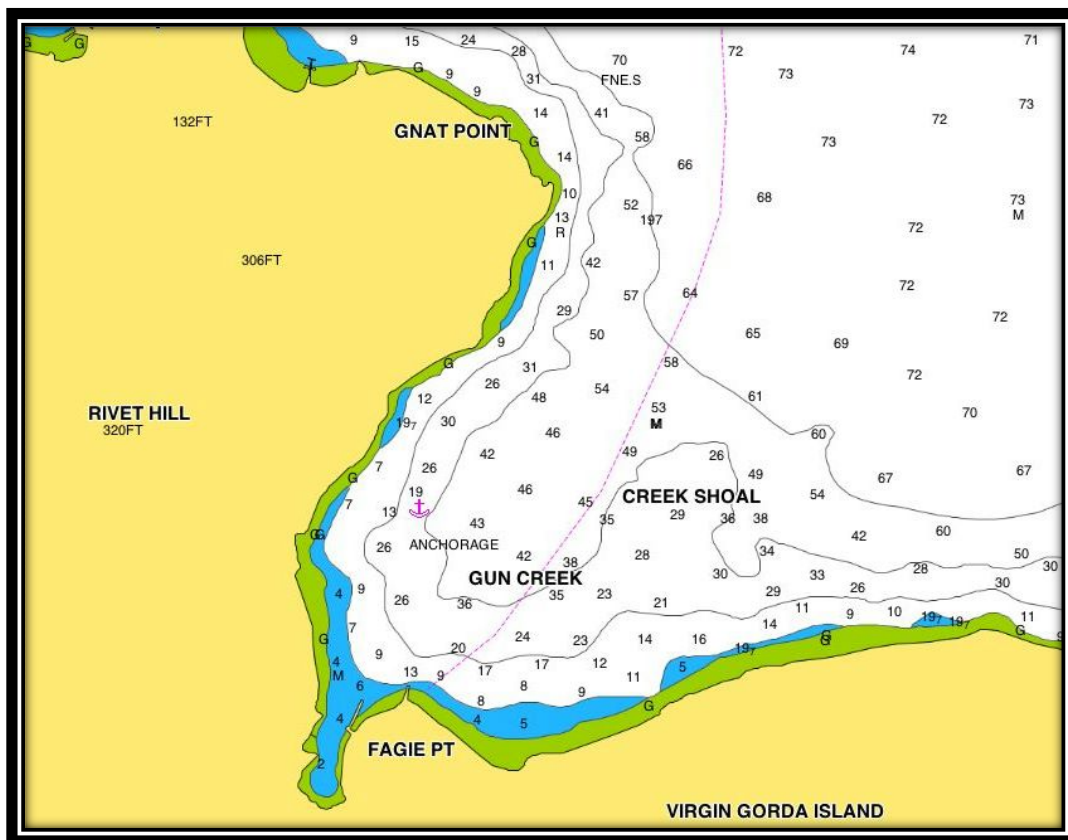
The hotel and swimming pool make for a complete and very pretty setting. When the trade wind is blowing, this anchorage can get a bit active although it usually settles down at night.

MAIN DOCK AT LEVERICK BAY

GUN CREEK**18° 29.64 N****64° 22.61 W at entrance to Creek**

You can anchor here close to the east shore although very few cruising boats do. I usually go here by dinghy and get someone in the supermarket to call a taxi for me to take me to Spanish Town to clear in if this is my first stop. Many times, coming from the east, we arrive late and it is easier to anchor in North Sound rather than proceed. The next day, North Sound is so beautiful that no one wants to leave, so I go by land to clear in.

As I mentioned previously, the officials are not always happy with the idea that the boat is not at the marina and available for inspection, but no one has ever not cleared me in.

**Figure 79. GUN CREEK**

BIRAS CREEK**18° 29.72 N****64° 21.76 W NE of red nun that marks Oyster Rock****CAUTION: Go around Oyster Rock on the outside or *very* carefully on the “inside” if you are making for Biras Creek.**

If the weather were to turn really heavy, which it very rarely does during cruising season, this is a good place to hide out as it is a very protected anchorage. The hotel has moorings for rent. However the anchorage lacks “air” due to a high hill in the inner harbor. The restaurant is a first class, ladies and gentlemen “dress up” facility.

THE BITTER END**18° 29.98 N****64° 21.62 W in front of facility at mooring field**

Everyone has favorites, and this is clearly one of mine and, for that matter, many others as well. When you arrive at The Bitter End you have made your pilgrimage in the Virgin Islands.



The Bitter End Yacht Club has everything you can imagine; moorings, slips, fuel and water, restaurants, swimming pool and even an open air movie theatre which our children loved growing up. In case you are unaware, they have bungalow cottages tucked into the mountainside as part of the facility.



MOORINGS AT THE BITTER END YACHT CLUB

Many years ago, we chartered a bareboat and after a few days arrived at The Bitter End. It was my wife and children, her friend and my brother in law, who is the opposite of whatever a sailor is. Anyway, when we arrived everyone was beside themselves with delight. We picked up a perfect mooring in the front line close to the dinghy dock and thus easy and safe for the kids if they wanted to go in alone.

Just as we retrieved the mooring, the mooring man pulled up alongside and I filled out the form and made payment. The distraction of doing this caused me to forget that my brother in law had made us fast with the mooring line on the foredeck; gross negligence on my part.

After some time ashore we all returned to the boat and were all asleep when I heard water lapping at the sugar scoop at the stern of a boat. For a sailor who is moored, one knows instinctively that you should not be hearing this sound.

I went on deck. It was a pitch dark night and I am quite nearsighted and had forgotten to take my glasses with me. It was clear nonetheless that there were no boats around us. Once I managed my glasses and got my bearings, it turns out that we had slipped the mooring line and floated through the mooring field over to Robins Bay, almost a mile away. The boat had entered the bay and put her bow gently on the beach which was holding the boat steady on a very light wind night.

What was really incredible was that we had floated through 3 lines of moorings filled with boats and had not tapped anyone. I started the engine and backed out of Robins Bay uneventfully, then followed the lights of The Bitter End Hotel back to the mooring field where I picked up the same mooring. This time I personally made it fast. As everyone was on deck by this time and knew what had happened, the event was shared knowledge; so much so that the following morning everyone thought we had shared a communal dream!

A NOTE ON NORTH SOUND

A small lamentation is, I believe, appropriate at this point. From The Bitter End Yacht Club, there was always a wonderful view from your stern through North Sound inasmuch as your bow most often faces to the club. In recent years there has been an influx -- when I am lamenting I call it an infestation -- of large



mega yachts. They anchor in the middle of North Sound, sometimes 4 or 5 of them, and that becomes the view. Things could be worse, but I make this note here because there are those commercial interests who are quite happy to serve this market segment. I was much happier when they remained in their marinas with their large tethers to the docks. Progress!

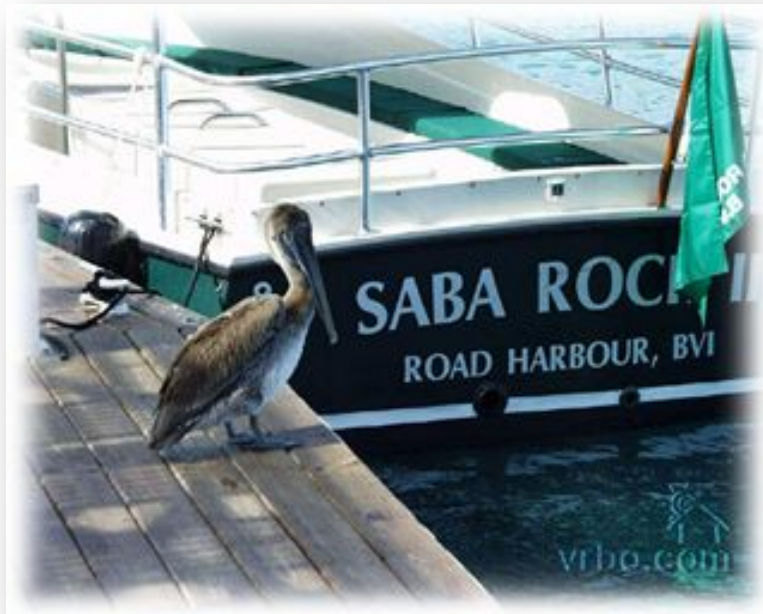


When there is a bunch of them, one can feel as a mouse amongst ELEPHANTS!

I have always avoided anchorages that permit ski boats which buzz around and make a great deal of noise. If their number increases much more, North Sound will lose me as a visitor. This is no great loss except to me and other cruisers as a recent article in the *Caribbean Compass* monthly reported that a single mega yacht can spend more money than a cruise ship with 5,000 passengers. Perhaps one day North Sound will become a mega port for mega yachts.

SABA ROCK

Saba Rock is just to port as you look at The Bitter End Yacht Club.



Saba Rock is an interesting place. Bert Kilbride, considered the dean of Caribbean SCUBA diving and wreck location and preservation, came to the Virgin Islands in the late 50s. He made Saba Rock his base in the late 60s and in the early 80s opened the “Pirates Pub” on the rock. He put out a few moorings and Saba Rock became the “sailor’s haven” where one could gam with other sailors; have a few drinks and watch the sun set. The place was full of fun and very ramshackle and everyone loved it and Bert. Bert was an expert in his area but he moved about in the most unassuming way.

In 1997 he was approached by an American from California who wanted to develop Saba Rock into something more. Bert was getting older and the deal was pretty strong as word has it, and Bert sold. John McManus swept Saba Rock clean and with a local architect invested a mountain of money and built a complete resort on this little rock. It is hard to believe but do not let its Lilliputian size deceive you.



SABA ROCK RESORT

They have moorings as well as water at their dock and they are very accommodating to cruising sailboats.

Bert passed away in 2008 at the age of 93. Like all things, his presence on Saba has passed into history but when you visit you will experience his presence everywhere. The new owner had the foresight to set up a small museum with Bert and you will see the evidence of Bert's work. I cannot help but think how hard it must have been for Bert to sell his beloved rock after all the years he had spent there but he managed to get it done.

This brings to mind for me a quote from William (Bill) Buckley when he was aged and had to sell his last sailboat "Patito". He said "So, deciding that the time has come to sell the Patito and forfeit all that is not lightly done, and it brings to mind the step yet ahead, which is giving up life itself". Whether you agreed with Buckley's political posture or not, you have to like his style and foresight, not to mention his eloquence on this subject.

PRICKLY PEAR ISLAND

EUSTATIA ISLAND

EUSTATIA SOUND

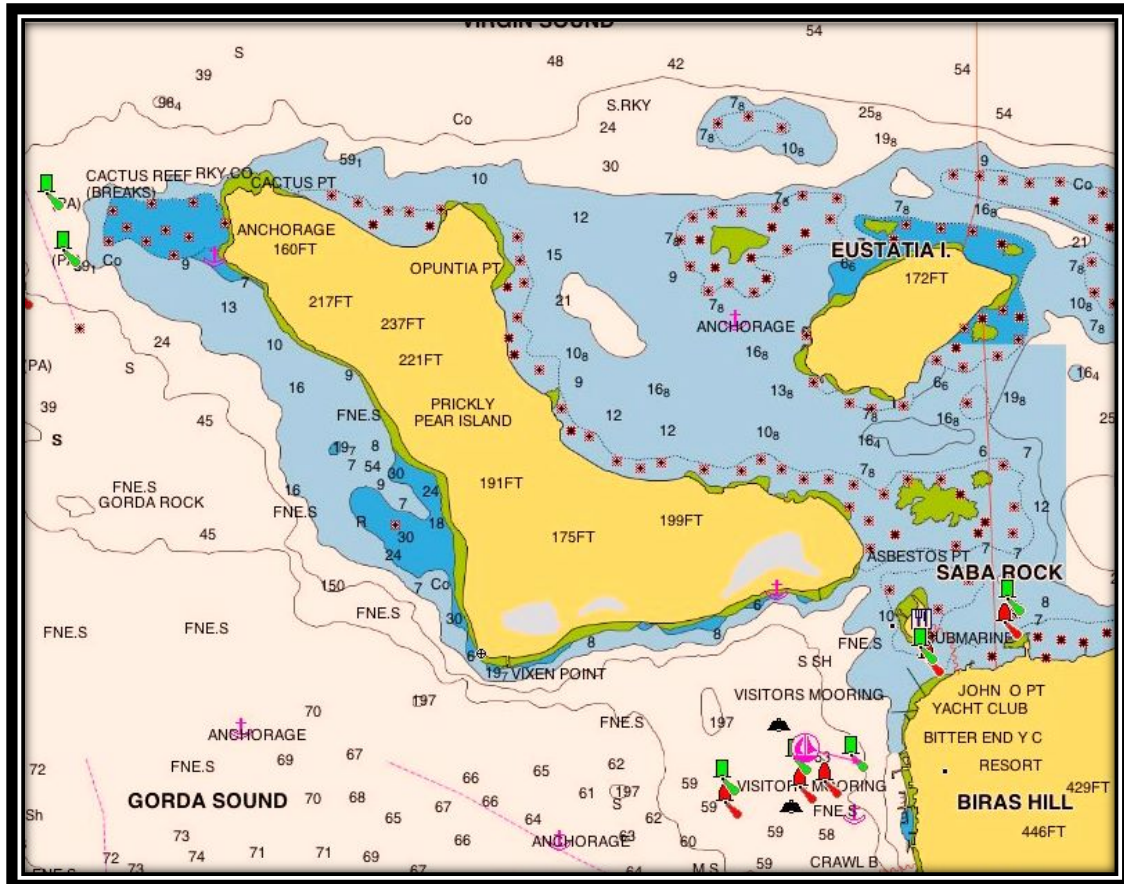


Figure 80. PRICKLY PEAR ISLAND

The first time you visit North Sound and you look at the channel from Saba Rock out to Eustatia Island, it can be daunting. Even if your boat draws 7' or less, your knees will knock doing this the first time.

If you decide you want to do it and go out and anchor for the day, or in settled weather perhaps anchor overnight, do it first in your dinghy 5 or 10 times until you are sure that you are sure that you know it backwards and forwards.

There is an anchorage in settled weather to the **SW corner of Eustatia Island**. You can even pass out to seaward if you can navigate between coral (there

are a number of openings), but the sea must be calm and you must be calm and very knowledgeable. Otherwise use the front door to exit North Sound.

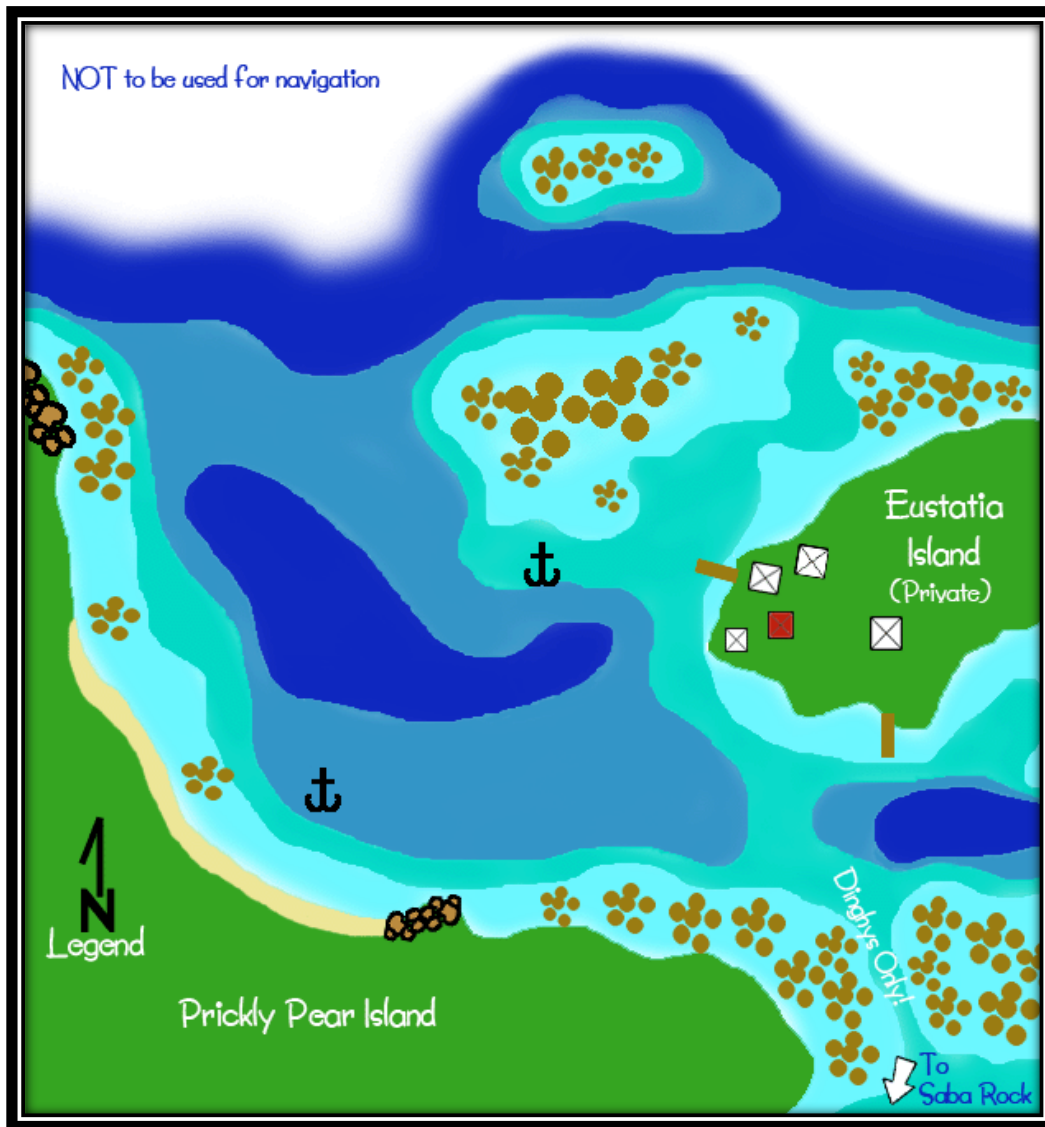


Figure 81. TIPTOEING THROUGH EUSTATIA SOUND

This cartoon drawing can give you an idea of what we are talking about but under **NO CONDITIONS** should it be used for navigation. Navigation in Eustatia Sound is **ENTIRELY EYEBALL**.

PRICKLY PEAR ANCHORAGES

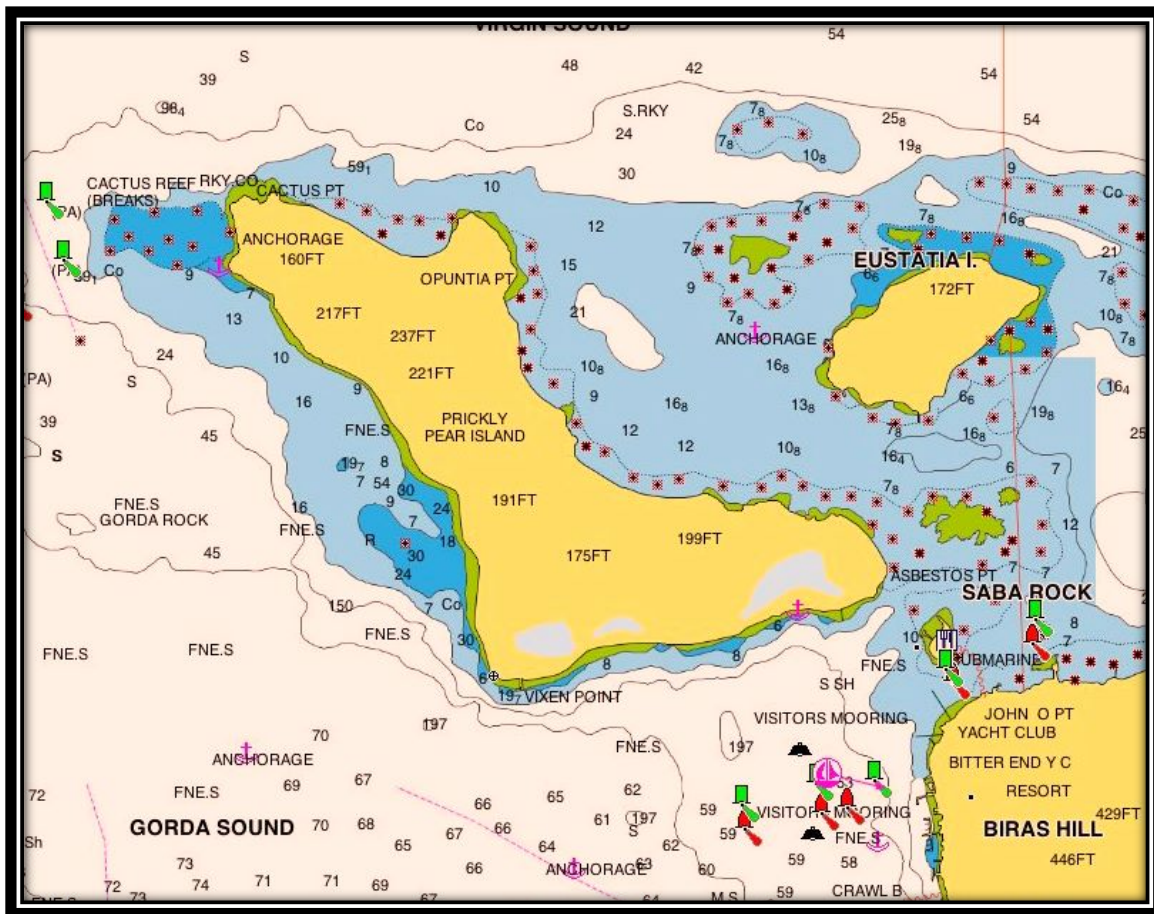


Figure 82. PRICKLY PEAR ISLAND

There are a number of anchorages in North Sound in the lee of Prickly Pear Island. If one wants perhaps a little more privacy, one can check out these two areas: The first is at the SW corner of the island under Vixen Point. You will see a few moorings laid out if you so desire and a dinghy dock for landing at the beach with its attendant nearby beach restaurant. There is some coral that runs out a distance just above Vixen Point; be careful of it.

The other anchorage is not too often used and it is to the northwest corner of the island just below Cactus Reef. It is reasonably well sheltered and has nice views.

NECKER ISLAND

This island is privately owned and you should get permission if you want to go ashore. Most certainly do not leave any “gifts” behind such as garbage bags, etc. The anchorage is on the south side of the island and requires eyeball navigation to get to, through reefs on either side. You can anchor in 9’ of water. While the snorkeling is quite good, the anchorage is not often used because all the action is in North Sound. Not to mention that when the wind is up, it is not well protected.

BEFORE WE LEAVE NORTH SOUND AND VIRGIN GORDA

There are so many things to do on and around Virgin Gorda and its anchorages that we often overlook its abundant inland attractions. Among these is Gorda Peak National Park.



The highest point on Virgin Gorda is 1370 feet. If you sailed down from the Bahamas on your way to the Caribbean it is hard to believe that islands can

have peaks this high. The park land, donated by Laurence Rockefeller in the early 70s, is considered to be one of the last dry forest areas in the region.

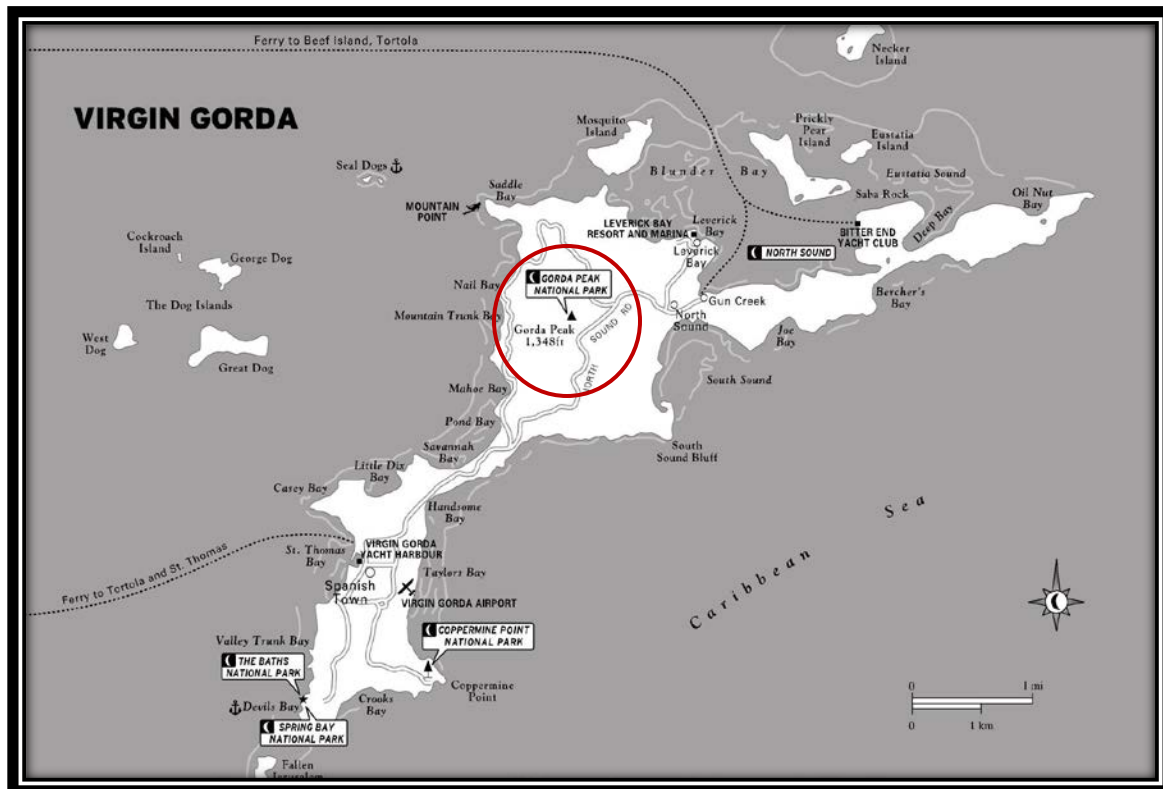


Figure 83. GORDA PEAK NATIONAL PARK – RIGHT IN THE THICK OF THINGS

If you follow the trails up to the peak, you will have a panoramic view of North Sound with the island of Anegada visible in the background as well. There are picnic tables along the way if you prepare and are so inclined.

There are also portable toilets along the way that are maintained and clean. The trip along the trail is safe in every way. The length, depending on which trail you choose, is a ½ mile give or take and the ascent is not arduous. About 20 to 40 minutes, depending on how fast you can and want to go.

Was it worth the climb? Only you can say, and perhaps Robert Frost, who wrote that “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood”. He took the one less travelled by. From my experience most sailors do not make this ascent; too much in a rush to get south along the Lesser Antilles island chain.



VIEW FROM GORDA PEAK

ANEGADA

18° 42.87 N

64° 24.17 W southwest of buoys to anchorage

Anegada is a strange bird as least as far as Virgin Island birds go. It is the only low-lying coral and limestone island in the Virgin group. It is and remains a fisherman's island. Because it is off the beaten track and without the fanfare accompanying the other Virgin Islands it is, more often than not, not visited. The fishing village is called The Settlement.

The first of a few anchorages is just above Pomato Point in 6' of water. **18° 43.60 N, 64° 24.38 W** will put you just west of the anchorage. The other is at The Settlement just west of Setting Point.

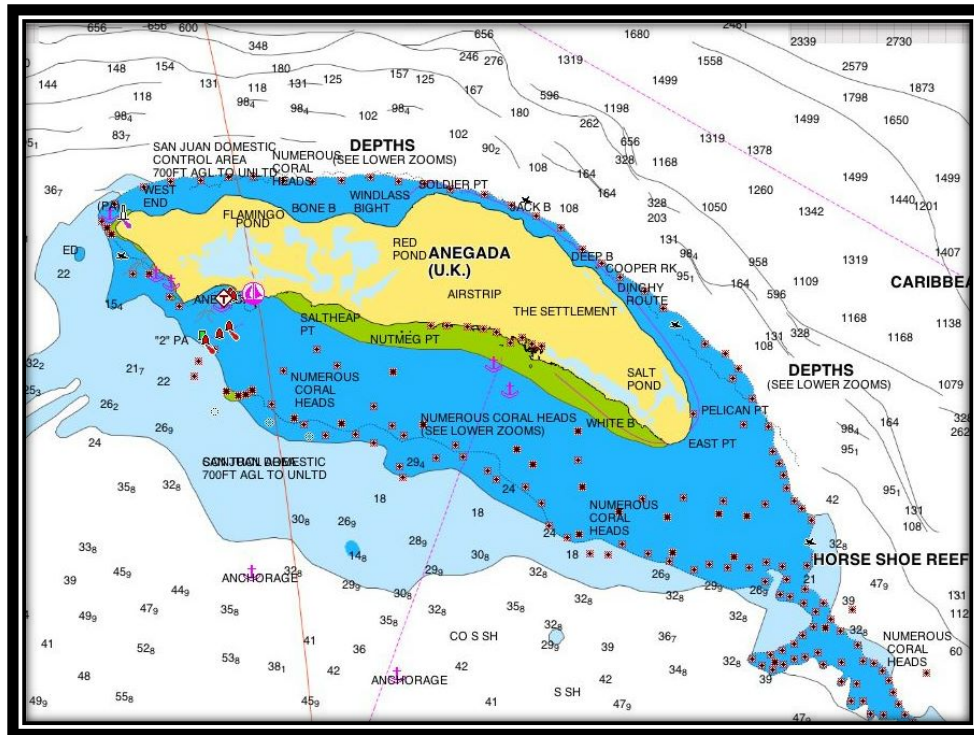


Figure 84. ANAGEDA

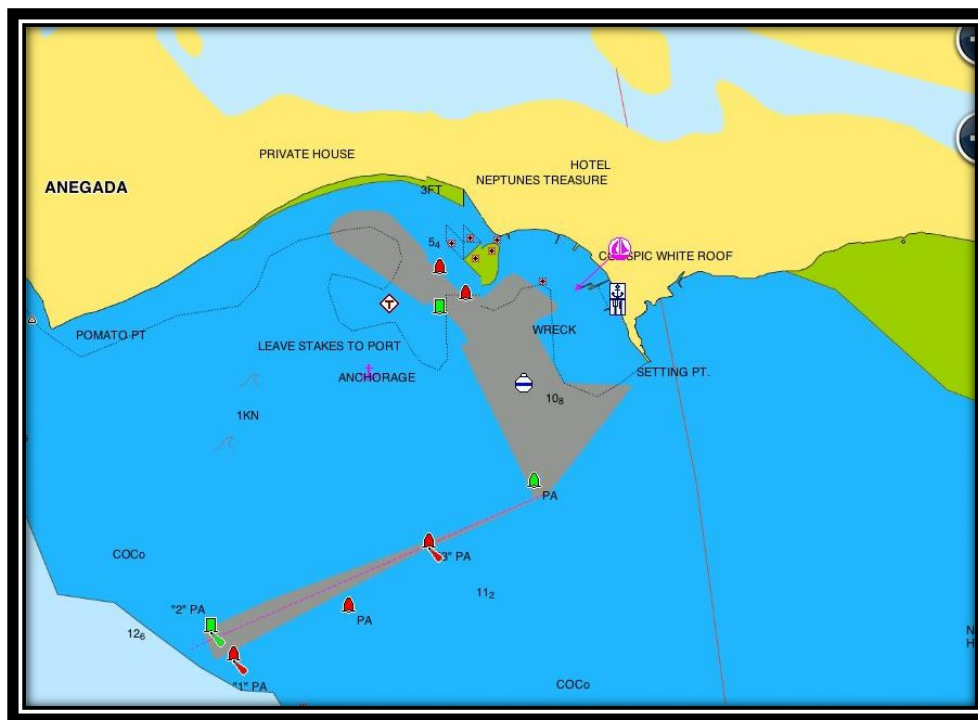


Figure 85. POMATO POINT TO SETTING POINT

As you can see from the chart above you arrive at the entrance to the channel, $18^{\circ} 42.75 \text{ N}$ $64^{\circ} 23.77 \text{ W}$ and you line up. The channel going in is not difficult; just be sure to follow the markers. You will carry a depth of from 15' to 10' as you approach the turn in the channel to northwest from northeast where the water will shoal to 7' in the mooring/anchorage areas. *If you draw more than 7' do not make the turn.* Instead anchor off the town dock just south of Setting Point.



Figure 86. ANEGADA ISLAND AT POMATO POINT LOOKING EAST

The island of Anegada is filled with wrecks. Its waters are also filled with fish and all manner and sorts of marine life. There are more restaurants on this island that you have fingers on both hands and perhaps toes on both feet as well. What they all have in common is that they serve fresh fish; very fresh fish! The local people are very welcoming and the island is a delight to explore. Some of the beaches are magnificent, like the beach at the anchorage above Pomato Point.



SUNSET AT ANEGADA ANCHORAGE~ALL'S WELL!

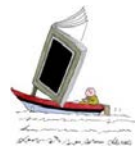


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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frank Virgintino is a native New Yorker. His sailing experience of over forty years includes the Canadian Maritimes, all of the eastern seaboard of the United States and the entire Caribbean, many times over. Aside from cruising he has spent the better part of his career building and administering marinas. All of the information in this guide is a result of personal research and knowledge of both the British and US Virgin Islands and the Lesser Antilles. It is hoped that this guide will make the entirety of the Virgin Islands easier to access and understand.



The author believes that this guide will prove an excellent source of information for these beautiful and immensely popular islands although *it should not be used for navigation at any time*. All charts, lat and long positions and inserts here should be used as a frame of reference only. Navigation should only be undertaken with appropriate charts of the area.

Anchorage, harbors and facilities are dynamic and in a state of constant change. A cruising *guide* is just that-- a tool that provides for insight and a basis for research – but it should always be used as a *guide* only.

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SPECIAL NOTE: Again, bear in mind that cruising guides are not intended for navigation. They are **GUIDES** to be used for reference. All Latitudes and Longitudes here are given to the best of the author's ability. However, they should never be relied on. The skipper of the boat should remember that he/she has sole responsibility for proper navigation. Facts and circumstances related to statements made in this guide can change; sometimes facilities and services that existed during the writing of the guide may no longer be available.

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