

a day in™ St Thomas



Factual and Background

In a Nutshell


St Thomas with a population of around 55,000 is the second largest of the US Virgin Islands, on the north-eastern edge of the Caribbean (St John has a population of around 5,000 while St Croix - the largest in size of the USVI has about 55,000 people).

St Thomas enjoys a cosmopolitan atmosphere. The island was once Danish and has only been a US territory for the last 90 years; the diverse mixture of European, American and West Indian culture can clearly be seen.

On St Thomas' you will find clear emerald seas ideal for water sports, and sandy beaches that are perfect for a spot of sunbathing. There are also many historical and natural points of interest on the island, as well as excellent shopping facilities. St Thomas and its sister island St John have rightly been called "the US in the Caribbean".

Visitor Information

Tourist Information Office
1 Tolbod Gade
Charlotte Amalie
Tel: 340 774 8784

Important Note:  the rule of the road in St Thomas is to drive on the left as they do in the rest of the Virgin Islands.

Climate

St Thomas has the perfect climate with tropical temperatures and light rainfall.

Temperatures vary little throughout the year with highs of 84°F (29°C) in January, and 90°F (32°C) in July.

Rainfall is generally light and followed by sunshine. The rainy season falls during spring and summer; the winter season is the driest period of the year.

Currency & Banking

The currency on St Thomas is the US dollar.

ATMs can be found at Lockhart Gardens Shopping Centre in Charlotte Amalie, Altona & Welgunst Street in Charlotte Amalie and in Red Hook.

Shopping

The main shopping area is located on the waterfront in Charlotte Amalie. Here you will find a vast array of designer and high street shops.

Need Help?

Police - fire - ambulance

Ambulance: 992



Police Department: 915

Fire Department: 921

What's to see

As well as wandering around the historic town of Charlotte Amalie, there are many sights to be seen on the island.

Try the Skyride (just opposite the cruise ship terminal across from the Havensight Mall - cable cars to Paradise Point Tel: 774-9809.

Coral World has sharks and iguanas, turtles and tropical fish and allows you to walk down two storeys underwater and watch real aquatic life at first hand.

Try these

Fort Christian

Between Veterans Drive and Emancipation Garden
Tel: 340 776 4566

The fort has been perched above the harbour at Charlotte Amalie since 1672 and is officially the oldest standing structure in the Virgin Islands. This large brick built defence was originally used to protect the inhabitants from pirate invasions and European Armadas.

Magens Bay

This beautiful heart-shaped beach, is worth a visit. It has been voted one of the most beautiful beaches in the world by the National Geographic and Condé Nast Traveller Magazines.

Peter's Great House

St Peter Mountain Road, on the north side of St Thomas
Tel: 340 774 4999

Visitors will find large botanical gardens with over 200 species of native plants and trees here.

St Thomas' Skyride

9617 Estate Thomas
Tel: 340 774 9809

This cable car takes you from Charlotte Amalie, over the bustling town and harbour, to Flag Hill above the bay.

Coral World Ocean Park

Coki Point

Tel: 340 775 1555

Open daily (October-May) 0900-1700 This large aquarium is filled with many varieties of Caribbean wildlife. There is even a reconstruction of a Coral Reef habitat.

Specials

Atlantis Submarine Expedition

Tel: 340 776 5650

20 minute boat ride from St. Thomas' to the dive site at Turtle Cove, where you will climb aboard the submarine
- 50-minute tour of the seabed.

Beaches

Sapphire Beach

Magen's Bay - a charge for the public section of the beach of about \$3

Coki Beach

Shopping

The majority of the shopping is located in Charlotte Amalie itself. There are three interlinking streets here; Main Street (also known as Dronningens Gade), Back Street and Waterfront, and each one is lined with shops. Nearer to the waterfront you will also find the Havensight Mall which houses over 60 stores Tel: (340) 777-5313

Make sure you pick up a copy of the St Thomas Shopping Guide at the port. It contains details of all duty-free shopping opportunities as well as some useful discount vouchers.

Clothes

Artland

Havensight Mall

Tel: 776 4544

T-shirts, sundresses and tropical-print shirts.

Captain's Corner

Havensight Mall

Tel: 774 8435

For US Virgin Islands' souvenir clothing.

Jewellery

You will not have to go far to find a veritable host of jewelry outlets in all of the main streets surrounding the waterfront. Duty Free regulations which allow US citizens to take home \$1600 worth of goods (in 2007) ensure St Thomas a steady trade in luxury items.

Gifts/Books

Dockside Bookshop

Havensight Mall

For literature.

Bernard K. Passman

Main Street

For unique pieces of sculpture and jewellery made from local black coral.

Shopping in other locations

The Vendor's Plaza in Charlotte Amalie has a fantastic array of local produce, gifts and souvenirs. The Plaza is open Monday - Saturday 0700 - 1700.


History & Economy

History

The US Virgin Islands were first inhabited by Carib and Arawak Indians. However, as with the rest of the Caribbean, they faced a number of European invasions and settlement from the 1490s onwards, finally becoming part of the Danish West Indies. During the early 1700s the local economy was booming thanks to the sugar plantations that had been introduced, with a significant number of slaves.

The US government purchased the islands in 1917 and they are now an unincorporated territory of the USA. A measure of self government was introduced in 1954, along with the introduction of an elected Senate.

The result of the island's history and location is a unique mix of Danish heritage and modern America with a typically Caribbean relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

 The harbour town on St Thomas was initially named Taphus. It was renamed in honour of King Christian V's wife.

Economy

During the 1600s the plantations, and the growth and sale of sugar played a vital part in St. Thomas' economy. However, during the late 1700s the neighbouring island of St Croix became the plantation capital of the Virgin Islands, and St. Thomas was forced to develop its trade industry.

Today, tourism is central to the island's economy.

Art & Culture

Art Galleries

Gallery St Thomas

Government Hill

Tel: 340 777 6363

www.gallerystthomas.com.

This gallery sells and displays works from artists around the Caribbean Islands.

Museums

American-Caribbean Museum of St. Thomas

32 Raadets Gade

Charlotte

Amalie

Tel: 340 714 5150

Open daily 09.00-15.00

An interactive and fun filled museum that offers life-like historical figures that explain Virgin Islands history and its relationship with America and Europe.

Seven Arches Museum

Government

Hill

Tel:

340 774

9295

Open 10.00-16.00

daily

This 18th century house has been fully restored and is now decorated in a Danish West Indian Style. In the Slaves quarters and kitchen you will see what life was like for the lower classes.

Music

Music is very much part of the island's culture and you will not find it difficult to find a bar with live music. If you are lucky enough to be in St Thomas during May, catch the annual street festival and hear some of the island's traditional music.

Recreation & Sport

Water Sports

Captain Nautica

Tel: 340 715 3379

This company rents sailing ships and powerboats, and can also arrange fishing trips, parasailing and diving trips too.

Virgin Island Ecotours

Tel: 340 779 2155

kayak and sail deep into the mangroves

Homer's Scuba and Snorkel Tours

Tel: 866 719 1856

Wildlife

If you prefer drier activities then take the quick ferry across to St John where you will find a National Park with some of the best wildlife and views in the Caribbean. On this small island you'll find over 20 different hiking trails.

Golf

There is also a golf course on the island. The Mahogany Run Golf Course was designed by George and Tom Fazio and is easily accessible from Charlotte Amalie. It is a 6022 yard, par 70 course. It is open daily between sunrise and sunset. For more information call 340 777 6250

Getting Around

Local Tours

Air Force One Taxi Tours and Beach Trips

Tel: 340 774 8342

www.airforce1fun.com.

This tour company offers various tours, including one for sightseeing and another for shopping. They are specially designed to fit in with cruise ships arriving and leaving port. They are reasonably priced too.

Hassel Island Tour

Tel: 340 774 8674

This cruise boat tour leaves from the WICO Cruise Ship Dock at 0800, 1100 and 1400 daily. Live commentary on board will explain the history of the area and point out key buildings and attractions. You will then land on Hassel Island and will be taken on a walking tour. Sturdy boots and sunscreen are recommended!

Flamon's Taxi & Island Tours

Tel: 340 775 0335

Take a tour of the island with Bruce Flamon, known locally as Chicago. He has fantastic knowledge of the island and will show you all its secret treasures. His mini-bus can seat up to 18 passengers.

Buses

There are regular bus routes running between Charlotte Amalie, Bordeaux (on the west of the island) and Redhook (on the east of the island). There is also a good service running around the centre of Charlotte Amalie itself. For more information ring VITRAN on 7744 5678.

Ferries

It is easy to reach the neighbouring islands by ferry and they run regularly from Red Hook and Charlotte Amalie. The schedule runs as follows:

Red Hook to Cruz Bay, St. John: 0630, 0730, and then hourly from 0800 to midnight. The return journey runs hourly from 0600 to 2300. This route takes

approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

Charlotte Amelie to Cruz Bay, St. John: 0900, 1100, 1300, 1500, 1600, 1730. The return journey runs at 0715, 0915, 1115, 1315, 1415 and 1545. This route takes approximately 45 minutes.

Sea Trips

Car Hire & Limousines

Budget Car and Truck Rental
Tel: 800 626 4516

Dependable Car Rental
Tel: 800 522 3076

Local taxis

Local taxis are available from all of the main tourist destinations and run on a metered system. Destination and cost is agreed prior to departure.

It is advisable to only use licensed taxis as they are strictly regulated. You will be able to identify them by their number plates which indicate their taxi status.

Eating Out

Local specialities

Café Wahoo
Red Hook (next to the ferry dock)
Tel: 340 775 6350
For French, Italian and Spanish dishes with a special Caribbean twist.

Fast food & quick bites

Paradise Point Bar and Café

Paradise Point
Tel: 340 744 9809

Club Rhino Tropical Café

Palm Passage
Tel: 340 777 8015

Gladys' Café

Royal Dane Mall, Charlotte Amalie
Tel: 340 774 6604

Delly Deck at Havensight - 776-9943

Havensight Cafe 774-5818

Formal

Mafolie Restaurant

Mafolie Estate
Tel: 340 774 2790

Herve Restaurant and Bar

Government Hill
Tel: 340 777 9703

Banana Tree Grille

Blackbeard's Castle, Charlotte Amalie
Tel: 340 776 4050

Cuzzin's Caribbean Restaurant Backstreet, Charlotte

Amelie. 777-4711

Amalia Cafe 714-7373

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A Linguistic Note

A Day In™ Guides are designed to meet the needs of a global audience. Modern tourists from Brisbane, Cincinnati, Edinburgh, and Los Angeles have English as their common language but each has a special way of spelling words and even a few grammatical idiosyncrasies. No single document can hope to cope with all these differences so the A Day In™ Guides have been deliberately written in what one might call a mid-Atlantic English. They use American, British and Australian spellings interchangeably and without worrying too much when or how. We hope that this approach will not offend any of the world's English-speakers and that you will tolerate the word 'center' as readily as 'centre' and 'favorite' as well as 'favourite'.

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