

give maximum exercise for the time involved. In just a short time, you climb from 700 to 1,200 ft. above sea level, where you get a very different view of the island. Trees creak in the wind and shy feral donkeys scatter when approached. Although NPS tours are available (see “Islandwide Practicalities”), the best way to go is on your own. If you do go with the park service, be sure to book trips well in advance if possible.

The “Trail Bandit” sells inexpensive trail maps: <http://www.trailbandit.org>

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS:** The development of the island has had severe environmental consequences. A 1994 research project launched by Colorado State University researchers found that unpaved roads are sending sediment into the coral reefs. Accordingly, they recommended that roads should be paved if possible, and new construction should be curtailed.

The *Wind Spirit*, an ultramodern craft operated by Wind Star Cruise Line, caused extensive damage to a coral reef. On Oct. 9, 1988, the boat was heading towards an authorized mooring in Francis Bay when a crewmember lowered the two-ton anchor too soon. The ship slowed down, almost halted, and then proceeded, leaving a huge stream of coral sediment in its wake as it dragged along the sea floor.

Although the ship failed to report the incident, it was observed and the government filed suit. (The cruise line—which uses that old “eco” line in publicity—failed to settle). As a consequence, the National Park Service filed a lawsuit in Nov. 1990. The trial was held in 1994, and \$300,000 was awarded (to the US government, unfortunately, *not* the Park Service) in 1996. The boat left a 400-foot-long and ten-foot-wide scar.

To date, the area remains largely barren of coral. The damage may take hundreds of years to rectify or the reef may never recov-

er. A second ship, the *Seaborn Pride* paid \$50,000 to the Park Service after accidentally dropping anchor off of Caneel Bay in 1990 and damaging the reef.

The past few years have seen rampant speculation and development driven by low interest rates coupled with tax incentives for millionaires. This has resulted in skyrocketing rents for St. Johnians and totally amazing prices for real estate. It has meant the defacement of island hillsides with what local architect Glen Spear terms “wedding cake houses.” Sadly, there is a lack of leadership willing to deal with these problems.

According to the non-profit National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), which released a 48-page “state of the parks assessment” in 2008, the park is threatened by development. Senior Marine Program Coordinator Jason Bennis maintains that “The park is at serious risk from development on properties within the boundaries of the park” which poses “a big problem.” “Development is incompatible within the park and you get fragmentation. You basically end up with gaping holes in the middle of the park.”

“Another big problem from development is the threat to water quality,” Bennis asserts. “Often with large scale development that is not done in an ecologically sound manner, you have sediment runoff. All dirt and sediment from loosened soil and construction ends up in the bay and threatens the health of the marine area.”

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## Cruz Bay

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**Cruz Bay**, once a relaxed and small town, has become an increasingly busy place. New condos are under construction in town; the Enighed Pond has been dredged to construct a cargo port; and an increasing number of vehicles ply the tiny town’s roads. Shoppers throng to the ultramodern but aesthetically

pleasing Mongoose Junction shopping center. The impressive Starfish Market complex caters to residents and visitors alike. In and around town, there are also a number of other shops, a wide range of restaurants, a small park, and a ranger station for the national park.

**NOTE:** For accommodations, food, and services in Cruz Bay see “Islandwide Practicalities” earlier in this chapter.

**SIGHTS:** St. John’s Administration Building, known as **the Battery**, was built on the foundation of an 18th-C fortification. Near the pier stands the **Nazareth Lutheran Church**.

**Gallows Point**, directly across from the harbor and now the sight of numerous developments, served a gruesome purpose in its time.

Farther out of town, along Centerline Rd. (formerly known as “Konge Vej”), stands the **Bethany Moravian Church**. Note the renovated 18th-C Parish Hall, the vaulted cistern behind it, and the two Dutch ovens inside the small house to the rear.

Near a large green water tank, a short paved road to the L leads to the ruins of **Estate Catherineberg** (Hammer Farms). One of the earliest plantations on St. John, it was restored in 1986. Here you’ll find a beautifully rebuilt windmill which is one of the most impressive ruined structures in the Caribbean. It is only one of two USVI sugar mill ruins featuring barrelled vaulting; the other is in Smithfield, St. Croix.

Back in town, the **bandstand** in the park was built in 1992 under the auspices of the St. John Community Foundation.

The **date palm** in front of the tourist bureau was transplanted from in front of Oscar’s Convenience Store in March 1993.

In another direction, the now gunless **Lind Battery**, allegedly constructed in a single night by the English during either their

1801 or 1807 assaults, can be reached by the Lind Point Trail (see “hikes” below).

**NEAR CRUZ BAY: The Pastory Gardens** (☎ 777-3147), around a mile from town along Centerline Rd., offer an 18-hole “executive putting course” and the Compass Rose Restaurant and Bar.

<http://www.pastorygardens.com>

An unusual sight in the island’s center, a “**smoothie stand**” is located in a vehicle which got stuck on Centerline Road. This is the type of thing that characterizes St. John.

**HIKES AROUND CRUZ BAY:** The **Lind Point Trail** (1.1 mi., one hour) connects the NPS Visitor Center with Caneel Bay Plantation. Just before the descent to Caneel Bay, the trail reaches an overlook at Lind Point. You enter the trail right in back of the ranger station where an open trail traverses pillar cacti, night blooming cacti, and tan tan, to reach a beautiful overlook facing Cruz Bay harbor. This is a great place to come for the sunset but bring a flashlight.

**Solomon Beach** is next, and then you can get to **Honeymoon Beach** right next door by heading around in back of the NPS-owned house (the former presidential suite of Caneel) and following the road. At Honeymoon, you may find all sizes and shapes of frog people who have disembarked from yachts and boats and are working on their snorkeling skills.

The **Caneel Hill Trail** (2.4 mi., two hours) joins Cruz Bay with the Northshore Rd. entrance to Caneel Bay via Caneel Hill and



St. John offers a much greater number of snorkeling sites than either St. Thomas or St. Croix. You can easily swim from most of the beaches.