

are found in the main towns, and access is available through some hotels. The cheapest access is found at the local libraries.

ORGANIZATIONS: If you've been impressed with the natural beauty of places like Salt River and Jacks Bay on St. Croix and wish to keep them that way, you may want to contribute to the **St. Croix Environmental Association**, Box 3839, Christiansted, St. Croix, USVI 00822. They sponsor some great hikes on St. Croix. Student membership is \$10, individual \$25, and family \$40.

<http://www.seastx.org>
sea@viaccess.net

Membership (\$15 individual, \$25 family) in the **Friends of National Park** (Box 11, St. John 00831) offers you a chance to directly participate in the preservation of this fantastic area. They also publish *The Virgin Islands National Park News*, a free bi-annual tabloid which offers an entertaining pastiche of information; it's issued by the Friends of the National Park. Other valuable work includes soliciting volunteers and working on the boat mooring system. *Their tours are great!*

<http://www.friendsvinp.org>

The **Nature Conservancy's** program in the USVI aims to protect high quality lands and waters as well as its biodiversity and to establish cooperative conservation, stewardship and science programs with federal and territorial governments. For more information and to contribute (\$25 for membership) contact Carol Harris Mayes, Program Director, The Nature Conservancy, 14B Norre Gade, Upstairs, Charlotte Amalie USVI 00802.

The **Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands** (☎ 774-6031) operates a number of programs, scholarships, and awards.

[http://www.fdcncenter.org/
grantmaker/cfvi](http://www.fdcncenter.org/grantmaker/cfvi)
dbrowncfvi@att.global.net

To become a tax deductible member of the **St. George Village Botanical Garden of St. Croix** (☎ 772-3872) send \$25 to Box 3011, Kingshill, St. Croix 00851-3011.

VOLUNTEERING: **Earthwatch** (☎ 617-926-8200) sends paying volunteers out to assist researchers working in the field. Costs are tax deductible, except for airfare. Write 680 Mt. Auburn St., Box 430-P, Watertown MA 02272 or call 1-800-693-0188.

<http://www.earthwatch.org>

Caribbean Volunteer Expeditions (☎ 607-962-7846; Box 388, Corning, NY 14830) offers occasional volunteer expeditions to the Virgin Islands. Past trips have focused on history and archaeology. Trips are from one to two weeks in duration and cost from around \$300-\$800 pw not including airfare.

<http://www.cvexp.org>
ahershcv@aol.com

Maho Bay Resort (☎ 800-392-9004) offers work exchange programs during the summer months.

<http://www.maho.org>

ACTIVISM: Whether you're a visitor or a resident, it is important to make known your concerns on social or environmental issues. Be sure to state your opinion clearly, include examples and key information, and include a return address. Write Dr. Charles Turnbull, Governor, Government House, St. Thomas 00801; The Honorable Donna Christiansen, US Rep. to Congress, US Representative to Congress, US House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515. Letters to The Legislature should be sent to The Honorable Almando Liburd, VI Legislature Building, St. Thomas 00801.

St. Thomas

Most populous and popular of all the United States Virgin Islands, St. Thomas measures three by 13 miles. A self-styled “American Paradise,” it hosts one million tourists a year; only 51,181 souls are permanent residents.

Flanked by the Atlantic to the N and the Caribbean to the S, the land is hilly and rugged. Hills, running up to 1,500 ft., give incredible views.

Charlotte Amalie (pronounced Ah-MAHL-ya) is the the Virgin Island’s commercial and political center. The town is very much a cruise ship town, and they dominate its landscape and small downtown area. For most visitors it is a small town, but Crucians find it crowded and urbanized, while St. Johnians regard a trip to St. Thomas as a ‘trip to the city.’ The town still has its historical heritage remarkably intact, and you may visit some of its old homes (and even stay in them!). It’s hard not to fall in love with the stone staircases, (“stair steps”) and, among the seemingly syndicated morass of shops, some gems are well worth visiting. There are plenty of good restaurants in all price ranges in town, and

many of them serve local food. A number of good coffee houses offer internet access, but the nightlife is mainly at the island’s resorts.

Although commercialized, the island still retains substantial charm. There are a number of popular attractions, two of the most popular of which are Coral World Ocean Park and Magens Bay. And there are many knockout views from all over the island. You can go kayaking, diving, fishing, windsurfing, snorkeling and find spas, tennis courts, golf courts, and, last but not least, child care. If at times St. Thomas may seem overbearing, just remember that, throughout its history, St. Thomas has always been a place where money and property have come before human beings.

TOPOGRAPHY: This 32-sq.-mi. island has been largely denuded; no primary forest remains. The visitor will find steep roads and, in Charlotte Amalie, innumerable staircases or “step streets.”

HISTORY: Arriving in 1666, the first Danish settlers found an abandoned island. To guard the harbor, Fort Christian was constructed in 1674. First known as “Tap Hus,” the town was renamed Amalienborg (later Charlotte Amalie) after the Danish queen in 1691. In 1755, after the dissolution of the Danish West India Company and purchase by the Danish government, the capital was transferred to Christiansted, St. Croix. A series of fires between 1804 and 1832 destroyed two-thirds of the town before a strict building code was enacted.

In 1837, a Lutheran Church census discovered at least 140 nationalities on St. Thomas. Most residents spoke two or more languages; church services were given in three languages and newspapers were print-

fast find

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ed in several. During this period, Charlotte Amalie was the third largest city in the Danish realm. After the emancipation of slaves in 1848, the island was transformed from an agricultural community into a supply depot for blockade runners and privateers from the South, as well as for the US men of war that chased them. Capital status was restored to Charlotte Amalie in 1871.

During the last quarter of the 19th C, St. Thomas became a coaling depot for European steamship companies. When the US Navy took possession of the island in 1917, they dredged a large channel between St. Thomas and neighboring Hassel I. to allow them an alternate escape route in case of attack.

Since the end of WW II, tourism has become the chief “industry” of St. Thomas.

Island-Wide Practicalities

Arrival and Transport

ARRIVING BY AIR: From San Juan a beautiful flight takes you past Icacos, flying directly over Culebra with Vieques in the background. Houses on St. Thomas look like white dots on a patch of green moss. The aircraft main terminal, to the W of Charlotte Amalie has been attractively remodeled.

From the airport to town, a van will cost you \$7, or \$6 pp if you share, plus \$2 per bag. [Larger bags (30”x20”) may be charged up to \$4.] For rates to destinations other than Charlotte Amalie see the chart later in this chapter. *Don't let them overcharge you!*

It is not practical to take a bus because the schedule has been cut way back and the bus does not come into the terminal. If you have strong legs and little luggage, however, you may go out to the main road and wait for the VITRAN (around \$1; exact change) or for a “dollar taxi” or “safari” (a pickup truck with seats and a roof). Be sure to ask

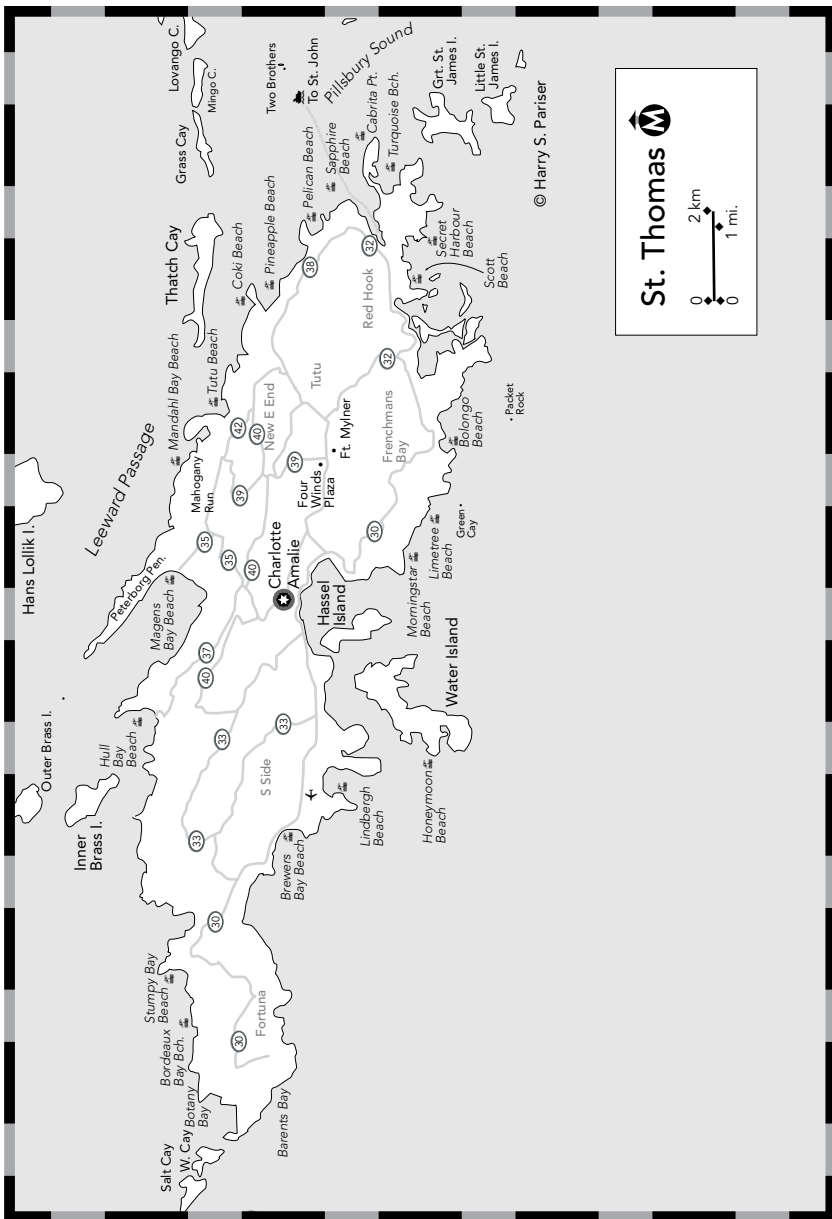
if it is a “dollar bus.” *Otherwise, they may try to charge you the taxi rate.* Rides are \$1 for short trips. Examples are anywhere in town, between the University of the Virgin Islands and the Hospital (Schneider Regional Medical Center), points between the Hospital up to Pricemart (a discount warehouse), and traveling from one point to another in the “country” (the used to describe the middle and east end of the island). The fare rises \$2 for more extended, cross-island trips such as traveling from the Hospital to points beyond PriceSmart, and traveling from PriceSmart and beyond to anywhere in town. If proceeding directly to St. John, you must travel from the airport to town and then take the ferries from Charlotte Amalie to Cruz Bay or take a bus or taxi to Red Hook and then the ferry on to St. John.

ARRIVING ON A CRUISE: There are two cruise ship piers. If your ship arrives while a few others are docked, you may be shuttled in by small boat. If arriving at the West Indian Company Dock, it's best to take the taxi shuttle into town. From the Crown Bay pier, the road to town is along a hot and heavily-trafficked main road so you may wish to take a taxi.

GETTING AROUND: The only local bus service, VITRAN (☎ 774-5678) runs to various locations all over the island. However, service cutbacks have limited its usefulness. The privately-run “dollar” buses (which charge \$2 for longer distances: see the previous “arriving by air” section for details) may



The Reefer (a ferry) will take you out to the beach at Frenchman's Reef. This is a great way to get to a beach if staying in town.



St. Thomas

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0 1 mi. 0

ST. THOMAS