



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Wyscan

# Honeymooning, Like a Virgin...

## **St. Thomas, 4 Days**

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** As a post-nup paradise, the US Virgin Islands make a big splash. With everything from tourist-packed mega-malls to protected pristine beaches, you won't have to give up modern conveniences and four-star amenities to enjoy the idyllic islands--unless you want to. This four-guide offers the perfect marriage of outdoorsy, lush St. John and bustling, glitzy St. Thomas, taking you from land to sea to sky... and into the stars with your sweetie. You'll be based at pristine and remote Caneel Bay Resort in St. John; you'll truly be off the beaten path, so be sure to pre-book unlimited ferry service between the resort and St. Thomas. While St. John creates a perfectly lush and tranquil honeymoon setting, it lacks the tourist facilities of St. Thomas. Be sure to enjoy a hearty breakfast or brunch at one of Caneel Bay Resort's before heading out for your morning beach romping, as restaurants are far and few between.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - St. Thomas

**DAY NOTE:** Your four days of honeymoon bliss begin at the Caneel Bay Resort, tucked away on pristine St. John. Enjoy a hearty brunch at one of the resort's restaurants before spend the rest of the morning lazing on the white sands of Trunk Bay, a quintessentially remote St. John beach--until the cruise ships arrive. When the tourists begin pouring in the afternoon, head to St. Peter Greathouse Estate & Gardens to stroll around the lush, romantic gardens. Hop on that ferry and head into St. Thomas for the night. Uber-romantic Old Stone Farm house is the ambient, old-world setting for your first day's dinner. Linger over the seaside small plates at Oceana Restaurant, and top the night off sipping cocktails at sultry Elizabeth's.

	<b>Caneel Bay Resort</b> Seven memorable beaches
	<b>St. Peter Greathouse Estate &amp; Gardens</b> Lush and green gardens
	<b>Oceana Restaurant and Wine Bar</b> Global cuisine, tapas and wine bar

## Day 2 - St. Thomas

**DAY NOTE:** You'll spend most of your second day romping around one of St. John's most stunning attractions, Cinnamon Bay. Snorkel around the azure waters and stroll hand-in-hand along the gleaming white sands before heading into St. John, where you'll spend the rest of the day dining, drinking and gazing out from one of the island's best vantage points.

Casual Rhumblines will make for a relaxing alfresco lunch. Brave the crowds and soak in a truly stunning sunset at Mountain Top, well-touristed but still a must-see. Dinner will take you to local hot-spot and haven of hipness Epernay, where you can spend hours sipping wines.

	<b>Mountain Top</b> Stellar vistas from former Signal Hill
	<b>Epernay Wine Bar and Bistro</b> Wine bar extraordinaire

## Day 3 - St. Thomas

**DAY NOTE:** Start your third day at little-visited St. Croix's best beaches and snorkeling waters, Jack and Isaacs Bays. One of the few restaurants on St. Croix, Indies will wow you with sumptuous local flavors. For the rest of the day, head back to St. Thomas. No trip to the US Virgin Islands is complete without a little shopping. You can join the masses at one of the duty-free mega-malls, or head to Tillett Gardens, home to local artists galleries among other entertainment options. Dinner takes you to award-winning Agave Terrace, where tropical atmosphere and exquisite cuisine is yours for the taking. Head back to Tillett Gardens and enjoy an evening show at well-regarded Pistarkle Theater/

	<b>Tillett Gardens</b> Art and artisan center
	<b>Agave Terrace (Point Pleasant Resort)</b> Beachfront dining
	<b>Pistarkle Theater</b> Popular local theater

## Day 4 - St. Thomas

**DAY NOTE:** Your fourth and final honeymoon day will deliver over-the-top romance. Spend the early part of the day swooning at remote and aptly named Honeymoon Beach on St. John. Have an ideal alfresco lunch at St. Thomas' Blue Moon Cafe before hitting the skies. Air Center Helicopters is your outfitter for dazzling bird's eye views of the islands. Get back in time for your sunset champagne cruise with Heavenly Days. Your final dinner will be at uber-romantic Old Stone Farm house, where the old-world ambiance will make you swoon.

	<b>Blue Moon Cafe</b> Beachfront dining
	<b>Air Center Helicopters</b> See St. Thomas from the air
	<b>Heavenly Days</b> Wind in your sails
	<b>Old Stone Farm House (The)</b> Gracious surroundings and good food

# Day 1 - St. Thomas

## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Your four days of honeymoon bliss begin at the Caneel Bay Resort, tucked away on pristine St. John. Enjoy a hearty brunch at one of the resort's restaurants before spend the rest of the morning lazing on the white sands of Trunk Bay, a quintessentially remote St. John beach--until the cruise ships arrive. When the tourists begin pouring in the afternoon, head to St. Peter Greathouse Estate & Gardens to stroll around the lush, romantic gardens. Hop on that ferry and head into St. Thomas for the night. Uber-romantic Old Stone Farm house is the ambient, old-world setting for your first day's dinner. Linger over the seaside small plates at Oceana Restaurant, and top the night off sipping cocktails at sultry Elizabeth's.

### contact:

tel: +1 340 776 6111  
fax: +1 340 693 8280  
<http://www.caneelbay.com>

### location:

P.O. Box 720  
Caneel Bay VI 00831

## 1 Caneel Bay Resort

**DESCRIPTION:** Pristine and perfect with lush grounds, seven beautiful beaches and knock out views of St. Thomas across the sea, Caneel Bay Resort sets the stage for a comfortable vacation. The posh, yet simple, rooms are decorated in tropical-style furniture, and the upscale 170-acre property offers impeccable service as well as a variety of activities and water sports. Guests spend their days playing tennis, relaxing at the beach, browsing in the ritzy gift shop, and enjoying fine dining at any one of the hotel's four restaurants. © wcities.com



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### contact:

tel: +1 340 774 4999  
fax: +1 340 774 1723  
<http://www.greathouse-mountaintop.com/>

### location:

6A St. Peter Mountain Road,  
Route 40  
Charlotte Amalie 00801

## St. Peter Greathouse Estate & Gardens

**DESCRIPTION:** Perched a thousand feet above Magens Bay, this 11-acre estate offers visitors a self-guided stroll past its 200 plus varieties of trees and plants, an orchid garden, waterfalls, bird sanctuary, and fish ponds. An observation deck provides views of Magens Bay, Peter Island, Jost Van Dyke, Hans Lollik, and a number of smaller islands. In addition to the huge greathouse, there is a mini-museum of antiques and furnishings as well as local art. Built in the 1800s, the attraction was originally part of the 150-acre Estate St. Peter. © wcities.com



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### hours:

Daily 9a-4:30p

### contact:

tel: 1340 774 4262  
fax: 1340 774 4841  
<http://www.oceanavi.com>

### location:

Villa Olga in Frenchtown  
Frenchtown 00802

## Oceana Restaurant and Wine Bar

**DESCRIPTION:** This restaurant is located in a beautifully restored villa at the water's edge. The menu features fresh seafood and meats expertly prepared. The reasonably priced tapas table has twenty delicious items to choose from.



Oceana Restaurant and Wine Bar

### hours:

5:30p-9:30p

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**contact:**

tel: +1 340 774 2400

fax: +1 340 777 4691

<http://greathouse-mountaintop.com>

**location:**

Route 33

Charlotte Amalie 00802

**hours:**

9a-5p daily

## Mountain Top

**DESCRIPTION:** Even if you're not in the market for a tee shirt, a St. Thomas souvenir or a banana daiquiri, a stop at this touristy attraction is worth it just for the view. At 1,500 feet above sea level, visitors can see up and down the island chain. The area, once known as Signal Hill, served as a strategic communications point for the United States government during the 1940s. Tour buses galore visit this spot, so time your visit when only a few cruise ships are in the harbor. There is no admission charge. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Mountain Top

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**contact:**

tel: 340 774 5348

**location:**

Route 3016

St. Thomas 00802

**hours:**

11:30am until the evening ends

## Epernay Wine Bar and Bistro

**DESCRIPTION:** The island's premier wine and champagne bar also conjures up a delicious and nicely-presented menu of contemporary cuisine. Start with something like the Epernay Platter, a plate of Smoked Salmon, Brie and Pate served with Crostinis, Capers and Onions. Dinner tends towards a Rib Eye Steak with Fried Shallots, Grilled Chicken and Sesame Crusted Tuna with Sticky Rice and Roasted Vegetables. Sophisticated residents and visitors gather at the bar to sample a vast selection of international wines by the glass or bottle.

# Day 3 - St. Thomas

## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Start your third day at little-visited St. Croix's best beaches and snorkeling waters, Jack and Isaacs Bays. One of the few restaurants on St. Croix, Indies will wow you with sumptuous local flavors. For the rest of the day, head back to St. Thomas. No trip to the US Virgin Islands is complete without a little shopping. You can join the masses at one of the duty-free mega-malls, or head to Tillet Gardens, home to local artists galleries among other entertainment options. Dinner takes you to award-winning Agave Terrace, where tropical atmosphere and exquisite cuisine is yours for the taking. Head back to Tillet Gardens and enjoy an evening show at well-regarded Pistarkle Theater/

### contact:

tel: +1 340 775 1929

fax: +1 340 775 9482

<http://www.tillettgardens.com/>

### location:

4126 Anna's Retreat, Route 38 (Smith Bay Road)  
Charlotte Amalie 00802

### hours:

9a-5p M-Sa, call for concert schedule

## 1 Tillet Gardens

**DESCRIPTION:** This small compound, tucked away right in the heart of the busy Tutu shopping area, is home to a handful of artists, the highly-acclaimed local theater group, Pistarkle Theater, a restaurant, and an ongoing series of concerts and art fairs, including the popular Arts Alive festival. Established in 1959 by the late Jim Tillet, the area developed into an art center when Tillet began making and merchandising his silk-screened island maps and prints. Similar items are still available at Tillet Art Gallery. © wcities.com

### contact:

tel: +1 340 775 4142

### location:

6600 Estate Smith Rd  
Smith Bay 00802

### hours:

Daily 6p-10p

## 2 Agave Terrace (Point Pleasant Resort)

**DESCRIPTION:** This lovely cliffside restaurant epitomizes tropical dining. The friendly but elegant atmosphere is outdone only by the excellent cuisine. Agave Terrace is known for its seafood specialties. Try the local lobster or the catch of the day prepared with your choice of sauce and style. The restaurant has a menu just for children, who are welcome here. It has won six gold medals, including the Best Overall award, from Chaine des Rotisseurs and an Award of Excellence from Wine Spectator. A steel drum band usually plays on Tuesdays and Thursdays. © wcities.com



Agave Terrace (Point Pleasant Resort)

### contact:

tel: 340 775 7877

fax: 340 776 6119

<http://www.pistarkletheater.vi>

### location:

Tillet Gardens  
St. Thomas 00802

## 3 Pistarkle Theater

**DESCRIPTION:** The island's premier little theater group puts on quite good performances throughout the year. Most of the actors live here, but most have at least some theater experience elsewhere. The director is often imported from the United States mainland to give the play a bit more polish. Look for plays like Bus Stop and California Suite on stage. Advance reservations are advised, but you may pick up your tickets at the box office. © wcities.com

# Day 4 - St. Thomas

## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Your fourth and final honeymoon day will deliver over-the-top romance. Spend the early part of the day swooning at remote and aptly named Honeymoon Beach on St. John. Have an ideal alfresco lunch at St. Thomas' Blue Moon Cafe before hitting the skies. Air Center Helicopters is your outfitter for dazzling bird's eye views of the islands. Get back in time for your sunset champagne cruise with Heavenly Days. Your final dinner will be at uber-romantic Old Stone Farm house, where the old-world ambiance will make you swoon.

**contact:**

tel: +1 340 779 2262  
<http://www.bluemooncafevi.com/>

**location:**

6280 Estate Nazareth  
Nazareth 00802

**hours:**

Daily 7a-3p, 6p-10p

## 1 Blue Moon Cafe

**DESCRIPTION:** This alfresco beachside eatery is a favorite for casual lunches with sand on your feet and more elegant dinners served under soft lighting and ceiling fans. Palm trees surround the restaurant and boats bob in the harbor. By day, the cuisine includes imaginative salads, sandwiches and items such as a quesadilla with chicken, mango, Monterey Jack and cheddar cheeses, and scallions. In the evening, the menu runs to dishes like red snapper with pecans, bananas in a coconut rum sauce and parmesan-crusted chicken with penne pasta, artichokes, tomatoes and garlic. © wcities.com



"Photo courtesy of Blue Moon Cafe"

**contact:**

tel: 340 775-7335  
fax: +1 340 774 7133  
[http://www.achi-vi.com/service02\\_8.htm](http://www.achi-vi.com/service02_8.htm)

**location:**

Crown Bay Cruise Ship Dock  
Subbase 00801

## Air Center Helicopters

**DESCRIPTION:** Get a bird's eye view of reefs, rocks, the islands and the sea with a helicopter tour from this St. Thomas company. The 25-minute Odyssey trip takes you from a grassy spot near the Crown Bay Cruise Ship Dock over Charlotte Amalie, along the north coast of St. John, over Jost Van Dyke in the British Virgin Islands, and back to St. Thomas via Magens Bay. © wcities.com



Air Center Helicopters

**contact:**

tel: +1 340 775 1800 / +1 800 524 4746  
fax: +1 340 775 3208  
<http://www.bolongobay.com/>

**location:**

7150 Bolongo, Route 30  
(Bovoni Road)  
Charlotte Amalie 00802

**hours:**

Leaves at 9:30a daily

## Heavenly Days

**DESCRIPTION:** Set sail aboard Heavenly Days, a 53-foot catamaran, for Honeymoon Beach in St. John. This type of sailboat is stable, which means the ride is more comfortable than a conventional sailboat. The trip includes several hours of sun, swimming and snorkeling at one of the island's prettiest beaches, located at the posh Caneel Bay Resort in Virgin Islands National Park. The rate includes snorkeling gear, a buffet lunch and an open bar. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Heavenly Days

**contact:**

tel: +1 340 777 6277

fax: +1 340 777 6985

<http://www.oldstonefarmhouse.com/>

**location:**

Route 42 (Mahogany Run Road)

Lovenlund 00802

**hours:**

5:30p-9:30p Tu-Su

**2 Old Stone Farm House (The)**

**DESCRIPTION:** The Old Stone Farm House serves delicious food in what was once the factory of a centuries-old sugar plantation. With exposed stone walls, candlelight and lovely table linens, the restaurant sets the stage for a gracious evening. The menu runs toward the contemporary side with dishes like pan seared salmon with arugula, pistachios, mint and a yellow split pea puree. It is served with basil pomme frites, or French fries to those who prefer English. Do not skip the chocolate covered Grand Marnier cheesecake. © wcities.com



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# St. Thomas Snapshot

## Local Info

With its lush green hills, quintessential white sand beaches, bustling commercial center, and spectacular dining, St. Thomas packs a lot of paradise into 28 square miles. Which is why it is the busiest of the three United States Virgin Islands, and one of the most popular cruise ports in the Caribbean.

One of four islands that compose the US Virgin Islands, St. Thomas was a Danish colony until the United States bought it in 1917. Today it's home to only 51,000 full-time residents, but sees almost a million visitors every year. Tourism is the mainstay of the economy, and many residents work in the industry, or at businesses that depend on it.

Golf and watersports such as sailing and scuba diving are some of the main draws of the island, and many independent operators (or cruise ship tour directors) can organize excursions for those who want a more active vacation. But there are also plenty of beaches to laze on, shopping- both duty free and local handicrafts- a vibrant international dining scene, and nightlife that's centered around Frenchtown.

The nerve center of the island is the picturesque but congested capital, Charlotte Amalie, with its top-notch duty-free shopping, boutique hotels and inns, and historical landmarks dating back to 1671. Radiating out in every direction from the capital are quieter areas and pockets of isolation for those who don't care for the buzz of the city. Luckily, no place in St. Thomas is more than an hour from the center by rental car, taxi, or bus, which makes it relatively easy to explore in a short amount of time.

In the remote but chic East End is a collection of elegant resorts, quaint towns and unspoiled beaches, such as Sapphire Beach, the enclave of Red Hook, and Fungi's bar. The ever-popular South Coast has gold-plated resorts and the rollicking nightlife of Frenchtown. And the charming North coast boasts the renowned Magens Bay Beach and the highly-rated Mahogany Run golf course. While traveling around the island, along the winding mountain roads, you'll be treated to incredible views at almost every turn. Drake's Seat, where Sir Francis Drake reportedly checked on his

fleet, and the recently re-opened Mountain Top are especially popular viewpoints.

Non-cruise visitors usually arrive at Cyril E. King Airport, near the western end of the island. Cruise ship passengers arrive at the Havensight cruise ship dock, but a few ships also tie up in Crown Bay or anchor out in Charlotte Amalie Harbor. Since St. Thomas is known as one of the top sailing destinations in the world, many visitors also come in on their own boats, while others arrive via ferries from other islands.

There is a wide variety of accommodation on St. Thomas, which tends to be divided between the historic hotels, cozy inns and quaint guest houses tucked into Charlotte Amalie's hills and back streets, and the grand resorts and condominium complexes that line the beaches on the island's eastern end and southern coast. Vacation villas also pepper many exclusive residential neighborhoods.

While Charlotte Amalie is the main shopping area, several other shopping centers with tourist-oriented stores are now spread out all across the island. Havensight Mall has dozens of shops, including some branches of Charlotte Amalie stores. Other popular shopping spots include the American Yacht Harbor in Red Hook, plus Lockhart Gardens and the Tutu Park Mall near Charlotte Amalie. Most hotels also have a few shops for picking up resort wear and souvenirs.

Shopping in all the United States Virgin Islands is duty free, but it pays to check prices before you leave home to make sure you cannot buy items cheaper from your local discount store. Merchants tout deals on jewelry, liquor, electronic equipment, camera, linens, and more. United States residents may bring in USD\$1,200 worth of goods. All items made in the Virgin Islands, including art, are exempt from the total.

If you decide to explore by rental car, bear in mind that street addresses in St. Thomas are a bit of a loose concept. Maps identify major roads by route numbers, but residents are not always aware of them. Furthermore, roads may change names several times along a numbered route, and some streets in Charlotte Amalie with Danish names are often called by their English names. So be prepared to ask for

help with a smile, and to be directed to your destination using local landmarks.

Although it's a beautiful and hugely popular island paradise, one of the only drawbacks of the island is that it's not necessarily the friendliest or safest place in the Caribbean. Locals often seem to have little patience with the hordes of tourists, but a good attitude and a cheerful "good morning" or "good afternoon" will get you far. Precautions need to be taken against theft: cars and rooms should stay locked and valuables should be kept out of sight. It's not a great idea to walk around alone at night, especially on Back Street in Charlotte Amalie. Visitors may want to take taxis to and from restaurants in the evenings.

St. Thomas can also be over-developed and crowded at times (especially when a cruise ship is in port). But there's plenty of space to spread out beyond the capital in order to find a little piece of classic island paradise.

© NileGuide

## History

Though most histories of St. Thomas start with its discovery by European explorers, a succession of native tribes lived on this island for hundreds of years before Columbus and his ilk sailed in. 1,500 year old artifacts from the Ciboney Indians, who are believed to have migrated from the South American mainland, have been found on the north shore of the island near Hull Bay. Remains of later tribes such as the Arawak, Taino and Carib Indians were uncovered in 1990 during the construction of the Tutu park mall in the center of the island.

Unfortunately the Indians were wiped out by diseases carried by Europeans, the first of whom to venture to the islands was Christopher Columbus. Columbus did not drop anchor in St. Thomas during his second trip to the New World in 1493, but he did claim the Virgin Islands for Spain. For the next 180 years the waters around the island were plied by pirates, who raided ships loaded with booty from the Americas, and used St. Thomas's harbors as refuges. The English pirate Blackbeard was a legendary menace, and a castle in Charlotte Amalie carried his name to this day.

## St. Thomas Snapshot continued

Real colonization of St. Thomas did not occur until 1671, when the Danish West India Company was granted a charter to take possession of the island and began importing first convicts, then slaves, to create and maintain large plantations. A small settlement grew around what is now Charlotte Amalie harbor, and work on Fort Christian, built to protect the island, began in 1672. The town was initially known as Taphus ("beer hall" in Danish), due to the abundance of taverns, which catered mainly to pirates and other seafarers. Charlotte Amalie also became a post for slave trading, which was centered in modern-day Market Square. Both these developments led to the island's preeminence as a center of commerce and trade in the Caribbean during the 1700s, a position it still holds today.

In 1754 the island became a crown colony of Denmark and continued to grow and prosper, but by the mid-1800's the fortunes of St. Thomas took a turn for the worse. A slave revolt and the subsequent abolition of slavery, combined with seizures by the British, fires, hurricanes, trade embargoes and various other woes, combined to depress the agricultural economy. But at the same time, the island was gradually shifting away from plantation life and developing industries based on shipping, importing, and coal.

Between 1865 and 1917 the United States negotiated several times with the Danish government to purchase the Virgin Islands.

In 1917 the deal finally went through, and the United States became the owner for a mere \$25 million. The idea was that the territory could be used as an outpost to protect the United States in the event of an invasion through the Panama Canal. The United States Navy ran the islands until 1931 when the United States Department of Interior took over. The 1936 Organic Act gave residents the right to elect members of their Municipal Councils, but the president appointed the governor until 1970 when residents elected Melvin Evans to the post. All residents who held American citizenship, were over age 21 and could read and write English had the right to vote starting in 1938.

Many residents continue to feel they are second-class U.S. citizens. Although decisions made at the federal level have a huge impact here, territorial residents

cannot vote for the U.S. president. Residents elect a delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives, but she is not able to vote. Residents pay taxes at the same rate and use the same paperwork forms as state residents, but the money stays in the territory to fund local government operations. During World War II, the federal government used the island as a submarine base, hence the name Subbase still in use today in the neighborhood surrounding the former base. The federal government retained ownership to Water Island, which sits just offshore in Charlotte Amalie Harbor, until 1996 when the territorial government took over.

Vacation travel began to increase in the late 1950s when the doors to Cuba slammed shut with Fidel Castro's rise to power. Newly opened hotels and tourism business were left scrambling for help. This forced the island to recruit a vast number of immigrants from the Eastern Caribbean, who came for better jobs than they could find at home. Most remained, growing into a solid middle class.

St. Thomas' tourism-based economy continued to grow, but Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and Hurricane Marilyn in 1995, plus a series of smaller hurricanes in the late 1990s, the closure of Eastern Airlines as well as the failure of several major travel wholesalers, dealt severe blows. However, the economy has rebounded from each problem.

©

### Hotel Insights

St. Thomas offers a full range of accommodation, from luxury beach front resorts where the staff caters to your every whim, to cookie-cutter condominiums, to historical boutique hotels, to vacation villas and cozy guesthouses in several price ranges. Former President Bill Clinton picked St. Thomas twice for a New Year's break; he stayed at the posh Sand Dollar Villa, located above Magens Bay. That villa is still in the vacation rental market, and is one of the island's most popular.

The Ritz Carlton, St. Thomas sets the standard for a luxury visit with its Mediterranean-style villas and marble accoutrements, but several other large resorts like the Renaissance Grand Beach Resort are just a tick or two below.

These are full-service resorts with several swimming pools, vast water sports programs, spacious beaches, a handful of restaurants, a string of shops, a car rental agency, and more. All are chains run by large conglomerates. Most are located on the island's eastern end, an easy drive to the Red Hook ferry dock for day excursions to St. John and the Virgin Islands National Park.

Conventioneers head for Marriott Frenchman's Reef Beach Resort, whose 500 rooms make it the largest in St. Thomas. It has everything a convention-goer needs, including restaurants, a beach, water sports, and ferry transportation to Charlotte Amalie's shops and restaurants. Other resorts also provide convention services, but none on quite the same level as Frenchman's Reef.

People with business in Charlotte Amalie or who want a large city-based hotel opt for the Holiday Inn St. Thomas. A chain hotel, it provides standard amenities with in-town convenience. While the closest beach is a bit of a drive away, the hotel does have a pool to refresh you. It is also within walking distance of the seaplane connection to St. Croix and ferries to St. John and the nearby British Virgin Islands.

Smaller seaside hotels like the family-owned Bolongo Bay Beach Resort & Villas and the Best Western Emerald Beach Resort provide quite nice resort amenities with a lesser price tag and a more personal feel. These hotels have a pool, water sports, and a restaurant, but on a much smaller scale than larger resorts.

Condominium complexes like Sapphire Village Condominiums are a home away from home for independent sorts. With full kitchens and more space than a hotel room, they give guests flexibility to eat in or dine out. Most have beaches and a restaurant or two within walking distance.

Many visitors prefer to stay at a vacation villa. St. Thomas has a large number for rent, with McLaughlin Anderson Luxury Villas the island's premier company for finding a villa to suit your need and pocketbook. All are located in residential neighborhoods. Some are beach front, but most sit high up on the island's hills for great views and lovely breezes. They come fully equipped, making it easy to enjoy all the comforts of home for a week or more by just unpacking your suitcase. To fully

## St. Thomas Snapshot continued

enjoy your vacation villa, a rental car is a must. Taxi drivers are reluctant to head into neighborhoods because homes are not easily identified, so without a car you may be unable to dine out or shop.

Historic Charlotte Amalie guests houses such as the bougainvillea-draped Hotel 1829 give visitors a city experience. Such hotels exude charm, but the rooms may be on the small side. Many do not have pools or other amenities, but put you just steps from a vast number of stores and restaurants, including the eponymous Hotel 1829 Restaurant.

Budget vacationers opt for places like the Green Iguana Hotel, where the rooms are clean and comfortable but a tad on the pedestrian side. These smaller spots, usually located up in the hills in the Charlotte Amalie outskirts or within the city limits, come with one plus. The owners, with years of Caribbean tales to share, are on hand to entertain you. It is also easy to meet other guests, who tend to be sociable sorts.

Families often opt for the all-inclusive Wyndham Sugar Bay Resort & Spa. With the myriad amenities and activities a full-service resort provides, the hotel gives families good value for its money since meals are included. Other resorts, such as the Sapphire Beach Resort & Marina, also have active children's programs to give parents a break. Baby sitters are usually available through hotel front desks.

If you want an active Scuba diving vacation, pick a place with an extensive dive program. Since you will depart for your dive right from the resort's dock, you will not waste time driving to a dive operator's location. The smallish Secret Harbour Beach Resort is home to Aqua Action, one of the island's most respected dive operations.

Chartering a sailboat for a week or more through a company such as Regency Yacht Vacations, called a term charter in industry lingo, is an alternative to staying put in a hotel. While you can sign on without a crew, the addition of a captain and a mate provides a level of luxury hard to achieve on your own. The captain knows the nicest anchorages, the neatest tropical bars and how to operate those intriguing water sports toys. The crew conjures up fine cuisine to a menu chosen by you in an amazingly small

galley. Prices compare to a luxury hotel vacation.

Package plans are often available, particularly at the larger hotels. The local government adds an 8 percent hotel room tax on to each bill and some hotels add a service charge.

©

### Restaurants Insights

There is no shortage of places to eat and drink on St. Thomas. While the major hotels have multiple restaurants that offer everything from burgers to bouillabaisse, most visitors like to venture out a time or two to sample some of the island's fare. Like the cultural stew that makes up St. Thomas, restaurant menus reflect a cross section of cuisines. While many of the dishes might be found on menus at home, others carry a Caribbean influence. Plantains, a banana-like vegetable, often come with your dinner and chutney is the de rigueur condiment. The island's ties to the United States have led many culinary school graduates to head here for stints at the most prestigious restaurants. They demand the best ingredients and create lovely presentations, a culinary aspect that trickles down to less-pricey restaurants.

Aside from fine restaurants, you will find dozens of other more casual dining options scattered around the island. They range from cozy seaside bistros to roadside stands featuring West Indian dishes. The hotels welcome you even if you are not a guest. The style and ambience of the dining and drinking scene varies widely, but by and large, expect things to be informal.

St. Thomas is among the more expensive places to dine out, but not any more so than a big city like New York or London. If you are used to more modest prices, the dinner tab can come as a shock. Since nearly everything is imported, shipping adds to the cost. A 15 to 20 percent tip is expected at the island's restaurants.

### Charlotte Amalie

The island's main town serves as its culinary heart. Dozens of bistros welcome cruise ship passengers for lunch. At night, hotel guests and locals fill the tables.

At the upper end of the credit card bill and opposite ends of town, Virgilio's and

Hervé Restaurant & Wine Bar attract well-heeled customers for fine dining in lovely surroundings. Hervé Restaurant & Wine Bar, on Kongen's Gade, provides lovely views and a fusion of French, Italian and Caribbean cuisine. Virgilio's, a local hot spot for in-town government officials and professionals, leans toward Northern Italian.

A tad less pricey are spots like the casual Café Amici in A.H. Riise Mall for burgers, salads and sandwiches or Lillian's Caribbean Grill to dine on West Indian fare like kallallo, a spicy okra stew, or local fish and fungi, made or cornmeal and okra.

For budget meals, try Texas Pit BBQ. This take-out stand has three locations in St. Thomas. Gladys's Cafe, in the alleyway shopping area called Royal Dane Mall, dishes up a mixed bag of American and Caribbean food to an equally eclectic clientele.

### Hillsides outside Charlotte Amalie

Banana Tree Grille at Bluebeard's Castle Hotel is a hike up from Charlotte Amalie, so take a taxi if you are not staying there. The restaurant dishes up delicious contemporary fare along with its sumptuous view.

Mafolie Restaurant at the Mafolie Hotel is a hot spot for steak and seafood as well as gorgeous views of the Charlotte Amalie Harbor.

### Havensight

Havensight is home to numerous restaurants, most catering to the cruise ship crowd that throngs the area every day. Delly Deck in Havensight Mall is an island standby. Serving standard fare like burgers, reubens and fried chicken, it can be one busy place. Across the street at Al Cohen Mall sits Pizza Amore, home to pizza by the slice and huge submarine sandwiches for take out or eating in. For a little nicer ambience, try the Havensight Café in Havensight Mall. The food runs to sandwiches and specialties like bagels and lox.

### Frenchtown

Frenchtown, a small community near Charlotte Amalie, is a food connoisseur's paradise. Great restaurants sit cheek and jowl with casual bistros. Alexander's Cafe, open for lunch and dinner, sees a

## St. Thomas Snapshot continued

good smattering of visitors joining local business types for eclectic fare. The patés are especially good.

### Between Charlotte Amalie and Red Hook

A string of hotel-based restaurants on both the north and south coasts serve a wide variety of cuisines in varying settings.

On the south shore and a few miles east of Charlotte Amalie and the Havensight area, the huge Marriott Frenchman's Reef Beach Resort and the adjacent Morning Star Beach Resort reign over the restaurant scene. Havana Blue, a lovely seaside restaurant serving Latin-fusion food, is the best of the lot.

In Estate Nazareth, on the south coast, Blue Moon Cafe at Secret Harbor Beach Resort conjures up contemporary cuisine with tropical flair in a lovely beachfront setting.

Visitors heading out of Charlotte Amalie towards Red Hook along the northern route should not miss Randy's Wine Bar & Bistro. Located in the Al Cohen's Plaza, along with a paint store, a bakery and a dentist, the restaurant with its American-style menu is a local favorite.

Located on the north coast at the Point Pleasant Resort, the Agave Terrace is one of the island's best restaurants. With several prestigious awards on its wall, the restaurant serves mostly seafood.

### Red Hook

Bustling Red Hook is home to several restaurants. The casual Grateful Deli in the Red Hook Shopping Plaza serves up eclectic cuisine popular with locals. Since it is also a cyber-café, you can check your e-mail while you eat.

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### Nightlife Insights

When it comes to entertainment, the offerings are as eclectic as the people who live in St. Thomas. What is fresh and new this season may have left the island by next, but others quickly take their place. The winter season always sees more to do than the summer. For the latest on entertainment events, pick up a copy of St. Thomas This Week, available free at shops, restaurants, and tourist attractions around the island, or check the Thursday edition of

the Virgin Islands Daily News. Its weekend section gives a good rundown of who is playing where and when.

### Nightlife

Most hotels provide some sort of rather sophisticated entertainment at their bars and restaurants, particularly during the busier winter season. The offerings run toward local artists, some quite good, playing piano, steel pans or guitar. The Blue Moon Cafe at Secret Harbour Beach Resort provides a lovely setting for mellow piano and jazz music.

Hotels occasionally offer West Indian-style events popular with tourists. Bolongo Bay Beach Resort & Villas holds a Wednesday Carnival Night with a steel band, fire eater, limbo show and dinner.

Many restaurants set up entertainment after dinner with offerings that run from sophisticated jazz to very loud rock and roll. Duffy's Love Shack sets the pace for a party hearty atmosphere with its outrageously named drinks and loud music. Located in the Red Hook Shopping Center parking lot, the bar sees huge crowds of youthful folks gather here to mix and mingle. The Greenhouse also attracts a young crowd for nightly music that runs from rock & roll to local music.

Molly Malone's in American Yacht Harbor at Red Hook always has Irish music playing.

Frenchtown is the place to stroll from bar to bar for eclectic late night entertainment. The hot spots seem to come and go, but there is always something happening.

### Performances

Reichhold Center for the Arts on the University of the Virgin Islands is the island's only place for major performances. Imported symphonies, ballet, and repertory companies join homegrown theater and dance groups in staging performances.

Pistarkle Theater, in the Tillett Gardens art complex, holds performances throughout the year.

### Festivals

Carnival, held every year, is the island's premier event. Thousands of islanders living abroad return home for this event, so make sure to reserve your hotel early if you plan to attend. The event culminates with

a parade by troupes and floats of people wearing fanciful costumes.

Other events, such as the St. Thomas Agriculture & Food Fair and the Texas Society Chili Cookoff happen yearly, but many happen only sporadically. Check at your hotel to find out what is happening when you are in town.

### Art Exhibits

With little to entertain them in the way of formal events, residents gather at local galleries and shops whenever an artist unveils a new collection. Spots like the Color of Joy and the Camille Pissarro Gallery are known for these events. Wine, cheese, conversation and a chance to meet the locals are the reasons to attend. Check St. Thomas This Week and the Daily News for announcements.

### Sports

Horse racing at Clinton Phipps Racetrack provides gathers a crowd every other Sunday. While the crowd is mostly local, a smattering of tourists also place bets.

School fields and Emile Griffith Park, located along Route 30 in Charlotte Amalie, often see local teams play baseball. Avid fans are always welcome to sit in the stands.

The Rolex Regatta is the island's premier sailboat race with competitors coming from all over the Caribbean. All are welcome to the festivities at the St. Thomas Yacht Club.

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## Things to Do Insights

### St. Thomas: Day 1

If you only have one day to visit, spend half a day on a taxi tour around the island past beautiful beaches and lovely vistas. Have your driver let you off in Charlotte Amalie for lunch and a stroll through Charlotte Amalie's byways and back ways. The heart of the island's shopping scene, the stores crammed full of merchandise on the waterfront side of town date to the 17th and 18th century when they served as warehouses. Filled with sugar, molasses and other goods awaiting export, they held products from the island's plantations. In those days, the waterfront was at their doorstep. A mid-20th century landfill created the waterfront highway called Veterans Drive, and the warehouses were

## St. Thomas Snapshot continued

turned into shops with entrances at both ends. The stores on the inland side of Main Street were always shops with storeowner families living upstairs.

Start your tour at the 17th-century Fort Christian, the oldest building in St. Thomas. With its small museum, the fort sets the pace with old guns and ramparts ripe for exploring. Across the street toward the harbor sits the Legislature Building, home to the sole lawmaking body in the territory. Heading west and inland, Emancipation Garden provides a pleasant respite for tired sightseers. The park was built to commemorate the 1848 slave emancipation, which actually happened in St. Croix.

Continue up hill to Government Hill, home to slews of historic homes and public buildings. The list includes the Hotel 1829, Government House, and the Seven Arches Museum, tucked behind the Lieutenant Governor's office. The 99 Steps leads to Blackbeard's Hill, home to Haagensen House, a restored historic home, Inn at Blackbeard's Castle, and the Green Iguana Hotel, both located in historic buildings.

After returning to the town proper, go east a block to visit the historic Frederick Lutheran Church. Tucked up behind Main Street on Crystal Gade sits the historic St. Thomas Synagogue. The congregation dates to 1796 although this building went up in 1833. It has a sand floor to commemorate the flight of ancient Jews out of Egypt across the desert.

### Day 2

While the air is still cool, stop by the lovely Magens Bay Beach for a few hours of swimming, snorkeling and relaxation. This palm-fringed beach is the island's most popular. With fresh-water shower facilities to make clean up a breeze, it makes a perfect first stop on a day spent exploring the island north and east of Charlotte Amalie. Visit Drake's Seat for great views and the lovely restored St. Peter Greathouse Estate & Gardens while poking around these less crowded roads.

### Day 3

If you are touring on your own, spend the day exploring the island's South and North Coasts. Your first stop might be the Havensight area for a jaunt up Paradise Point Tramway. The views are stupendous. Follow the southern Route 30 and then

Route 32 to Red Hook, where it is fun to watch the ferries to St. John arrive and depart. There are several restaurants and shops in the area perfect for whiling away a bit of time. From Red Hook, head west along Route 38 past luxury resorts. Feel free to stop at anyone of them to enjoy the beach and the resort's restaurants. Coral World, a unique marine park with petting tanks and an underwater observatory, sits just off Route 38 in Smith Bay.

Following your map, turn right on Route 42 and then onto Route 40 for a ride on Valdemar Hill Drive. Usually called Skyline Drive by residents, this road provides lovely vistas of Charlotte Amalie below.

### Outdoor Adventures

Visitors with more time have many options. Spend a day sailing the waters between St. Thomas and St. John or the nearby British Virgin Islands. Go scuba diving with any of the numerous outfitters based in St. Thomas. Play a round at Mahogany Run Golf Course. Or hop the ferry to St. John for a day of hiking or swimming at the Virgin Islands National Park's luscious beaches.

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### Travel Tips

St. Thomas: **By Air:**

St. Thomas is serviced by the Cyril E. King International Airport(+1 340 774 5100/http://www.viport.com/aviation.html). Flights to and from St. Thomas are provided by:

American Airlines(+1 800 433 7300/ http://www.aa.com)

Cape Air(+1 800 352 0714/http://www.flycapeair.com)

Continental(+1 800 525 0280/ http://www.continental.com)

Delta(+1 800 221 1212/ http://www.delta.com)

Seaborne Airlines(+1 340 773 6442/http://www.seaborneairlines.com)

US Airways(+1 800 428 4322/ http://www.usairways.com)

There are bus and taxi services available from the airport. The city bus line(+1 340 774 5678) runs between downtown and the airport.

Taxi Companies include:

East End Taxi(+1 340 775 6974) East End Taxi Association

Independent Taxi(+1 340 775 1006)

Islander Taxi(+1 340 774 4077)

Sunflower Bliss(+1 340 777 7343)

V.I. Taxi Radio Dispatch(+1 340 774 7457)

V.I. Taxi Association(+1 340 774 4550) VI Taxi Association

Wheatley Taxi Service & Tours(+1 340 775 1959)

### By Train:

There are no train services available on St. Thomas.

### By Bus:

Bus services on St. Thomas are limited to local providers such as Vitran Buses(+1 340 774 5678).

### By Car:

There is a comprehensive network of roads on St. Thomas. Route 302 services the airport.

### Getting Around:

Vitran Buses(+1 340 774 5678) offer transit services throughout St. Thomas.

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### Fun Facts

**St. Thomas**

**Country:** US Virgin Islands

**St. Thomas by the Numbers:**

Population: 108,775

Average Annual Rainfall: 38 inches

Average January Temperature: 79 degrees F

Average July Temperature: 83 degrees F

### Quick Facts:

Major Industries: Tourism, Petroleum refining, Rum distilling, Pharmaceuticals, Textiles, Electronics.

Electricity: 110 volts, 60Hz

Time Zone: GMT-4

Country Dialing Code: 1

Area Code: 340

## St. Thomas Snapshot continued

### Did You Know?

During the 17th century the Virgin Islands were divided between the English and the Danish colonies. The Danish islands were

purchased by the United States in 1917 and since this time have been transformed into a popular tourist destination. The port of Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas is a popular site for cruise ships.

### Orientation:

St. Thomas, part of the U.S. Virgin Islands, is located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, east of Puerto Rico.

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