



Charlotte Amalie

Photo: Matt Wade/cc by-sa 2.0/Flickr



Karl Callwood/unsplash

Exceptional views, numerous historical attractions, delightful shopping opportunities and some of the best Caribbean beaches nearby — that's what Charlotte Amalie is all about. Cruise ship passengers disembark daily to explore the idyllic waterfront, buy Caribbean rum and tax-free jewellery. Imagine the days of pirates while sipping a fruity cocktail, or get to know the colonial past of this 350-year-old city.

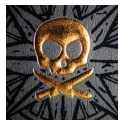


Karl Callwood/unsplash



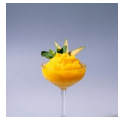
Yogi Misir/unsplash

Featured



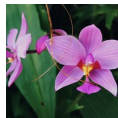
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Top 5



Old Town

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Fort Christian

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St Thomas Synagogue

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Drake's Seat

Drake's Seat was built in 1933, when everyone had to navigate the island by ...



ST THOMAS ISLAND



Kellie Klumb/unsplash

Before the colonisation of the Americas, the area was inhabited by Caribs, Arawaks, Ciboney and Taíno native peoples. The U.S. Virgin Islands were “discovered” by Columbus on his second voyage to the New World in 1493. In the centuries that followed, the English, Dutch, French, Spanish, Knights of Malta, and Danes ruled the islands. In 1917, during World War One, the United States bought the islands from Denmark for \$25,000,000 in gold.

Since then, St Thomas became known for having one of the most beautiful harbours in the world. Located in the Northeastern area of the Caribbean Sea, St. Thomas is part of the Leeward Islands. Wonderful and reliable weather is what makes it such a popular destination in the winter months. It is a Caribbean postcard image in real life: glimmering turquoise waters, a hammock under a palm tree and a fruity rum drink in hand.

St Thomas offers a lot of variety depending on your interests. Busy resorts line the shores of the East End around Red Hook Village. Southside beaches are almost exclusively used by hotel guests, so head here for a little more privacy. Northside is entirely private residences and villa rentals, so it’s even more tranquil — no tourist crowds whatsoever.

Founded in 1666 as Taphus (“beer house” in Danish), Charlotte Amalie is the capital and the largest city of the U.S. Virgin Islands. The town got its present name in 1691 in honour of Charlotte Amalie of Hesse-Kassel (1650–1714), queen consort to King Christian V of Denmark-Norway. The deepwater harbour that once attracted pirates now welcomes cruise ships. It is, in fact, the busiest port of call in the Caribbean.

Danish colonial architecture can still be found in Charlotte Amalie, and many streets and places have Danish names. Blackbeard's Castle and Bluebeard's Castle play into the romantic ideas we all got from the Pirates of the Caribbean franchise. Be sure to stop by the Royal Dane Mall, where a series of plaques placed throughout the alleyways provide extra historical context.

The U.S. Virgin Islands have also been a popular shopping destination since 1607. The settlers of Jamestown, the first English settlement on the continent, bought supplies on their way to Virginia. These days, it’s all about shopping tax-free for things like custom leather sandals, jewellery, rum, artisanal Moko Jumbie dolls, shipwreck coins and local art.

Fascinating history, exciting adventures, lush natural beauty, fantastic cuisine and lively culture — St Thomas has it all.

DO & SEE



start livin/unsplash

There are plenty of things to explore in Charlotte Amalie: up in the hills, by the sea and underwater. Culture, food and drinks, stunning nature and delightful shopping opportunities — you'll never get bored.

Old Town

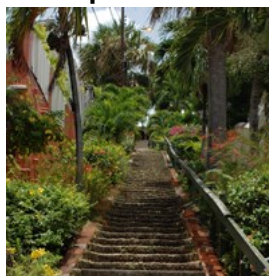


The capital city of St Thomas — Charlotte Amalie — only about 10 minutes away from both It will take you about 10 minutes to reach

downtown from the Havensight cruise pier and Crown Bay Marina. Take a stroll down the cobbled alleyways, climb the steep stairs for glorious views and admire West Indian furnishings in historic homes. Since its founding by Danish settlers in 1681, the town has evolved from a colonial trading post to one of the busiest duty free ports in the Caribbean.

Photo: Public Domain/Wikimedia(image cropped)

99 Steps to the Blackbeard's Castle



The many winding steps of Charlotte Amalie were built in the mid 1700s. The bricks for the steps were brought all the way from Denmark as ballast in the empty hulls of the sailing ships. The picturesque 99 steps attract the most foot traffic and cameras. How could one resist this narrow stairway, adorned with flowers on both sides!

The original name if the street can be translated as the Greater Tower Street. The steps lead to the Blackbeard's Castle — a 17th century watch tower. The tower has been closed to visitors since Hurricanes Irma and Maria, but the view from up above is still stunning.

Photo: F Mira/cc by-sa 2.0/Flickr

More Info: The 99 steps are actually 103 steps!

Fort Christian



Build in the 1670s as the administrative centre of the island and military grounds, the bright red Fort Christian now hosts the St Thomas museum.

Explore the old photos, antique furniture and artifacts connected to the history of the island.

Photo: daveynin/cc by 2.0/Flickr

Address: Between Veterans Drive and Emancipation Garden, Charlotte Amalie, St Thomas Island

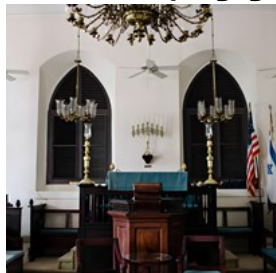
Opening hours: Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:30pm

Phone: +1 340 714 3678

Internet: www.nps.gov/nr/travel/prvi/pr29.htm

More Info: The museum is being restored, so you won't get to see the entire collection.

St Thomas Synagogue



The St Thomas synagogue first opened its doors in 1833, which makes it the the second oldest synagogue in the United States. The building features a domed ceiling with beautiful chandeliers and mahogany pews.

The white sand floors both to remind congregants of the 40 years the Jews spent wandering the desert in biblical times and also to pay homage to their Portuguese ancestors who had to muffle the sounds of their footsteps during prayer. Only four synagogues in the world still honour this Dutch-Portuguese tradition.

Photo: Ami at [www.entouriste.com/cc by-nd 2.0/Flickr](http://www.entouriste.com/cc-by-nd-2.0/Flickr)(image cropped)

Address: 2116 Krystal Street, Charlotte Amalie, St Thomas Island

Phone: +1 340 774 4312

Internet: www.synagogue.vi

More Info: Officially named Beracha Veshalom Vegimulth Hasidim, meaning Blessing and Peace and Loving Deeds

Drake's Seat

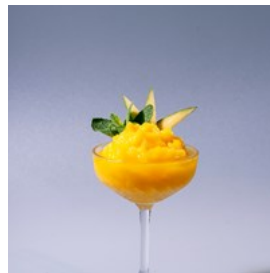


Drake's Seat was built in 1933, when everyone had to navigate the island by horse or on foot. To this day it remains the most popular vantage point, only rivalled by the Skyline Drive Overlook. Stop here for a short while and enjoy the panoramic view of Magen's Bay, surrounded by green rolling hills and with a scattering of colourful houses.

Photo: Hugh Millward/cc by 2.0/Flickr(image cropped)

More Info: History says that this was Sir Francis Drake's lookout point for enemy ships

Mountain Top



Mountain Top is a must do just for the view alone. Their observation deck is the perfect vantage point to see the island and the bay below. A sizeable gift shop will provide you with all the USVI souvenirs imaginable. The cherry on top — banana daiquiris were invented right here, and the bar is happy to give you a taste.

Photo: Ruslan Khmelevsky/pexels

Address: 7840 Mountain Top (on St. Peter Mountain Road), St Thomas Island

Opening hours: Daily 9am-5pm

Phone: +1 340 774 2400

Internet: www.mountaintopvi.com

Email: info@mountaintopvi.com

Skyride to Paradise Point



Paradise Point is one of the three most enticing viewing stops in Charlotte Amalie. The gondola of the Skyride smoothly takes you up 213 m (700 ft) to an observation area with scenic views of the bay, a restaurant and bar. Try the famed Bushwhacker cocktail to cool down a bit.

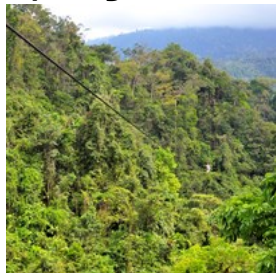
Photo: Matt Wade/cc by-sa 2.0/Flickr

Address: 9617 Estate Thomas, Charlotte Amalie, St Thomas Island

Phone: +1 340 774 9809

Internet: www.paradisepointvi.com

Ziplining



There are numerous places to try ziplining close to Charlotte Amalie, but the most lively one is Tree Limin' Extreme Zipline. Soar at 55 km/h

(35 miles per hour) between 8 platforms over the Caribbean lush rainforest. Your guide will tell you about the Virgin Islands' culture, flora and fauna while you take in the stunning views of the ocean around you.

Photo: Sean Hobson/cc by 2.0/Flickr(image cropped)

Address: 7406 St Peter Mountain Road, Saint Peter, St Thomas Island

Phone: +1 340 777 9477

Internet: www.ziplinestthomas.com

More Info: The "Yo-Yo" is the only zipline of its kind in the Caribbean

Frederick Evangelical Lutheran Church



Known as the oldest Lutheran Church in the Americas, the Frederick Lutheran Church was established in 1666 by Danish minister and coloniser, Kjeld Jensen. The yellow Georgian style building with its large staircase that you

can visit today was opened in 1793. The earlier two buildings that were, unfortunately, destroyed by fire.

Photo: Matt Wade/cc by-sa 2.0/Flickr

Address: 7 Norre Gade, Charlotte Amalie, St Thomas Island

Phone: +1 340 776 1315

More Info: Next to the 99 steps

Pirates Treasure Museum



Learn about pirates and their long history fun of dangers and adventures at the Pirates Treasure Museum. The interactive environment with videos,

hands-on activities and lots of visuals won't leave you bored. You can learn to tie the various knots and imagine what life would be like back in the pirate era.

Photo: Jakob Rosen/unsplash

Address: 17-1 Estate Thomas, St. Thomas Islands

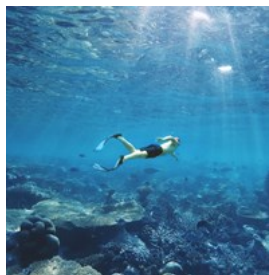
Phone: +1 340 775 9575

Internet: www.piratemuseumstthomas.com

Email: info@pirate.vi

More Info: Located in Buccaneer Mall

Scuba Diving and Snorkelling



While there's plenty to do in Charlotte Amalie on land, it would be a great loss not to explore the underwater wonders of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

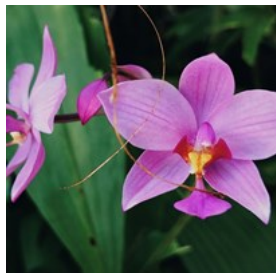
The easiest thing to do is rent a snorkel and explore the shallow waters by the beach, but you should definitely consider trying something more advanced at least once. Snorkelling is the cheapest choice. Add some diving equipment to go deeper and see more. Some tours now offer Sea Trek helmets — a modern take on the diving helmet.

No matter your choice of equipment, do explore the coral reefs that are home to tropical fish such as snapper, hamlets, parrot fish, sturgeon, squirrel fish and majestic sea turtles.

Photo: Ibrahim Razzan/unsplash

Internet: www.visitusvi.com/experiences/water-activities

Phantasea Tropical Botanical Garden



Phantasea Tropical Botanical Garden is a superb place to hide from the intense heat of the Caribbean sun. Stop here on your way to Crown

Mountain and explore the work of Patsy, the garden's owner. She has worked tirelessly for over 20 years to assemble a vast collection of orchids, bromeliads, palms, succulents and air plants. Kids will surely love the petting zoo with a peacock and parrot, while "plant parents" can buy some gorgeous flowering plants to bring home.

Photo: Olena Shmahalo/unsplash

Address: 5 Lerkenlund Est, St Thomas, Saint Thomas Island

Phone: +1 340 774 2916

Internet: www.stthomasbotanicalgarden.com

Email: ptbg@vipowernet.net

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



Roberto Nickson/unsplash

Even though eco-tourism is still a relatively new concept to the Virgin Islands, it is possible to find truly eco-friendly lodgings on the islands. Low-impact activities like hiking, snorkelling and kayaking abound in this natural paradise. Many restaurants and bars that grow their own ingredients.

Back in the 18th century, most of the islands

were clear-cut to plant sugar cane. Today, there is a very different attitude toward the complex ecosystem of the islands, shared by both residents and visitors alike.

Sunscreen



Staying protected from harmful UV rays is paramount. However, when protecting your skin, also consider the environmental impact of your sunscreen. The "Toxic 3 Os" — oxybenzone, octinoxate and octocrylene — are prohibited in the United States Virgin Islands. Choose a mineral sunscreen containing zinc oxide and titanium dioxide which are deemed safe and effective by the FDA.

In addition, don't forget to wear a hat and put on a rashguard if you plan to stay in the water for a long time.

Photo: Portuguese Gravity/unsplash

Internet: www.islandgreenliving.org/sunscreen-list

National Parks



U.S. Virgin Islands are a marvel of biodiversity. The three biggest islands are home to six national parks. Hassel Island is only a short hop away from Charlotte Amalie and features 135 acres of pristine nature, hiking trails and the preserved 19th-century fortifications. The islands has not fully recover after the hurricanes of 2017, so only parts are available for self-guided tours.

The Buck Island National Wildlife Refuge is the perfect destination for snorkelling. See a sunken

ship and get close to the giant sea turtles off shore, and observe migratory birds on this 45-acre island.

If you prefer to stay on St Thomas, check out the two botanical gardens close to the capital: Phantasea Tropical Botanical Garden and Plantation Crown and Hawk Botanical Garden.

Photo: Public Domain/Wikimedia(image cropped)
Internet: www.visitusvi.com/travel-information/sustainable

Carnival



A month-long party takes over St Thomas every year after Easter. J'ouvert "day break" parties begin before dawn, with elaborate costumes, a food fair and a vibrant carnival village. Move to the rhythm of reggae nights, enjoy pageants and calypso shows. Charlotte Amelie really heats up in the last week with non-stop partying.

Don't miss this celebration of local culture, where African, European and Caribbean customs mix into the unique traditions and heritage of the island.

Photo: Karl Callwood/unsplash
Opening hours: 2 April — 1 May 2022
Internet: www.carnivaland.net/saint-thomas-carnival

Volunteering



The hardcore ecotourist can take advantage of volunteering projects in the Caribbean paradise that is the U.S. Virgin Islands. You can get up close and personal with nature and leave your positive mark while cleaning up beaches,

learning to grow your own food at a Green Globe-certified farm, helping maintain hiking trails and several other hands-on educational activities. Last but not least, you'll meet amazing like-minded individuals and form new friendships.

Photo: Lara Jameson/pexels
Internet: www.conservationvip.org/destinations/virgin-islands

SHOPPING



marada/cc by-nd 2.0/Flickr

Stunning beaches and endless blue skies aside, St Thomas is known for its shopping scene. Remember, that you can buy souvenirs, local art, jewellery and whatever your heart desires duty free.

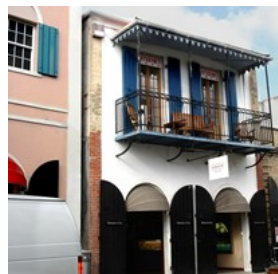
Both cruise ports — Havensight and Crown Bay — have their own malls. The selection of products and services is superb. You could do all your shopping right there if you don't feel like making the trip downtown.

Let a gondola take you from Havensight up to Paradise Point, where the sprawling views of the bay are the perfect backdrop for some souvenir shopping. Try the chocolate-flavoured piña colada called the Bushwacker!

Another place to shop with a view is the famed Mountain Top on St. Peter Mountain. Grab a

Banana Daiquiri (which was invented right here!) and browse beachwear, sandals, jewellery and other Caribbean delights.

Main Street



The historic Dronningens Gade, now known as Main Street, is a prime destination for shoppers. It has had this role ever since the city was founded. Take a walk down the cobblestone

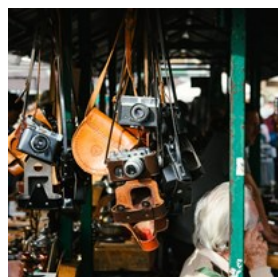
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Stroll the bustling cobblestone lane in the heart of Charlotte Amalie, which is lined with high-end shops and cozy restaurants that were previously used as pirate warehouses. Find beautiful jewelry pieces, watches, and souvenirs, as well as perfume, liquor, and tobacco. If you're interested in shopping for jewelry, highlights include Diamonds International, Cardow Jewelers, and Bobby's Jewelers.

Make sure to venture down the quaint side alleyways, too, where more boutiques await with hidden gems. Main Street is one of the top spots for shopping in St. Thomas.

Photo: Marelbu/cc by 3.0/Wikimedia(image cropped)
Address: Downtown Charlotte Amalie

Vendor's Plaza



casual jewellery and hats. The plaza gets very

Vendor's Plaza is an open-air market with small stalls selling local merchandise, souvenir and trinkets, clothes and knockoff designer purses,

busy whenever a newly docked cruise ship is in-town.

Photo: Kai Pilger/pexels
Address: Emancipation Park, Downtown Charlotte Amalie
More Info: Right next to Fort Christian

Royal Dane Mall



The famous Gladys' Cafe is perfect for breakfast or lunch.

A small pedestrian alleyway called the Royal Dane Mall is studded with small boutiques. Browse artisanal souvenirs and eclectic trinkets. The

Back in the Danish colonial times, this part of the city was filled with cane sugar warehouses. Some of the buildings now house boutiques, cafes and restaurants.

Photo: marada/cc by-nd 2.0/Flickr
Address: Downtown Charlotte Amalie

Back Street



Running parallel to the Main Street and the waterfront, Back Street is a showcase of impressive West Indian architecture. The buildings now house over 100 jewellery stores, fine dining restaurants and luxury boutiques.

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Photo: marada/cc by-nd 2.0/Flickr
Address: Downtown Charlotte Amalie
More Info: Also known as Vimmelskaft Gade

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION



Karl Callwood/unsplash

Cyril E. King Airport (STT)



Cyril E. King Airport is a public airport just two miles (3 km) west of the central business district of Charlotte Amalie. The U.S. Virgin Islands greet visitors with open-air terminals — rain or shine — so be ready with sunscreen or rain protection! The airport also serves the island of St. John and is additionally often used by those travelling to the nearby British Virgin Islands. Non-stop and connecting service from the US mainland to St. Thomas are available, but most flights make connections in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Small sea planes land at the Charlotte Amalie Harbor Seaplane Base — another port-authority-owned private-use airport with two seaplane landing areas.

Photo: Lars Schmidt/cc by-sa 3.0/Wikimedia (cropped)(image cropped)

Address: No. 70 Lindbergh Bay on the southwestern side of St. Thomas Island

Opening hours: The airport terminal is open 6 am-11pm

Phone: +1 340 774 5100

Internet: www.viport.com/cekastt

Havensight — The West India Company Dock



Havensight is one of the busiest cruise ship ports in the world. The port is located only 2.5 km (1.5 miles) or about a 5-10 minute taxi ride outside

of downtown Charlotte Amalie. Havensight is mostly known for its deepwater port West Indian Company Dock and the aerial tramway to Paradise Point on Flag Hill.

Right here you'll find numerous businesses that offer boat trips, submarine rides, scuba diving and snorkelling, jet skiing and more. Boats can take you to Red Hook in East End, Saint John, and Water Island. Taxis will take you downtown for about \$3, but you could also take a long but pleasant walk there.

The Havensight Mall offers eateries, all sorts of souvenir and luxury shops, and even a post office. Nail salons and barber shops, pharmacies and crafts stalls — whatever you need for a great trip.

Three large modern cruise ships can tie up at Havensight at the same time. When the docks are full, allow extra time to return to the pier from downtown Charlotte Amalie.

Photo: Prayitno/cc by-sa 2.0/Wikimedia (cropped)(image cropped)

Internet: www.viport.com/charlotte-amalie-waterfront

More Info: Remember, that cruise ship passengers in St Thomas are required to have both the ship card and a valid photo ID to re-enter the pier

Passports & Visas



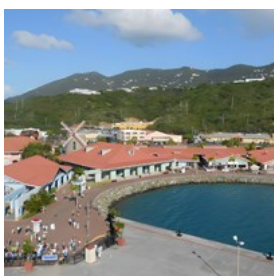
The U.S. Virgin Islands choose to follow the mainland US entry requirements. As with the mainland, any non-US citizen must follow the Visa Waiver Program. All travellers arriving in the U.S. Virgin Islands from outside the United States (including U.S. citizens) must meet the requirements for entry (or re-entry) to the United States.

Since USVI is an American territory, a passport is not required for American/American Samoan citizens who are travelling from any part of the United States or its territories, as long as a foreign place is not touched during the journey. However, having a passport might speed up the entry and exit process.

The territory is a "free port" in a separate customs zone from the mainland USA, which means that everyone going to the mainland must go through customs.

Photo: ConvertKit/unsplash

Crown Bay Dock



Once a naval base, Crown Bay is St. Thomas' newest cruise port. The port has been completely restored after the hurricanes of 2017. The ships dock on either side of a single finger pier. The Crown Bay Center is a large shopping mall just outside the pier gates with duty-free shops, crafts and souvenir stalls, restrooms, ATMs, convenient stores and taxi dispatch. A taxi is the best way to get to Charlotte Amalie downtown.

You'll find the Information Center just outside the Mall, on the north side. The building looks like a miniature windmill, so it's easy to spot.

Photo: Roger W/cc by-sa 2.0/Flickr (upscaled and cropped)(image cropped)

Internet: www.iqcruising.com/ports/caribbean/st.thomas/at-the-pier-crown-bay.html

More Info: Remember, that cruise ship passenger in St Thomas are required to have both the ship card and a valid photo ID to re-enter the pier.

Population

14,477 Virgin Islanders (2020)

A 76.2% majority are Afro-Caribbean, descended from Africans who were enslaved and brought to the islands by Europeans to work on plantations.

Currency

US dollar (US\$)

Internet

www.visitusvi.com/st-thomas

Newspapers

Virgin Islands Daily News – www.virginislandsdailynews.com

The Virgin Islands Consortium – www.viconsortium.com

Virgin Islands News Online –

www.virginislandsnewsonline.com

St Thomas Source – www.stthomassource.com

Emergency numbers

Dial 911