

ST. CROIX HERITAGE TRAIL

Your Guide to the History, Culture, and Nature of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

WELCOME TO AN ISLAND JOURNEY

The St. Croix Heritage Trail traverses the entire 28 mile length of St. Croix, linking the historic seaports of Frederiksted and Christiansted and the fertile central plain, the mountainous Northside, and the arid East End. The route, which follows modernized 18th century roads, offers a wide cross-section of the island's history, culture, landscapes, and outdoor activities. The Trail traces the evolution of the island, from pre-Columbian peoples through sugar and cotton plantations to cattle farms, homesteads, suburban communities, industrial complexes and tourist resorts to St. Croix in the 21st century.

Heritage attractions, recreational opportunities, local arts and crafts, churches, viewscapes, agricultural traditions and St. Croix's complex multi-component heritage are identified and interpreted at several locations along the way.



Scraped Cattle at Pasture

St. Croix's history and culture have been shaped over the last 350 years by European planters and merchants, enslaved Africans, free people of color, Caribbean immigrants and American settlers. Through war and peace, great prosperity and grinding poverty, colonialism, insurrections and incessant struggle, their lives and folkways have been woven into a colorful tapestry which their descendants are eager to share with you. remarkable diversity of this beautiful tropical island, once called the "Garden of the Caribbean."

ABOUT THE TRAIL & THIS BROCHURE

As with many memorable journeys, there is no real beginning or end of the trail. You may want to start your drive at either Christiansted or Frederiksted as a point of reference, or you can begin at a point close to where you're staying. If you want to take it easy, you can cover the trail in segments by following particular subroutes, such as the "East End Loop," delineated on the map.

The Heritage Trail will take you to three levels of sites: full-service Attractions that can be toured; Visitation Sites, like churches, with irregular hours; and Points of Interest, which you can view, but are not open to the public. Along the route you will find an assortment of amenities, such as gas stations, restaurants, shops and roadside vendors.

Brown and white Heritage Trail road signs with a sugar mill symbol are positioned to help guide you along the Trail route. These signs do not mark a site location.

Managed attractions and visitation sites are generally identified by some kind of signage; however, points of interest may not yet be marked. If you have trouble finding a particular place, don't hesitate to politely ask someone. You will nearly always receive a courteous response, and it is a good way to strike up a conversation.

The brochure map also delineates the Trail route and identifies sites found along the way. Heritage Attractions are designated by **BOLD TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS**. Visitor information for these sites can be found in the **Heritage Attractions** section below. Visitation sites are designated by **Bold Italic Text**. The icons shown in



association with each site represent attributes found there, such as greathouse, windmill, nature, or viewscapes. All St. Croix roads are not portrayed, so do not consider this a detailed road map.

- Key to Icons**
- Greathouse
 - Sugar Mill
 - Chimney
 - Ruin
 - Church
 - Cemetery
 - Von Scholten School
 - Nature Area
 - Overlook/Pullover

Please remember to drive on the left, a remnant traffic rule bequeathed by our Danish past. The speed limit along the Trail ranges between 25 and 35 mph, unless otherwise noted. Seat belts are mandatory, so "buckle up" at all times. At intersections look right first for oncoming traffic, then look left, right again, then proceed with caution. As you look for sites along the Trail, please be considerate of vehicles behind you. You may need to pull over to the side of the road to study your map or to ask for directions. Please do so with caution. Have a safe journey!



Remember to KEEP LEFT!



Outside the towns the Heritage Trail will take you by the following churches built to accommodate the plantation workers in the central plain: **St. Ann's Church** at Estate Barren Spot, built in 1815 on the site of an eighteenth century Roman Catholic chapel; **Kingshill Lutheran Church** built in 1912; **St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church**, built in th 1930s. Two other interesting churches of the Trail are **Holy Cross Anglican Church**, built in 1913 (at the intersection of Rtes. 72 and 669) and **St. Luke's African Methodist Episcopal Church**, erected in 1933 to serve the members of the St. Croix Labor Union residing at Estate Grove Place.



Historic cemeteries, with inscribed tombstones of Crucians of all classes and nationalities, are associated with nearly all of these churches. The Christiansted town cemetery is immediately adjacent to **St. John's Anglican Church**. The Frederiksted town cemetery is directly across the street from **Holy Trinity Lutheran Church**. Churches and cemeteries are usually open for visitation. Feel free to stop by and visit, or attend a service. But please do so in a respectful manner and with appropriate attire.

HISTORIC SITES

St. Croix is rich with historic sites associated with its plantation agriculture and overseas commerce. Everywhere you go along the Heritage Trail you will see sugar plantation ruins (usually identified by windmill towers and/or chimneys), restored 18th and 19th century greathouses, and abandoned plantation villages. Here and there you will pass by old schoolhouses or churches built to serve the plantation workers. Some of these historic places have been preserved and can be visited. (See Attractions section below). Others can only be viewed from the roadside. When you are done touring by car, you can wander around the picturesque port towns of Frederiksted and Christiansted, where you will discover many fine shops and restaurants housed in ancient buildings.

PLANTATIONS

The landscape of St. Croix is dotted with the ruins of over 300 sugar, cotton, and cattle plantations that dominated Crucian economic, social, and cultural life between 1750 and 1950. Ranging in size from 75 to 750 acres, they encompassed the entire land mass outside the two towns. Their evocative names - Wheel of Fortune, Barren Spot, Envy, Mary's Fancy, Adventure, Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Misery, Stoney Ground, Contentment, Jealousy, Work and Rest, Profit, Bethlehem, Anna's Hope - conjure up stories of the dreams, successes, and misfortunes of their former owners. A source of short-term wealth to the Crucian plantocracy, the plantations were instruments of oppression and exploitation for enslaved and free working people.

A typical sugar plantation contained wind, animal, and steam mills for grinding the sugar cane; a factory for processing crushed cane juice into sugar, rum, and molasses; shops for craftsmen; cattle and mule pens; a workers' village; wells, water cisterns, and the planter's greathouse, with an associated kitchen, domestic quarters, and other outbuildings. Stone well towers and watch houses were sometimes placed in the cane fields and pastures that surrounded the settlement complex.



The Windmill at Whim Plantation Museum

The best-preserved sugar plantation sites are found at **Estate Whim Plantation Museum** near Frederiksted and **Estate Little Princess** near Christiansted. Both are full service attractions. Plantation ruins can also be explored at **Estate Mt. Washington**, **St. George Village Botanical Garden**, the **Lawaetz Museum at Little La Grange**, **Estate Anna's Hope**, and **Estate Butler Bay**. Between October and June the St. Croix Landmarks Society conducts monthly "Ruins Rambles" to otherwise inaccessible estates. In addition, several tour operators interpret historic ruins in their hiking, biking, and horseback riding excursions.

FREDERIKSTED & CHRISTIANSTED

The Heritage Trail pivots around St. Croix's two historic seaports, Frederiksted on the west coast, and Christiansted on the north shore. Carefully laid out in accordance with grid plans and strict building codes imposed by the Danes, these well-preserved towns feature some of the finest colonial architecture in the Caribbean.

CHRISTIANSTED

Christiansted is distinguished by its wealth of neoclassic buildings, arched streetscapes, and spacious waterfront square. Founded in 1735, the town flourished as the main shipping center and seat of government between 1755 and 1871. The streets leading to the waterfront are lined with 2- and 3-story merchant shops and planter townhouses dating from the early prosperous time. The street floors of these colonial buildings served as warehouses and businesses. Today they house stores and restaurants. Former living quarters on the upper floors, graced by shuttered windows and dormers, have been converted into offices. Distinctive arched galleries provide shaded walkways along the building entrances. Here and there you come upon gateways opening to cool interior courtyards and old warehouse arcades.

The town's centerpiece is the **Christiansted National Historic Site**, which encompasses the historic waterfront square. Here sailing ships docked to unload goods from Europe and North America, and slaves from Africa, and left laden with sugar and rum. Administered by the National Park Service, the site contains several restored 18th century buildings that are open to the public: **Fort Christiansvaern** (with cannons still trained on the harbor entrance), the **Steeple Building Museum**, the **Danish Customs House**, the **Scale House**, and the **Danish West India & Guinea Company Warehouse**, which also functioned as a slave market.

ATTRACTIONS

Christiansted National Historic Site - Administered by the National Park Service. This waterfront site features several restored 18th century buildings. Fort Christiansvaern is open weekdays 8am-5pm, weekends 9am-5pm. Closed on Christmas Day.

Government House - The imposing building on King Street is an outstanding example of the splendor of Danish colonial architecture and the opulence of the sugar plantation era. Its elegant ballroom was the site of festive gatherings hosted by the governors of the colony and is still used for government functions. The building has undergone major historical renovation and preservation. You may take a glimpse of the ballroom and walk through the courtyard weekdays 8am-5pm. No admission charge.

Apothecary Museum - Housed in its original location on Queen Cross Street, this impressive display of pharmaceutical bottles and paraphernalia is open Monday through Saturday 10am-4pm. Admission is free.

FREDERIKSTED

Frederiksted is characterized by a smaller scale, wider streets, and charming Victorian architectural detailing. Founded in the 1750s, the town languished until the second half of the 19th century, when it replaced Christiansted as the main port and supported a vibrant community of craftsmen, dockworkers, fishermen, small shopkeepers, and merchants. After being virtually destroyed during a labor insurrection called the "fire burn" in 1878, Frederiksted was quickly rebuilt by skilled local craftsmen influenced by the gingerbread style of the late Victorian period.

Frederiksted's finest feature is **Strand Street**, with its beautiful waterfront promenade and shops and restaurants shaded by arched colonnades. Its northern end culminates in a broad waterfront plaza bordered by historic **Fort Frederik**, the island's cruise pier, the **Customs House**, and **Emancipation Park**, whose name and statuary commemorate the freedom fighters of 1848.

The residential quarters of Christiansted and Frederiksted, formerly inhabited by the free people of color, poor whites, and emancipated slaves, and more recently by Caribbean immigrants, are found at the edges of the commercial centers. They are characterized by small one- and two-story wood frame houses, with hip roofs and small inner yards. The yards provided communal outdoor living space for several households. In these residential areas also can be found most of the colonial churches which are discussed in the Churches section.

Our historic towns can best be seen and appreciated on foot. We highly recommend that you take walking tours, using either the self-guiding brochure provided by the Office of Tourism or a knowledgeable tour operator.

Eco Hiking and Touring - Several knowledgeable eco-hiking companies offer fun & educational excursions which include cultural, historical, and ethnobotanical talks. Hills above pristine pastures and watersheds like Est. Hermitage, and rugged beachfront, Maroon Ridge and Annaly Bays' pools. Contact **Any-Ay Eco Hike's Ras Lumumba Corriette** for details. 772-4079

Base Array Telescope - This 240-ton, 82-foot wide dish antenna is a component of a radio telescope system designed to penetrate deeply into the universe through the interception of radio waves. It is part of the VLBA, or Very Long Baseline Array, which consists of ten similar sites from Hawaii to the Virgin Islands. Group tours can be arranged by special appointment only. 773-0196

Point Udall - The easternmost point of the United States named for former Secretary of the Interior Stuart Udall, has beautiful sea vistas. A hiking trail leads to some of the island's most remote beaches at Jack's and Isaac's Bays. A monument was constructed at the Point to commemorate the new millennium.

Estate Little Princess - Established as a sugar plantation in the 1730s, this 24-acre Nature Conservancy preserve is being restored to create a community center for education and research. A self-guided trail with interpretive signs meanders the estate ruins and ends up at a small beach with a splendid view of Christiansted Harbor. Open Mon - Fri 9am-2pm. Closed Federal holidays. Admission is \$3. Groups of ten or more are asked to make an appointment. 773-5575

Salt River Bay National Historical Park & Ecological Preserve - Encompassing an extensive mangrove-lined estuary on the north

CHURCHES



Crucians are a religious people. The many churches scattered throughout the island bear witness to this spirituality. They also reflect the denominational diversity and religious tolerance that has characterized the island since Danish times. Lutherans, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Dutch Reformed, Moravians and Jews all established places of worship during the 18th century. The Moravians came as missionaries to convert the enslaved Africans, and their success encouraged other faiths to follow suit. Since the 1920s the mainstream denominations have been joined by a host of sectarian faiths.



shore, this attraction contains many archaeological and ecological treasures. Within its boundary is the Columbus Landing Site, a National Historic Landmark that commemorates the armed clash in 1493 between resident Caribs and soldiers from Columbus' fleet anchored at the mouth of the Bay. Diving, kayaking, and sightseeing tours are available. 773-1460

St. George Village Botanical Garden - An interesting blend of history and flora, the Garden is built upon 17 acres of a Native American settlement and the ruins of an 18th century sugar plantation. Featured are exotic tropical plants and trees, a cactus garden and rain-forest walk. A nursery and gift shop complete the area. Open Nov - Apr, seven days a week, 9am-5pm; May-Oct, Tues-Sat 9am-4pm. Admission: \$5 adults, \$1 children. 692-2874

Cruzan Rum Distillery - A sweet aroma permeates the warm air as you approach the rum distillery, where world-famous Cruzan Rum is still processed according to a centuries-old recipe. Tour the factory and discover how our popular rum is made. Learn the difference between light rum and dark rum, how varying proofs are achieved, and sample a Cruzan Rum for yourself. Guided tours are Monday - Friday, 9am-11:30am and 1pm-4:15pm. Admission: \$4

Several historic churches of outstanding cultural and architectural value distinguish St. Croix. Of particular interest are the **Friedenshal Moravian Church** just outside of Christiansted and **Friedenshal Moravian Church** at Estate Mon Bijou. Built in the 1850s, both are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Heritage Trail will take you past Friedenshal as you enter Christiansted from the west.

Other noteworthy churches in Christiansted: **Lord God of Sabaoth Lutheran Church**, built in 1744 by the Dutch Reformed Congregation and transferred to the Lutheran Church in 1834; **Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church**, built in 1750 and extensively remodeled after a fire in 1858; **St. John's Anglican Church**, constructed originally in 1760 and restored after a fire in 1866. The **Steeple Building**, now a museum within the Christiansted National Historic Site, was built in 1753 as a Lutheran church. The steeple was added in 1796.

In Frederiksted you can enjoy **St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church**, an interesting blend of Gothic Revival and Spanish Mission styles constructed in 1848; **Holy Trinity Lutheran Church**, built in 1792 on the site of the original church consecrated in 1771; **St. Paul's Anglican Church**, built in 1812 and beautifully renovated after a fire in 1998.

enslaved Africans forced Danish authorities to declare their emancipation in 1848. The surrounding area has been transformed into a dramatic park, with a bust of slave rebellion leader Budhoe and a beautiful statue of a freedom fighter blowing a conch shell signaling emancipation. Featuring a museum and art gallery, the Fort is open Mon - Fri 8:30am-4pm, and Sat 1pm-4pm. Admission is free, but a \$1 donation is appreciated. 772-2021. On the nearby waterfront is the picturesque vendor's plaza, where you can purchase local art and crafts on days when cruise ships are in port.

Lawaetz Museum at Little La Grange - At the edge of the tropical forest, nestled in a magical setting, this charming West Indian greathouse museum features original furnishings, photographs, heirlooms, and lore of a prominent Danish American family which has owned the property since 1896. Guided tours are available. Open Nov - Apr Tues - Sat, 10am-4pm; May - Oct Wed - Sat 10am-3pm. Admission is \$6 adults, \$2 children under 12. 772-0555

St. Croix LEAP - The Life Environmental Arts Project founded many years ago by noted woodworking artist Fletcher Pence still thrives in the tropical forest north of Frederiksted, and is well worth the drive. Island mahogany, tibet, and saman woods are harvested from fallen trees and given new life as exquisite pieces of furniture, clocks, serving boards, counter tops, and more. Open Mon - Fri 8am-5pm, Sat 10am-4:30pm. 772-0421

Estate Mt. Washington - The current owners of this former sugar estate discovered the ruins buried in the tropical forest in 1984 and have since rebuilt the animal mill bell tower, installed authentic wooden grinding machinery, stables, planted 14 acres in citrus and avocado trees and converted the original stables into an antique shop and interior decorating studio. The surrounding property is a designated wildlife sanctuary. Open during daylight hours. Free admission. 772-1026

ST. CROIX HERITAGE TRAIL



We are proud that the St. Croix Heritage Trail has been designated one of fifty Millennium Legacy Trails by the White House Millennium Council. These nationally recognized trails symbolize the spirit of efforts to connect the nation's culture, heritage and communities. More information on this national system can be found at www.millenniumtrails.org



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Important Virgin Islands Telephone Numbers
Police 778-2211 or 911
Hospital 778-6311 or 911

VON SCHOLTEN SCHOOLS



Governor-General Peter von Scholten

Peter Von Scholten served as Governor-General of the Danish West Indies from 1827 to 1848. Among his reforms was the establishment of eight schools on St. Croix to help prepare enslaved children for their eventual freedom. Designed by the renowned Danish architect Albert Lovmand, these schools were first staffed by Moravian missionaries and later by educators who were previously pupils at these schools. The Heritage Trail will take you by several of these schools that are still in use as educational and community centers: **Diamond School**, **La Grande Princesse School**, **Peter's Rest School**, and **Kingshill School**. The ruins of **Mt. Victory School** can be seen along the Creque Dam Road, while the **East Hill School** has been incorporated into a private residence.

PREHISTORY

The earliest humans on St. Croix were here some 4,500 years ago. The only trace found so far of these stone users is the remains of a temporary fishing camp. These people are believed to have migrated from the Yucatan peninsula to the Greater Antilles and then across St. Croix and down the island chain. Later, by I.A.D. pottery-making people had come up from South America. The first of these waves of people were later known as the Igneri (Ancient People). They are known as the Pre-Taino peoples to archeologists today. The Taino, often called Arawak, culture blossomed around 1200 A.D. St. Croix was on the eastern boundary of the Taino. By the time of Columbus's voyages the people on St. Croix were fighting with the most recent wave from the south, the Carib or Kalina peoples. Physical evidence shows that the Salt River site in particular was a major religious and cultural center. The only Taino ceremonial ball court found in the Lesser Antilles was discovered there in 1923.

On November 14, 1493, during his second voyage of exploration to the New World, Columbus sighted the island which he named *Santa Cruz* ("Holy Cross") - present-day St. Croix. At Salt River, a skirmish between Spaniards and Caribs resulted in a fatality on both sides. This hostile encounter constituted the first documented Native American resistance to European encroachment. Columbus named the scene of the encounter *Cabo de las Flechas*, or "Cape of the Arrows." Unwearing Carib resistance to enslavement, as well as their practice of ritual cannibalism, served as the pretext for their extermination by the Spanish beginning in 1512. In the face of military raids from Puerto Rico, the Caribs had permanently abandoned St. Croix by 1590.

HISTORY

Although Columbus claimed St. Croix for Spain in 1493, the Spanish made no attempt to colonize the island. The first European settlers, a quarrelsome mixture of English, French and Dutch adventurers, took up residence in the 1630s. Their

TOPOGRAPHY & VEGETATION

The topography of the island of St. Croix varies from the mountainous areas of the northwest, to arid rolling hills toward the east, to a broad, rolling plain along the southern coastline, and finally, to fringing flat sand beaches. The highest point on St. Croix is Mount Eagle at 1165 feet. Most of the island is made up of ancient marine sediments, with eroded materials found in layers atop these sediments. Although igneous rocks underlie some of the island's soils, St. Croix is not a volcanic island. These volcanic rocks were left by undersea volcanoes many years ago and were just part of the marine sediments that make up most of the island's soils. There are at least 8 major ecosystem types represented on St. Croix, from an area known locally as the "rainforest," really a subtropical moist forest, to mangrove forests, to beaches, to savannah, to thorny scrubland. The type of



CULTURAL LIFE

St. Croix's diverse heritage is preserved not only in landmarks. It is also honored in the rituals of daily life, woven into straw baskets and concocted into "Kallaloo" soup and filling "johnny cakes." History speaks in Creole languages, in stories and proverbs, in lively *quelbe*, *calypso*, and *salsa* rhythms, and the joyful music that reverberates from our churches. Crucian culture is a Creole culture, reflecting African and European traditions, spiced with Latin, American, and even Arabic influences. The legacy of Africa is particularly evident in the cuisine, gestures, traditional healing practices, styling, music, dance, and oral traditions. The European legacy derives primarily from the large number of Scots-Irish who ran the plantations. Since there were few resident Danes, and Danish language and culture was never taught in the schools, the Danish element is not very pronounced except for urban architecture. Crucians are very proud of their cultural heritage and eager to share it with visitors.



tenuous co-existence gave way to several years of internecine conflict, from which the French emerged victorious in 1650. The French colony, based on the cultivation of tobacco, indigo, cotton and sugar, lasted until 1696, when the entire population was evacuated to modern day Haiti.

France maintained title to St. Croix from 1696 to 1733, but made no effort to occupy it. During this period, the tropical wilderness reclaimed the island, which was periodically



visited by pirates, woodcutters and indebted poor whites fleeing from neighboring colonies. In 1733, Denmark bought St. Croix from France. The Danes, who wanted a plantation colony to complement their emerging free port at nearby St. Thomas, proceeded to subdivide the island into some 400 estates, each approximately 150 acres in size. These tracts were sold off to aspiring planters from Denmark and the neighboring Caribbean islands. The resultant plantation system structured Crucian life and landscape until the early 1960s.



Cane Workers, circa 1930

Economic opportunity and Denmark's reputation for a poor man's crop, was grown predominantly on the dry East End of the island. "King Sugar" was harvested everywhere - even at the tops of the highest mountains. It particularly thrived on the fertile, well-watered soil of the flat central plain along the south coast. By 1800, St. Croix boasted over 200 sugar plantations and had become the fourth largest producer in the Caribbean. As sugar expanded, cotton declined. By 1810 its cultivation had ceased. African labor and agricultural traditions made this system possible. Enslaved Africans cleared the dense tropical forest, greathoused the soil and built the sugar mills, factories, greathouses, and villages that everywhere dotted the landscape. They planted, tended, harvested, and processed the export crops, as well as manned the carts and boats that transported them to market. Resourceful African men and women also supplied foodstuffs for the local market from their small provision grounds. African contributions were not limited to



DANCE, MUSIC, & MASQUERADE

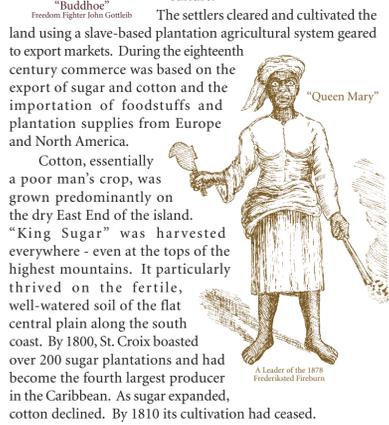
If you're lucky, during your visit there may be a scheduled *quadrille* dance, a performance of the St. Croix Heritage Dancers in their bright madras, or an opportunity to hear one of St. Croix's lively *scratch bands* such as Blinky and the Road-masters, Bully and the Kafoneers, Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights, or James Brewster and his band. Tradition bearer and author Richard Schrader, in his book "Maufe, Quelbe, and Ting" says when James performs, "trees shake their branches and grass bends down low." You can find Schrader's delightful island stories in local bookstores and shops.

The quadrille, introduced through either the French lands or through St. Croix's English and Irish planters and managers, was originally meant for four couples in a square. For generations, St. Gerard's Hall in Frederiksted had its floor filled with promenading partners led by a caller and live music on stage. Dances are also occasionally held at the Botanical Garden and at Harbour Night in Frederiksted.

Quelbe music, also called *scratch* or *fungi*, consists of a ukulele banojo, a short-necked, four-string banojo; the conga drum, played with a mallet or stick; the squash, a gourd with serrated sides scratched with a comb or wire-pronged stick; and the steel, a triangle played with a metal rod. Other instruments sometimes playing the lead include guitar, bass, saxophone, or flute. The bass line often comes from the tailpipe, created from a length of exhaust pipe after cars came to the island. Christmas is the time of year when *quelbe* is heard frequently - at parades, parties, and on the radio.

Other musical expressions you are likely to encounter,

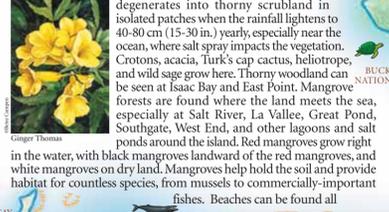
religious tolerance attracted a wide assortment of ethnic migrants. Within a few decades, small groups of Dutch, Irish, Scots, English, and Sephardic Jews had settled alongside the Danes in the towns and countryside. With them came thousands of enslaved laborers forcibly imported from Africa and the surrounding Caribbean islands. Later, immigrants from Puerto Rico and the Lesser Antilles joined the mix and contributed to the present culture.



A Leader of the 1878 Frederiksted Revolt

The settlers cleared and cultivated the land using a slave-based plantation agricultural system geared to export markets. During the eighteenth century commerce was based on the export of sugar and cotton and the importation of foodstuffs and plantation supplies from Europe and North America.

prevent the area from developing into deciduous forest. Instead, these areas develop into thorny woodlands. The yearly rainfall in these areas is 60-90 cm (25-35 in.). Here you will find cacti, acacia (locally called *casha*), tan-tan, frangipani, croton, prickly pear, organ cactus, and many kinds of grasses. Cane Garden, Cotton Garden, and



Thorny woodland degenerates into thorny scrubland in isolated patches when the rainfall lightens to 40-80 cm (15-30 in.) yearly, especially near the ocean, where salt spray impacts the vegetation. Crotons, acacia, Turk's cap cactus, heliotrope, and wild sage grow here. Thorny woodland can be seen at Isaac Bay and East Point. Mangrove forests are found where the land meets the sea, especially at Salt River, La Vallee, Great Pond, Southgate, West End, and other lagoons and salt ponds around the island. Red mangroves grow right in the water, with black mangroves landward of the red mangroves, and white mangroves on dry land. Mangroves help hold the soil and provide habitat for countless species, from mussels to commercially-important fishes. Beaches can be found all



whether it be on a stage, on a parade route, or driving past local restaurants, bars and dance halls, include *cariss*, with its message wrapped in song; *calypso*, whose lyrics are satiric; and *soka*, Jamaican-based reggae. Latin sounds of *salsa*, *merengue* and *bachata* are such as Liquid Sounds Brass and Mo' Tempo. Puerto Ricans have introduced the This guitar-family instrument ornate shape with violin-type tripod known as *bamboula* hopes of carrying on the link and dance.

The Caribbean Dance Company, established in 1977, is a professional touring company carrying Virgin Islands talent throughout Europe, Canada and the U.S. Its Christiansted trains kindergarden up. The Company, in its tradition of keeping local musical idioms alive, generally has two local performances a year.

During Crucian Christmas, Three King's Day, and even St. Patrick's Day, parades carry on the ancient tradition of masquerading, where men and women dress up in assorted costumes and move about town with musical accompaniment. Some of the characters at these "tramps" included queens, downs, Zulus, Indians, bulls, devils, pirates, and Mother Hubbard. At today's carnivals and parades you are more likely to see very elaborate and colorful costumes with sequins, feathers, and much more exposed flesh than in the olden-day tramps. Troupes of still-walking *moko jumbies*, with their veiled mysterious faces, perform amazing jumps and turns to delighted on-lookers.



carpenters, coopers, wheelwrights, joiners, and blacksmiths. Others worked as domestics, vendors, nurses, washerwomen, sailors, and fishermen. Large numbers of free people of color established themselves and their families in the port towns of Frederiksted and Christiansted.

Through continuous acts of defiance, running away (maroonage), and incidents of rebellion, Africans also bequeathed the fierce spirit of freedom and independence that has characterized the people of St. Croix since the days of slavery. In 1848 a bloodless rebellion by enslaved Africans forced the Danish authorities to proclaim Emancipation.

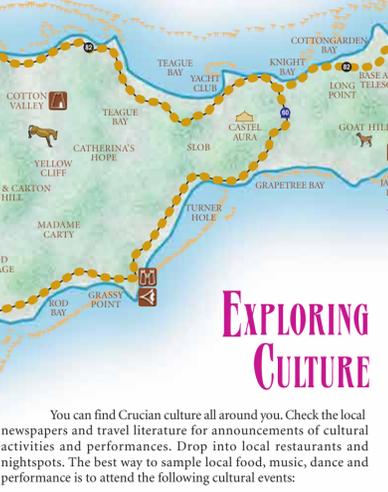
Thereafter, sugar production became less profitable, but continued as the island's economic mainstay until 1966, when the last crop was taken off. Experiments with alternative crops such as citrus, tomatoes, coconuts, and agave proved unsuccessful. Today, cattle raising, which began replacing sugar on many estates in the nineteenth century, is the primary agricultural activity. St. Croix is famous for its red Senepol cattle, a hardy breed which can be seen grazing in the northside hills and valleys, and along the south shore between the oil refinery and Great Pond.

Industry and tourism have dominated the economy since the 1960s. One of the largest oil refineries in the Western Hemisphere is located in the south central part of the island. Big and small tourism resorts are clustered along the scenic north coast.



Centerline Road (now Queen Mary Highway), circa 1860

around the margins of the island. Vegetation along the flat sand beaches includes coconut, machined (don't touch this tree it is toxic), Haiti-baiti, West Indian almond, sea grape, painkiller tree, acacia, and Puerto Rican Royal Palm. Many beach plants are adapted to holding water in their leaves and stems, including the sea purslane and beach bean. Beach ecosystems are affected by the salt water, salt spray, intense sunlight, and strong winds. Along both the North Side Road and the South Shore Road are areas of savannah, grasslands with scattered trees. These areas are dominated by guinea grass, with occasional calabash, tamarind, tibet, white manjack, acacia, tan-tan, and guava trees. Savannah areas are home to many species of birds, lizards, and insects. Finally, there are areas of vegetation on St. Croix that have been planted for their unique qualities. Many introduced species such as bougainvillea and flamboyant trees are colorful additions to our tropical island. Australian pine, hibiscus, African baobab, breadfruit, banana, and India fig all have been introduced to St. Croix, and are planted to brighten many roadsides, residences, and resorts.



EXPLORING CULTURE

You can find Crucian culture all around you. Check the local newspapers and travel literature for announcements of cultural activities and performances. Drop into local restaurants and nightspots. The best way to sample local food, music, dance and performance is to attend the following cultural events:

- Three Kings' Day Parade..... early January
- Agricultural Fair..... February
- Caribbean Dance Company Performances..... February
- St. Patrick's Day Parade March
- Starving Artists Days (Whim) March
- Mango Melee (Botanical Gardens)..... late June
- Emancipation Day..... July 3
- Hispanic Heritage Celebration Sept - Oct
- Liberty Day Celebration (Grove Place) November 1
- Crucian Christmas Festival December
- Christmas Spoken Here (Botanical Garden)..... December
- Harbour Nights in Frederiksted Wednesday nights
- Christiansted Jump-Up Nights throughout the year
- Randall "Doc" James Racetrack most Sundays

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Basket weaving, construction of metal or clay cook pots, mahogany furniture making, chair caning and needlework are among the craft traditions carried on to this day on St. Croix.

The calabash gourd, or "gobi", is made into bowls, utensils, purses and musical instruments. The calabash and coconut are both made into bird feeders. Several other local crafts have evolved from the emergence of the tourism trade such as moko jumbie dolls, palm frond hats and birds, shell crafts and adornments, and articles of clothing made from madras. A flourishing fine art community is evident from the many galleries and studios throughout St. Croix. In the winter there are many non-profit organization fundraisers which feature works by these gifted artists. "St. Croix This Week" lists places to find local art.

LANGUAGE & SAYINGS

While English is the official language of St. Croix, you will frequently hear Spanish and West Indian Creoles spoken. The local Creole, called *Crucian*, grew out of the social interaction of enslaved Africans and European planters. It is English-based because that language, rather than Danish, predominated among the Europeans. Also, English rather than Danish was taught in the schools before and after Emancipation. Crucian's African influence is most obvious in its grammar, syntax, and use in oration, story-telling, and proverbs. The following local sayings give a sampling of the distinctive flavor of *Crucian*.

- No fo want o' tongue meh cattle can talk.
- God Almighty never shut He eye.
- Yeh don' smell goat dung till you muss it up.
- Gold teet don' suit hog want.
- De devil tempt bu he don force.
- De longest prayer got an Amen.
- If you wash ants, you will find ants' qirts.
- Monkey noh wha tree tch come pon.
- Donkey got no business in a hos quallup.
- God live ch town, he live ch country.
- Uhe yeh gloss deh foh meh bottle deh.
- When quinea bird wing bruk, he seek the company of hens.



Sunday Market Square, Christiansted, 1912

BIRDLIFE AND LORE

St. Croix boasts over 100 bird species. The best birding can be found at the salt ponds listed below. But as you traverse the Trail, have your navigator (not your driver) be on the lookout for white-crowned pigeons on telephone lines, kestrels tending nests at the top of sugar mills, smooth-billed ani congregating in the bushes and our territorial bird, the bananaquit (sugarbird) raising a ruckus just about anywhere.

Knowing our colorful local names enriches your birding experience:

- Black Witch = Smooth-billed Ani
- Cattle Goulin' = Cattle Egret
- Pilikin Bird = Pelican
- Killy-Killy = Kestrel
- Antillean-Crested Hummingbird
- Colibri, Docta Bird = Humminbird
- Chinchary = Gray Kingbird
- Sugarbird, Yellowbreast = Bananaquit
- White Head = White Crowned Pigeon
- Mani-Coo, Dumb Bird = Mangrove Cuckoo
- Chicken Hawk = Red-Tailed Hawk
- Tortola Bird = Zenaida Dove
- Grass Sparrow = Black-faced Grassquit
- Thrushee = Pearly-Eyed Thrasher
- Half Bird = Laughing Gull
- Gray Goulin' = Great Blue Heron
- White Goulin' = Snowy Egret
- Weather Bird, Man-o-War Bird = Magnificent Frigatebird

For further information on birdwatching areas, contact The St. Croix Environmental Association at 340-773-1989.

NATURAL SITES AND PROTECTED AREAS

St. Croix possesses many ecological treasures, several of which are being preserved for their value as natural areas and wildlife habitat.

Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge, at the southwest corner of the island, was established primarily to protect the March - June nesting grounds of endangered leatherback turtles. **Caledonia Gap, Annull Bay, Willis Bay, and Creque Dam Road** offer interesting hiking spots in the lush northwest corner of St. Croix. **Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve**, in addition to protecting a significant historical area, is the crown jewel of natural areas on St. Croix. The mangrove "forests" of this estuary were damaged extensively by Hurricane Hugo and are being replanted by volunteers of the V.I. ReLeaf project of the St. Croix Environmental Association (SEA).

In addition to being a well interpreted example of a former working sugar plantation, **The Nature Conservancy's Estate Little Princess** near Christiansted is a nature preserve featuring trails and marked vegetation. **Buck Island National Monument** has an underwater snorkel trail for viewing fish, rays, corals, and an impressive garden of other sea life. The island itself contains a lovely beach with picnic facilities and a hiking trail which climbs to the top for some superb views back to St. Croix. **Green Cay National Wildlife Refuge**, established to protect the St. Croix ground lizard, is closed to the public above mean high tide. **Jack's and Isaac's Bays**, on the island's far East End, beckon dedicated hikers with a desire to see a remote beach. The 301-acre area, owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy as a nature preserve, protects flora and fauna from the ridge line to the coral reef.

St. Croix's many saltponds are rich in resident and migratory birdlife. The mangroves surrounding the ponds are critical nursery habitat for juvenile fish. Kayakers find smooth paddling when the ponds are full, and fishermen can be seen harvesting crabs from the mudflats. Following the Heritage Trail, you will see **Great Pond** on the south shore and **Southgate Pond** on East. Elsewhere you will find **West End Salt Pond** near Sandy Point; **Billy French Ponds** near the oil refinery, and **Altona Lagoon** near Gallows Bay (Christiansted).

CRUCIAN WILDLIFE

The most commonly seen mammal along the trail is the *mongoose*, introduced in 1884 to kill rats that were destroying sugar cane. They run in leaps across the road and seem to have better luck making it to the other side than do squirrels. They may be cute, but they eat ground-nesting birds and lizards, and they destroy turtle eggs. What's the plural of mongoose? (Answer: "mongoose dem.") *White-tailed deer*, introduced by planters in the 1770s for sport, find cover island-wide in woodland and scrub and can sometimes be seen foraging in pastureland in the evenings.

Three endangered sea turtles nest on St. Croix. The *leatherback* can over six feet long and over 500 kilograms. March to June is the nesting season; hatchlings emerge from May through August. The *hawksbill*, with its beautiful shell and beak-like jaw, often shares nesting beaches with the *green turtle*, named for the color of its body fat. Snorkelers occasionally spot turtles, particularly along the underwater trail at Buck Island.

Iguana, whose bones have been found in local kitchen middens, were probably very common up until mongooses were introduced. Most reported sightings of these scaly critters have been on the East End and along Mahogany Road west. A delightful time can be spent watching the threatening posture of a territorial *tree lizard* or *anole* as he inflates his dewlaps while doing mini-push-ups. The light-colored *woodsleeper*, a *gecko* thought to have been a stowaway on slave ships from Africa, is often seen at night stalking insects attracted to outside lights.

Kallaloo crabs, one type of land crab sometimes seen dangling from strings at roadside fish stands, can be found crawling around their mud holes in stands of red mangroves. At night, after a heavy rain, you might see residents collecting them with the aid of flashlights for use in kallaloo soup. The most cumbersome of land crabs, the purple-clawed *forest crab*, or *soldier crab*, can be found scrambling around the former floor or coastal thickets in its shell home. We also have *fiddler crabs*, whose one enlarged claw is waved constantly as if to say "hello." Look for the *giant toad* or *crapaud*, brought to St. Croix in the 1930s to control cane insects, an unsuccessful experiment.

Immigrants from Puerto Rico have brought us *lechón*, or pork, and *arroz con pollo*, rice with chicken. Trinitadians have introduced *roti*, a spicy curry wrap. And don't forget to try some locally made *hot sauce!*

Tropical fruits we delight in are often found at roadside stands and local markets. Familiar to every cereal eater, here the *banana* is turned into fritters, bread, puddings, and pies. The Indonesian *Carambola*, or "star fruit," is very often a garnish for drinks or salads. *Mango*, *papaya*, *passion fruit*, *soursop*, *coconut* and *tamarind* are turned into delicious drinks, preserves, chutneys and candies. If your sweet tooth comes combined with a thirst, try some *guava*, sugar cane juice, at Smithens Market stand on Queen Mary Highway.

Fresh fish, conch, and lobster can be purchased at the Frederiksted or Vrizze Lane LaReinefish markets. Choices of fish may include yellowtail snapper, grouper, tuna, wahoo, mahi-mahi, kingfish, or pot fish, depending on seasonal availability.

There are a number of restaurants throughout St. Croix that serve local island cuisine, and some of the hotels offer a weekly West Indian buffet. For a sampling of local fruits and vegetables you can go to the marketplaces in Frederiksted, Christiansted and La Reine early on a Saturday morning or look for vendor stands and trucks along the Trail.

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